



Notes & News

CELEBRATING THEATRE IN MISSISSIPPI

Mississippi Theatre
Association

<http://www.mta-online.org>

October 2006

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Greetings all!

I hope that all of you had a restful summer and that you are all getting back into the swing of things.

But who am I kidding?! Restful schestful! We are theatre folk!

Hey Secondary Division, get ready for the North, Southeast, and Southwest High School Drama festivals! Big "THANK YOU!" goes to Mississippi State University and the University of Southern Mississippi for hosting the three festivals. It takes a lot of time, energy, and thoughtful planning to get the festivals going.

Mark your calendars for KCACTF, held at Mississippi State this year, in November.

There is also something new at MSU! The Southeastern Comedy Arts Festival is going on September 29-30. Improv groups from all over the southeast will gather for what promises to be an exciting event.

2007 is an AACT Fest year for community theaters. The community theater that advances from MTA will compete at SETC '07 in Atlanta. Two community theatres will advance from SETC to the national festival in Charlotte, June 18-23, 2007. In the meantime, I hope your seasons have started well. Be sure to let us know about your shows so

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Ole Miss to Host 2007 MTA Festival

Mark the date! January 11-14, 2007 is the date for the 2007 Mississippi Theatre Association's annual statewide festival.

Regardless of whether you are competing in the high school festival or the community theatre festival, there is something for you!

If you have never attended an MTA Festival or if it has been a while since you attended – seriously consider attending this year's festival!

The Gertrude Ford Performing Arts Center on the Ole Miss campus is an

exceptional venue for our 2007 festival and the Ole Miss faculty are preparing for an extraordinary festival.

Some people have the misconception that the MTA festival is just for those theatres competing. It isn't that at all. With an ever expanding list of opportunities for theatres, we have a Theatre for Youth Festival whose mission is to provide theatres (high school, community theatres as well as college/

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Kennedy Center Theatre Festival

Mississippi State University will host the state leg of the 39th Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival the first week of November. Productions traveling to Starkville include: *The Madwoman of Chaillot* - Mississippi State University; *The Flaming Guns of the Purple Sage* - University of Southern Mississippi; *The House of Bernarda Alba* - Mississippi University for Women; *Voices of a Storm*; *Katrina and Mississippi* - Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College-Perkinston; *Bad Axe* - William Carey University; and *The Firebugs* - Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College-Jefferson Davis. The order of performance as well as the

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exact start and end dates of the festival will be finalized soon and posted to the MTA web-page.

Make plans now to attend. All performances are open to the public. There are observer rates for colleges and universities as well as group rates for high schools.

Myrna Colley-Lee Donates Collection to MSU, Opens Exhibit

In January of 2006 you heard Myrna Colley-Lee speak about her career as a costume, set and interior designer.

In June, she opened an exhibit of her work at the Mississippi Museum of Art which will be open until October 15, 2006 and in August 2006 she donated her memorabilia, papers and contents of The Myrna Colley-Lee GladRags Costumes to Mississippi State University Libraries.

Colley-Lee designed the costumes for a play commis-

sioned by Bill Cosby and contributed to Eugene O'Neill's video production of "Long Day's Journey Into Night," not to mention dressing the likes of actor Kevin Kline and singer Linda Ronstadt.

The collection consists of scripts, photographs, breakdowns (what each character wears in each scene), rehearsal notes from the director, research, playbills, newspaper articles, and thank-you notes from cast members and production crews, as well as other

novelties. Copies of her costume renderings will be available in the collection as well.

Colley-Lee said she hopes her donation will help students and other library patrons learn more about theater.

"I'd like to think that they could be exposed to the design process, and understand a little bit about what they're seeing when they attend a theatrical production," she said. She added, "It would be nice to

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SETC News for Mississippi Theatres

SETC State Screening to be December 9

By Sam Sparks

The SETC State Screening Auditions for Mississippi and the Out of Region Screening Auditions will be held December 9 at Millsaps College in Jackson, Mississippi. The screening auditions are for college students who wish to be passed on to audition at the SETC Convention in Atlanta for summer and year-round acting work.



This year there are some important changes in the application procedure. All applicants will register for the auditions online through the SETC website. Students will upload all of their information, including their photo, and SETC will generate the application form. It is important to note that the online procedure is more efficient; however, students will not be able to complete it at the last minute. The verification process with the professors' signatures is now done through email, so it requires follow-up on the students' part.

The fee to audition is now \$35, which includes membership for in-state students into the Mississippi Theatre Association. This year if a student is passed on they will go back into the SETC system and register and pay for the SETC Convention, so that means no more money orders.

For more information, please visit www.mta-online.org or www.setc.org.

MTA Represented at Fall SETC Meeting

By Tom Booth

Mississippi and MTA were well represented at the fall Southeastern Theatre Conference meetings in Charlotte, NC September 8-10.

MTA President M. J. Etua, drama instructor at Louisville High School, Vice President Tom Booth, Executive Director of Tupelo Community Theatre and Sam Sparks, Technical Director at New Stage Theatre in Jackson were involved in activities ranging from board and committee meetings to times to network with theatre professionals from across the nation.

Booth is a member of the Endowment Committee and Etua is chair of the Diversity Committee. Both are members of the Financial Committee. Sparks is the Mississippi State Representative to SETC and serves on the Nominations and Auditions committees and the Keynote Emerging Artists of Promise Committee along with Etua.

Also attending the meeting was Shannon Robert, formerly of William Carey University and active member of MTA for many years. Shannon and her husband Paul Savas live in Jersey City, NJ and are both working in the theatre industry directing and designing. Shannon serves on the Advisory Council as the KCACTF Liaison. As you can see Mississippi is active in work of SETC and continues to serve the our home state.

Colley-Lee

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inspire students to attend theatrical productions."

The costume collection contains hundreds of costumes collected by Colley-Lee over the years and used for inspiration for her own work. Hundreds of costumes representing costumes from velvet dresses to 1980's hot pink leather miniskirts. It includes vintage lingerie, hats, sequined gowns, vintage women's suits and dresses, menswear, winter coats, and more.

Since Colley-Lee wants it to be used as a working costume collection, it will be housed and maintained by the TheatreMSU Department under the direction of Melanie Harris. To further Colley-Lee's vision of making the costumes widely available, TheatreMSU and the University Library will catalog the collection and develop a website to allow other theatres in the state to review and borrow materials from the collection on a

cost recovery basis.

According to Harris, "we are thrilled about having access to this extensive costume collection. We are in the process of cataloging the costumes but the process may take several months to complete." She added "we hope to have something online that will allow people to borrow from the collection in the coming months."

If you are unable to see Colley-Lee's exhibit at the Mississippi Museum of Art in Jackson, it will be available at Mississippi Museum of Art affiliate locations around the state. The first stop on the tour will be the Mississippi State University Libraries where it will be on display in the John Grisham Room from November through January 26, 2007.

For more information about Colley-Lee visit her website at <http://www.gladragdesigns.com>.



Myrna Colley-Lee, rendering for Gwendolyn Fairfax, Act I, *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Courtesy of the artist.



SECONDARY DIVISION

Two High Schools Chosen to Represent State in Scotland!

By Suzanne Allmon

Oxford High School and Tupelo High School have been chosen to perform as part of the American High School Theatre Festival in Edinburgh, Scotland. The American High School Theatre Festival is held as part of the Fringe Festival in Edinburgh, Scotland in August. To be chosen is a rigorous process of nominations, applications and videos, which then go before a board of experts who review the school's work and choose

from the top schools that were nominated. This is the first time that Mississippi will have two high schools representing at the same time.

According to Tupelo's Director, Debby Gibbs, "Tupelo High School was chosen to go last year, but because of Hurricane Katrina we missed that opportunity. American High School Theatre Festival was nice enough to work with us so that we could go this year

instead." This is a wonderful opportunity and learning experience for the students to be able to perform overseas. John Davenport, MTA Secondary Chair and Director of Oxford High School, says "My students are so excited! This is such an honor for us to represent our home state on the international stage. I know this will be a once in a lifetime opportunity for some of my students, and I am just so happy they have this chance."

John Neil Kelly of Flowood Wins MTA Scholarship

By Tom Booth

As many of you are aware one of the purposes of the Mississippi Theatre Association is to educate our members and the people of our state in the art of theatre.

The board of directors of MTA voted in 2005 to begin a scholarship program for high school students wishing to attend a Mississippi school of higher education to pursue a theatre related program of study.

The recipient was announced earlier this year at the state festival in Starkville and the award went to John Neil Kelly of Flowood.

Kelly is an honor graduate of Northwest Rankin High School, where he served as an officer for Thespian Troupe 5727 and was named Thespian of the Year and an Honor Thespian for more than 600 hours of theatre work. He has been involved at the Black Rose Theatre and is active on the drama team at his church.

For his senior project Kelly directed a production of *Our Town* made up high school and college students. He has been active in many other aspects of high school life from Beta Club, to the National Honor Society, Student Government, Choir, The Fellowship of Christian Athletes and the Peer Connection Student Mentoring Program.

When asked his thoughts about why he applied for the scholarship Kelly stated, "Theatre is what I love to do, to breathe, to be. I am planning on studying Theatre Education to provide other students with the same opportunities that I have had... Theatre has truly changed my life... It allowed me to find my true self."

We wish Kelly the very best as he begins his college career at the University of Mississippi.

If you are interested in applying for the 2007 MTA scholarship please visit our web site at <http://www.mta-online.org>.

Success of *Katrina Project* Continues

By Anita Boyd

The Katrina Project, last year's winner in the Southeastern division and ultimately the MTA festival winner for 2006, has continued to enjoy success as a production. The show, written by Michael Marks and McKenzie Westmoreland, is based on a compilation of stories, essays, and interviews about Hurricane Katrina, the storm which greatly impacted the Mississippi Gulf Coast and New Orleans last year.

After being named runner-up at SETC's 2006 festival, the group returned to Hattiesburg to prepare for additional performances, including a performance at the National Forensic League's National Award Ceremony in Dallas, Texas, in June. The show has booked future performances in Washington, DC, (Ford Theatre), December 1-7, 2006, and at the NEA Southeastern Minority Conference Senator, which Trent Lott and his wife will chair, in Memphis in February, 2007. Other bookings are pending. Another feather in the cap of it authors and performers is that show has been published in Playscripts.

Secondary Workshop Deemed a Success!

On September 9, secondary teachers met at the University of Mississippi for MTA's annual secondary workshop. University of Mississippi was a very gracious host to us.

The workshop leaders, the Secondary Workshop UM Costume and Scenic Design Staff, were absolutely extraordinary. They gave us great ideas and pointers on everything from wigs to painting techniques, and also shared some of their "tricks of the trade". This year we had the privilege of being able to tour the site for MTA - the Ford Center for the Performing Arts in Oxford - as an added perk.

According to some of the participants this was our best workshop yet! The workshop had a great group of participants and we hope to see them back next year and a lot more too!





2007 Festival Registration



Complete the form to renew membership and register for the 2007 Festival
OR **register ONLINE** at <http://www.mta-online.org>

Registration Deadline: December 15, 2006

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

E-Mail Address: _____ Phone: _____

Theatre or School Affiliation: _____

Please be sure to supply your email address. Festival schedule will be distributed via email and the MTA website.

Please renew your membership even if you cannot attend the festival.

Select One: _____ Secondary School Theatre _____ Professional Theatre
_____ College/University Theatre _____ Theatre for Youth (Children's)
_____ Community Theatre _____ Other

1.	MTA Membership Fee: Renew your membership even if you can't attend! Everyone participating in the festival must be a current member of MTA. Even if you are not attending the festival—please renew your MTA membership at this time and support your statewide theatre organization. ___ Individual: \$20.00 ___ College Student: \$10.00 ___ High School Student: \$10.00	\$ _____
2.	MTA Festival Registration Fee: Everyone participating in the festival must enter the festival by paying a festival fee. Festival fee includes the following: free admission to 12 productions, social function on Friday and Saturday nights, luncheon and the awards ceremony. (Add \$5.00 for On Site registration / Late registration): ___ Individual: \$25.00 ___ College Student: \$20.00 ___ High School Student: \$20.00	\$ _____
3.	Please indicate below if you wish to purchase a T-Shirt. T-Shirts must be pre-paid. T-Shirt \$10.00 Quantity: _____ Size: (S, M, L, XL, XXL) _____	\$ _____
4.	Donate to the MTA Scholarship Fund.	\$ _____
5.	High school educators can obtain Continuing Education Units (CEU) for participating in the MTA Festival. Register for CEUs if not attending with a school. \$35.00 for CEUs.	\$ _____
Total Amount Due (Total of Lines 1-5)		\$ _____

Mail Registration Form to:
Stephen Cunetto
1247 Bardwell Road
Starkville, MS 39759

Find hotel information on the MTA website.
<http://www.mta-online.org>



MTA Festival Offers Many Reasons for Community Theatres to Attend

By Lynn Nelson

“Awww, momma do I have to? WHY?” “Yes you do have to—it’ll be GOOD for you!” How many times in your childhood did you participate in an exchange like that?

As Community Theatre Chair this year, allow me to pretend I’m your momma for a few minutes. Why should you attend the MTA Festival in January this year?

Many people attend MTA only when they are participating in the competition portion of the event. However, there is much, MUCH more to the festival than just the competition.

Sure, it’s fun to present a play and watch the other performances. And it’s even better to win awards. I know from personal experience how much I learn from watching other theatre’s performances—innovative blocking ideas, new techniques for lighting, special effects ideas. The list could go on and on. And

then there’s what I learn from listening to the adjudicator’s comments. That by itself is enough to make it worth attending the festival even when you are not part of the competition process.

But wait, there’s more! Attending MTA allows you to network with people from theatres all over the state. And face it, we’re all a friendly bunch of people. And willing to help other theatres when asked.

Again, from personal experience I can tell you how much networking has helped my home theatre and me personally as an actor and a director. I’ve used my contacts to borrow props, set pieces and costumes.

And other theatres have borrowed items from us. I’ve also called on others in the state that I’ve met at MTA for their expert advice on any number of subjects. Networking is one of the best tools you will ever use to improve!

Then, there are workshops that offer new ideas and techniques in all sorts of areas. Many times our adjudicators (who are experts in their fields) also present workshops.

We’ve had workshops in the past on various subjects ranging from on-stage fighting techniques to mask making to script cutting. If there’s a subject you would like to learn more about, let us know. We’ll do our best to find an expert to present it.

And finally, MTA is a great way to make new friends and have loads and loads and loads of fun! To paraphrase an old saying, “When we work, we work hard. When we play, we play hard.”

And you know that thespians can play harder than just about any one else.

Come to MTA in January and find out for yourselves. You’ll be glad you did and learn a lot to help make your theatre better. And make Momma happy. See you there!

Gifts for the Gulf Coast

Dramatic Publishing Company and TheatreFolk Publishing donated hundreds of scripts to the theatres on the Mississippi gulf coast.

The scripts were donated to MTA who then donated them to the Harrison County Library System in Biloxi, MS with the understanding that they will be made available to all theatres on the coast. The scripts will be available at the Margaret Sherry Memorial Branch Library until the other branches re-open for business.

For more information about these scripts, contact:

Margaret Sherry Branch
2141 Poppas Ferry Road
Biloxi, MS 39532
228-388-1633

Please help us in thanking these companies for their generous donation and for assisting those theatres on the coast in need.

MTA Looking for Participants in Youth Festival

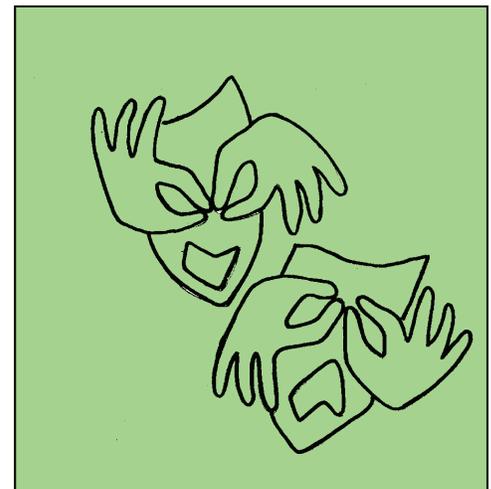
By Parker McMullan

The Theatre for Youth Festival is a one-day event designed to bring theatre to students who may not have the opportunity to experience it otherwise. Students are bused in from schools in the surrounding area. Each school usually attends two performances.

The audiences will rotate throughout the day in an effort to entertain as many students as possible. Due to this rotation, some performances have smaller or larger audiences than others. Most schools are required by their administration to be back on campus before their final bell, so the festival is normally completed before 2:00pm.

Any theatre (high school, community theatre, professional, college/university, etc.) who is a member (or joins as a result) of MTA may opt to participate in the Theatre for Youth Festival. Performance time should be limited to 30 minutes total.

Every performance receives critiques from a qualified adjudicator. Beginning this year, the adjudicator will select a best production & an all star cast.



The fee for participation is \$50 per organization. Any students/individual wanting to attend the rest of the festival need to pay the student/individual festival fee as well.

The deadline for registration is October 25. Space is limited, however, so early registration is advised. Visit www.mta-online.org for the appropriate forms.



President

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that they can be posted on the MTA calendar.

Check out New Stage Theatres website for their '06-'07 season. Under the guidance of Francine Reynolds, they have a great mix of shows. From musicals to classics, it promises to be a successful season.

The countdown is on for MTA 2007 at the Ford Theater on the campus of University of Mississippi! As an alumna of Ole Miss, I am excited to be able to go back to some of my theatre roots. I'll even get to see some of the friends who have inspired me the most.

Our scheduled speakers are MTA past president John Cannon and Actor John Maxwell. By the way, if you missed John Maxwell's one-man show *Mr. Faulkner, Do You Write?*, at New Stage this summer, then you truly missed a treat!

Blessings to all, M J

Festival

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university theatres) with the opportunity to showcase their youth oriented productions.

Colleges and universities have an opportunity to audition high school juniors and seniors, and for the first time community college students will have an opportunity to audition.

Theatre faculty from around the state setup booths to promote their program, entice students to attend their school and keep high school

teachers informed on their programs. Vendors from theatre supply companies also setup booths and offer workshops.

Workshops for participants provide opportunities for people of all ages to learn more about various aspects of theatre from acting to the technical.

And, there is the high school festival, the community theatre festival, the Individual Events and 10-Minute Festival, and yes, an opportunity to socialize!

We hope that you will make time for this year's festival and be a part of this festival!