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2019 State Theatre Champs Announced

Meridian, Miss. — The Mississippi Theatre Association held its 2019 Theatre Festival in Meridian, MS January 17-20, 2019 at The MSU Riley Center. This year’s festival included over 646 people representing 6 community theatres and 20 high schools. Theatres from Hattiesburg, Jackson, Madison, and Ocean Springs were awarded top honors in the community theatre and secondary divisions.

According to MTA Executive Director Stacy Howell, “The Board was very excited about the turnout at this year’s state festival and the incredible support provided by the MSU Riley Center and the Meridian community.”

In addition to the theatre competition, which resulted in 6 community theatre productions and 9 high school productions, the four-day event also featured a 10-minute Play Festival, Theatre for Youth Festival, workshops, networking opportunities, and staged readings of two original works, which were selected as part of the organization’s annual playwriting competition for adults and youth.

The highlight and major focus of the festival was the community theatre and secondary theatre competitions. Adjudicators from outside the state selected winners for both divisions, as well as numerous acting and technical awards.

In the Community Division, The Center Players production of *Tea for Three* and Fondren Theatre Workshop’s production of *I and You* won the Warren McDaniel Award for Best Production. Betty Jo Mahaffey, Kathryn Dawkins, and Wendie Sheppard, directors of The Center Players’ production, won Best Director. Both of these

productions will advance to the Southeastern Theatre Conference (SETC), in Knoxville, TN in March.

In the Secondary Division, Ocean Springs High School's production of *White Snake* won the Dominic J. Cunetto Award for Best Production, and Oak Grove High School's production of *Axeman's Requiem*, was awarded the runner up Best Show. Chris Permenter, director of Ocean Spring's High School's production won the Best Director. Ocean Springs High School and Oak Grove High School will also advance to SETC in March. For a complete listing of awards visit the MTA website at <http://www.mta-online.org>.

At the Sunday awards ceremony, Lavonne Bruckner, director of Actor's Playhouse, was recognized for her Outstanding Contribution to Theatre – Community Theatre.

Ryan Pierini, theatre director at Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College – Jefferson Davis Campus, was honored with Lee Crouse making a presentation to Pierini for his Outstanding Contribution to Theatre – College / University.

MTA recognized its first principal, Howard Savage, Jr. Ed.D, principal of Quitman High School for his Outstanding Contribution to Theatre – Principal.

MTA is sponsored in part by grants from the Mississippi Arts Commission, a state agency, and the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency. Sponsors included Mainstage Theatrical Supply. For more information, visit the MTA website at <http://www.mta-online.org> or contact Stacy Howell, executive director of the Mississippi Theatre Association, at (601) 201-9564 or execdir@mta-online.org.