

Mississippi Theatre Association
Board Meeting
July 11, 2015
Meridian, MS
MSU Riley Center
Minutes

Meeting Called to Order: Lee Crouse

Introduction of members present: Suz Allmon, Lee Crouse, Stephen Cunetto, Olivia Dunwoody, Stacy Howell, Thomas La Foe, Paula Mabry, Tim Matheny, Kenneth McDade, Sherri Marengo, Suzanne Oakley, Francine Reynolds, Christopher Shager, Cody Stockstill.

Minutes from May 2015 meeting approved by Board:

Mabry – Motion

Crouse – Second

Treasurer Report: Stephen Cunetto

- CREATE Foundation endowment should be fully funded by the end of July thanks to donation by Debra & Tom Hardy.

Executive Director Report: Stephen Cunetto

- Received full funding from MAC Grant. Cunetto noted that MTA being a statewide organization and its advocacy through legislative contact and attendance at Arts Day at the capitol likely contributed to the amount of the grant.
- Members reviewed and edited contact info.
- Cunetto and Stacy Howell currently working on streamlining registration process with company who provided MTA's membership software.

Tour of facilities: MSU Riley Center Staff

- Facilities technologically up-to-date, spacious, plentiful, well-kept, and appropriate.
- Major advantage of site is its ability to accommodate all festival functions and activities in one location.

NOTE TO STEPHEN & STACY – I have lots of the tour recorded on my phone. Do details about which rooms are for what location need to be included in the minutes, or is that something you need since you still have plans to hammer that out w/the Riley Center staff closer to time?

Lee reported - Brent Hearn has resigned as Adult Playwriting Division Chair. Will discuss replacement today.

Breakout Sessions: Strategic Plan Updates Discussions per Division

- Each division presented proposed adjustments to its Long Range Goals

Old Business:

- Scholarship Committee: No report
- Awards Committee: MTA Board asked to promote nominations for Outstanding Contributions awards. Forms available on website for Community, College/University, High School. Anyone can nominate.

- Performing Arts Framework Standards: MTA has been selected by the Mississippi Department of Education to be the “guiding force” behind the renovation of the frameworks. Applicants for this MDE committee continuing to submit paperwork. MTA Officers will review applications and announce committee members very soon.

New Business:

- Calendar of Events: This new feature is ready to launch on the MTA website. Each user who creates an account may add his/her own events.

- 2016 Festival:

- Current schedule/calendar is tentative and could change depending on registration.

- Members suggested ideas for vendors: publishing and lighting companies, ticketing agents, lighting. Cunetto encouraged members to continue to make suggestions to him or Stacy in the coming months.

- Adjudicators: Tim Matheny reported the following confirmations...

Secondary: Shannon Robert, Adam Twiss – lacks 1 (Howell suggested Mark Dunn.)

Community: Cranston Dodd, Beth Harvey, possibly Christopher Beaulieu

10-Minute: Craig Dettman, Alyssa McElfresh

Youth: Sadie Shannon, Steven Nabors

- Reynolds suggested using union actors as adjudicators for IEs.

- 2017 Festival: No proposals have been submitted at this time.

Division Reports:

- Playwriting: No report.

- College/University: Shager expressed a desire to study the division bylaws closely and being planning ways to further involve college/university students and faculty at festival.

- SETC State Auditions: Crouse reported that registration opens September 15. Audition dates are ??? at Jackson Academy???

- Community Theatre: La Foe reported that community theatre workshops other than festival weekend have been eliminated from the long range plan due to lack of participation. Also...

- Community Theatre division plans to create a Facebook page specifically for MTA community theatres to communicate and learn more about participation in MTA. Division suggests that most group communication to community theatres be moved to social media rather than MTA website.

- Community Theatre division plans to eliminate first goal in long range plan, but is keeping all others.

- Community Theatre division recommends that the community division just stick by the AACT Fest rules all the time and not switch back and forth on national festival on/off years. This would also require streamlining documentation in MTA handbook. The Board agrees.

- Professional: Reynolds reported the need to define “professional” and to recruit more professional members into MTA or disband the division.

- Recruitment ideas:

1. Determine a way to identify “professionals” already involved in MTA and get them together during the festival for roundtable discussion of goals and issues.

2. Create a weekend workshop other than festival (possibly in conjunction with October high school workshops), sponsored by MTA, possibly hosted by New Stage.

- Individual Events: McDade reported that schools will no longer be responsible for providing judges. Division supports the “talent show” style of groupings (larger groups, fewer rooms, greater percentage of more qualified judges), possibly pre-assign time slots.
 - Cunetto reminded the division to get the rule revisions done so teachers can get the word out at the fall workshops.
- Theatre for Youth: Marengo reported that recruitment is a primary focus.
- Secondary: Allmon reported forward motion on the new MDE fine arts framework.
 - Allmon is in the process of developing a Mentor Program, assigning newly participating schools/new teachers to experienced schools/teachers as an effort to get them involved.
 - The division plans to invite college/university reps to fall workshops to speak about their expectations of incoming freshmen. Workshop is October 9-10. Allmon would appreciate suggestions for workshop ideas.
- 10-Minute: Dunwoody reported that the division’s long-range goals include recruiting more participation from schools that don’t advance to state
 - The division also plans to add a workshop element to the competition, possibly provided by college/university students as a part of the competition as an effort to improve the artistic quality of the plays.

Other Business:

- Cunetto (Howell?) suggested putting MTA forward as a participant in the Mississippi Day of Giving (October 24), depending on the percentage that the MDG team takes.
- Crouse recognized Tupelo Community Theatre for AACT Fest awards: winner - People’s Choice for Best Production, winner - Best Set, winner – Backstage Award, nominee – Best Lighting, nominee – Best Actor and Best Feature Actor
- Cunetto recognized Starkville Community Theatre for hiring its first part-time employee.
- Mabry recognized some Mississippian living in ATL now for some new musical award ???
- Matheny recognized William Carey College for winning a national award ???
- Reynolds announced open auditions at New Stage August 8. Also plugged *The Telling: Central Mississippi Hamlet* project – presented in Prague in May. Recognized Schager as fight choreographer.

Lunch

Presentation by MSU Riley Center & Meridian reps:

- Shager requested provision of lodging and restaurant option info for teachers and those with special dietary needs
- Bus drop-off, pick-up, and parking issues discussed.
- Local attractions for students and tourists discussed.
- Ronnie Miller joined us for a completion of the facilities tour.
- La Foe requested lighting, sound plots, etc. Should be available by August/early September.
- As questions arise, Michele will be happy to help.

Adjournment approved by the Board:

Allmon – Motion

Matheny – Second