

**Mississippi Theatre Association  
Secondary Festival  
Rules / Guidelines**

(Revised July 2010)

1. The dividing line between the North and South will continue to be I-20. Any school North of I-20 will go to the festival at Mississippi State University and any school South of I-20 will go to the University of Southern Mississippi Festival.
2. Both regional festivals will cap the number of productions at 17. This will be monitor for 2-3 years to determine if there is a need for a 3<sup>rd</sup> region. Each region will collect data and report it to MTA on their final report. This does not include observing schools.
3. The regional festival will use a ratio system to determine the number of schools that will advance to the State Festival. The ratio will be 1:3 where you can advance 1 school for every 3 schools PERFORMING in the festival. This does not include observing schools attending the festival.
4. The minimum number of schools advancing to the State Festival will be 3 and the maximum will be 5. The number advancing will depend on the logical break in the scores.
5. A drop fee will be added in each regional festival to deter any school from dropping out at the last minute.

Above rules approved by the Board of Directors on July 18, 2009.

**Eligibility**

1. **Non-school groups** will include all community based programs with students in the grades 9-12 or the equivalent. Non-school groups will not be eligible to advance to MTA State Festival. **Non-school student groups** are those community based programs that may include home school students as well as students enrolled in a traditional high school (including charter or magnet school). Non-school groups will not be eligible to advance to MTA State Festival. {WINGS, Actors Playhouse, etc.}. Non-School Student Groups will be eligible for all awards EXCEPT Distinguished Play Award.
2. **Home-school student groups** are those community based programs that ONLY include home school students. No students enrolled in a traditional high school may participate in this group or it will be classified as a non-school student group. Home-school groups will be eligible to advance to MTA State Festival (as long as they qualify as a home-school group). Home-School Groups will be eligible for ALL awards.
3. **Non-Traditional schools** will be eligible to participate in Regional and State MTA Festivals {Example: Adept School}. Non-Traditional schools will be eligible for all awards and benefits of a traditional high school
4. While no one on the committee, the Board or the Host sites want to limit the number of production at the regional festival we have reached capacity in terms of the number of schools that we can handle. Until the size of each region is addressed in 2009, we will have to limit the number of entries to 17 schools. The first 17 entries will be accepted. Those schools reaching the deadline, but missing the entry # cut off will be placed on a waiting list in the event a school withdraws.
5. The order of performance will be a random order immediately following deadline date. It will not be based on the order the packets are received by the Host site.

Above rules approved by the Executive Committee (August 2008)

6. The MTA Board adopts a "one show per festival rule" which means that a theatre group cannot enter a secondary show in the regionals and enter that production in the Community Theatre Festival, Theatre for Youth Festival or any other festival. (Adopted July 24, 2010.)
7. As with any production of a copyrighted work, the producing organization will contract with the copyright /royalty holders to obtain written permission to perform the play. Copy of permission will be required prior to performing.

8. If your production must be edited to conform to festival production length requirements, you must obtain written permission from the publisher/royalty agent to perform in the festival. Copy of permission will be required prior to performing.
9. If your production uses music during the production rights must also be obtained by the copyright holder in order to use the music in the production. Copy of permission will be required prior to performing.

(Items 6-9 approved by the MTA Board of Directors on July 24, 2010.)

## Performance/Technical Rules and Procedures

1. **Time:** Shows may not run longer than forty-five minutes. Timing begins when called by host site. Timing ends when the set is completely struck: the stage must be completely cleared.

The forty-five minute period includes the time for setting up the stage (including any offstage sound or lighting equipment brought to the site by the participating school), lighting and sound checks at Regional Festival, performing the play, and clearing the stage. At THE STATE FESTIVAL (MTA) you will have a thirty minute rehearsal time. All actors and set pieces must remain in the area behind the starting/finish line(s) designated by the host site until time begins, and return to that area before timing will stop. Set-up and strike are the sole responsibility of each participant. *If any production exceeds the forty-five minute time limit*, it cannot receive a Superior Rating or Best Production, advance to the State Festival or advance to the SETC Festival in March, but is still eligible for all other awards.

The time clock may be stopped at the discretion of the site coordinator if unforeseen and extenuating circumstances arise during the forty-five minute time allotment.

2. **Running the show:** Only students from the performing school and members of the host site crew are allowed in the sound/light booth or backstage during the run of the show. No non-students, directors or teachers may enter the booth, backstage area or communicate with their students in the booth by headset or otherwise during the run of the show except in case of a safety emergency. Teachers and technical directors may assist with load-in, and load-out **only**.
3. By entering the festival, each participant assumes responsibility for making arrangements with the author and/or publisher for the right to use the play they are performing and to pay any required royalties. The Southwest Division Festival, Southeast Division Festival, North Regional Festival and THE STATE FESTIVAL (MTA) nor the host site shall be held responsible for any unpaid royalties. Payment of royalties must be shown prior to performance.
4. **Technical requirements and limitations.** Each participant must provide all technical materials, such as set, hand and furniture properties, makeup, costumes, recorded music and special sound effects.

**The organizing committee for the MTA High School Play Festival has determined that some standardization in technical guidelines is desirable.** Therefore, each regional site, and the State Festival site will provide the following:

- a. Multiple isolated lighting areas.
  - b. One 20-amp outlet for use by participants to power their own equipment. Said equipment must be approved prior to the date of the Festival by the host site coordinator and must meet all applicable safety codes and regulations. The host site coordinator reserves the right to refuse to allow the use of a particular piece of equipment. Schools should bring their own extension cords.
  - c. One CD Player and one cassette deck. A mini-disc player may be available; check with host site coordinator.
  - d. Light effects and follow spots: While simple area lighting is provided, special lighting effects are allowed only within the limitations of the host site. Any lighting needs other than those listed here must be approved by the site coordinator in advance (two weeks notice), and any such equipment must be supplied by the participant. The placement and removal of these must be included in the allotted time. You will have a designated holding space where you will load in and strike to as part of your time. Your local host site coordinator will provide detailed technical specifications for their facility well in advance of the Festival.
  - e. One follow-spot may be provided at the local host site coordinator's option. The participant must provide the operator. Some technical assistance may be provided by the host site to show how things work but will not be available to run the follow spot for anyone's show. Your host site coordinator will notify you if this option will be available.
1. **Safety.** Participants must adhere to all state, federal, county, and/or city fire codes. Absolutely no fire, pyrotechnics, combustibles or other unreasonably dangerous matter may be brought into the host facility or used in the production. Violation of this rule is grounds for disqualification and immediate removal from the festival site.
  2. **Running Crew.** Each participant must provide adequate running crew to ensure swift set changes and proper cues for lights, etc. A student familiar with the production (i.e. stage manager) should be in the control room (or on headset) to call cues.
  3. Dressing rooms may be occupied no more than one show prior to your production.
  4. Participants may have five minutes to walk through the festival site's stage at the Regional Festival. The site coordinator and/or stage manager will schedule technical briefings at regular intervals during each regional festival. This is an opportunity for each participant to examine the stage

- prior to the performance time. You may put down spike tape during this walk through, but it must be taken up during your 45 min. time limit.
5. No recording devices are allowed during the performances, either video or audio.
  6. The entry's designated leader shall provide a one-page program to the site coordinator. This should indicate the title of the production, the author(s), publisher (if applicable), school, director, cast and production crew lists, time/place of play, and any special advisory notes (i.e. the use of strobe lights or loud noises). This will be used for the program for drama festival. Any pre-production services paid for or professional volunteers (people who would usually get paid for their work) must be listed in the Regional Festival program.
  7. Schools are encouraged to bring their own programs for their production also.
  8. Should the production contain any themes, language, activity, or subject matter that are not appropriate for all ages, a notice to that effect must appear in the program.
  9. The set should fit into a 10' x 10' space. Your set should be contained inside the imaginary walls of your 10x10 space. You may stack your set as high as safety allows, but it may not protrude from the box. This is a Regional Festival and THE STATE FESTIVAL (MTA) rule. The show chosen to represent MTA at SETC may add additional pieces to their set for their performance at SETC if they feel it necessary. All props that are not costumes or costume props (props worn by actors) must remain in the 10x10 box until they are told GO by the host.
  10. No non-student may sing, act or dance in the production. Any non-student musical accompaniment included in the production must be in a designated area, as approved by the site host (or at the State Festival, as approved by MTA) so as not to detract from the adjudicator's assessment of the production. Non-students may not "conduct" musical numbers. No non student may assist in any technical aspect during the running of the show or strike.
  11. The designated leader of the production may only be a theatre arts educator from the represented school. Anyone else involved in the production is not the "designated leader." Nothing in this paragraph should be construed to mean that guest artists cannot be involved with the production process.
  12. Schools cannot perform a play that was performed at their regional festival within the last three years. (The list of productions will be posted on the MTA website.)
  13. Schools cannot perform a play that was performed at MTA State festival within the last three years. (The list of productions will be posted on the MTA website.)

#### Additional Points for Hosts:

(added August 2009)

1. Participating schools will receive their adjudication forms at the awards ceremony along with their participation certificates.
2. The house and backstage will remain closed until all schools have had five minutes in the space and on the lighting board. This will be recorded by an unbiased timekeeper. The timekeeper will announce 2 minutes, 1 minute and 30 seconds. Schools will clear stage immediately.
3. Host sites will post directional signs backstage to assist in locating dressing rooms, rest rooms, etc.
4. Host sites will provide backstage workers to assist in directing students and answering questions.
5. Host sites are encouraged to provide a snack bar for participants. The host site can retain all proceeds from this service.

#### Adjudicator Information

(added August 2009)

- Adjudicators will not be affiliated with the host institution or another school/university in the region.
- Graduate students cannot be used as adjudicators.
- Adjudicators will be selected from schools outside of the hosts region. (North festival has to select adjudicators from the South region or out of State.) This is done to ensure that participating schools have an objective and impartial adjudication. It is important to bring in adjudicators that cannot be viewed as being partial to one group or another.
- Adjudicators will not be used at a regional festival for more than 2 consecutive years. After serving for 2 years, they must lay out for 1 year.
- Adjudicators will be instructed that they need to make full use of their time during their comments following a production. Please ask them to keep all comments relevant to the production and not bring personal stories into the allotted time. Each adjudicator should attempt to speak to how well the production adhered to the qualities described in the adjudication rubric.

**Breaking any of the rules above will result in not being eligible for the Dominic Cunetto Best Play Award at MTA or for being chosen as one of the top three schools at the regional level.**

## Rules of Etiquette for Performers, Crew and Audience Members

Students attending the regional festivals and the state festival must complete a “Code of Conduct” form. Teachers MUST review the “Code of Conduct” form with the students and discuss “theatre etiquette” with their students.

### Violation of these rules will result in:

- a. Students NOT following rules will not be allowed to continue at festival and/or not be allowed to participate the following year.
  - b. Schools found in violation of these rules will not be allowed to continue at the festival and/or not be allowed to participate the following year.
1. Students attending the Festivals must be accompanied by an adult from the school or organization they are representing. In the event of an emergency, special permission can be requested to use substitute supervision; however, all supervisors must be 21 or older. The site coordinator must be notified in advance of such situations.
  2. Once the house lights go out and a play begins, there should be no entering or leaving the theater until after the play ends unless an emergency. No flash photography, video or sound recording is permitted during the performance of any play. Violation of this rule will result in the removal of the individual from the Festival.
  3. There should be no talking backstage or in the audience during the performances or during the adjudicators’ critiques. Rudeness in any form will not be tolerated. Student behavior onstage, backstage, and in the audience must be courteous at all times. There will be no use of foul language at any festival site. Sponsors/ directors are expected to prepare students by informing of these standards: **no** food or drink in the theater, **no** feet on the seats, **no** hats, and **no** distractions from the performance. (We are training future audiences as well as performers, directors, designers and technicians.)
  4. There will be no smoking, use of other tobacco products, alcohol or drugs by students on the grounds of preliminary or state festival sites or at any times during the festival.
  5. Students are expected to participate in all festival activities. Students who fail to attend workshops, performances, etc. will be reported to their sponsor/director. Please be courteous and attentive to all performers and workshop artists. Students will be asked to leave the theatre workshop if they are disruptive.
  6. Any disruptive or inappropriate behavior may result in disqualification and/or dismissal from the grounds.

Each school should receive a copy of their adjudication scoring ballot and comments before they leave the Regional and State Festival. These should be given out after the awards ceremony.

## Regional Festival Awards

The following awards are presented to the participants.

- Play Rating Certificates: These awards are given to each participant.
  - Distinguished Play Award(s): These plays (top 3) advance to State.
  - Outstanding Direction
  - Best Actor
  - Best Actress
  - Best Supporting Actor
  - Best Supporting Actress
  - Ensemble Acting
  - Best Costume Design
  - Best Scenic Design
  - Technical Achievement
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- All- Star Cast – each school should receive at least one all star cast member. (All Star cast members should not receive another acting award, such as Best Actress. They should only receive one. Best Actor/Actress, Supporting Actor/Actress would be considered automatically to be part of the All Star Cast)
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- Overall Theatrical Experience Award –school contributing the most to the festival, showing general excellence in all areas of theatre production as well as displaying an attitude of cooperation throughout the festival. It can be given to anyone participating in the festival, not necessarily one of the top three schools. Does not HAVE to be school with highest score. Does not need to be considered a “4<sup>th</sup>” place award. (In the South this is the Glen Menna Award.) (modified in 2008)
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- Peer Choice Award – each school is given a ballot and ranks the shows in order of which one they enjoyed the most.
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- Theatre Arts Awards - A maximum of ten certificates may be awarded. Adjudicators may use these awards to create categories for special recognition in areas not otherwise provided for. Examples: Excellence in Make-up, Properties, Sound, Student Playwriting, Choreography etc.

## **State Festival Awards**

- Play Rating Certificates: These awards are given to each participant.
- Dominic Cunetto Award for Best Production
- Runner Up Best Play
- Outstanding Direction
- Best Actor
- Best Actress
- Best Supporting Actor
- Best Supporting Actress
- Ensemble Acting
- Best Costume Design
- Best Scenic Design
- Technical Achievement
  
- All- Star Cast – each school should receive at least one all star cast member. (All Star cast members should not receive another acting award, such as Best Actress. They should only receive one. Best Actor/Actress, Supporting Actor/Actress would be considered automatically to be part of the All Star Cast)
  
- Theatre Arts Awards - A maximum of ten certificates may be awarded. Adjudicators may use these awards to create categories for special recognition in areas not otherwise provided for. Examples: Excellence in Make-up, Properties, Sound, Student Playwriting, Choreography etc.