



# Notes & News

CELEBRATING THEATRE IN MISSISSIPPI

Mississippi Theatre Association

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

October 2005

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Greetings from Starkville, home of the MTA 2006!

I hope that all are doing well, despite the devastation of Katrina. I ask all in our MTA family to continuously pray for the high schools, colleges and universities, and community theatres in the southern part of the state, as well the MTA members and their families who have been affected by the storm.

Although we have spent a few anxious weeks trying to get information from our friends in the south, we have slowing been getting relatively positive reports. Those who could contact us have said they were able to get their families to safety. Although, there has been a great deal of damage done to many high school, colleges, and community theatres, we have not heard of any major physical injuries, and we pray it remains that way. There are still many people and groups from whom we have not heard. If you have information, please let us know so we can put it on the listserv.

We, in Starkville, did not fair as badly as our southern friends did. Starkville Community Theatre suffered minimal damage to the downtown playhouse. But that has not slowed down our planning and preparations for the January convention.

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## Katrina Damages Mississippi Theatres

To say that Hurricane Katrina certainly left her mark on the Mississippi Gulf Coast and on Mississippi is a vast under-statement. In addition to thousands of homes being damaged by the winds and flooding, several theatres on the Mississippi Gulf Coast were damaged by hurricane Katrina and have been forced to close their doors or look for alternate venues.



St. Louis Little Theatre.

Judy Madden, President of Biloxi Little Theatre reported that Biloxi's theatre received considerable wind and flood/tidal surge damage. "While we know we are all very fortunate to be okay, and to some our theatre isn't a priority, we would really like to get back up and running as soon as we can" said Judy Madden, President, Biloxi Little Theatre. The 120 seat theatre that was housed in an old church received considerable wind and the basement was completely flooded. As a result of the flooding, mold is growing at a fast rate. In order to pay bills the Board made a decision to move forward with their next production. The old saying "the show must go on" takes on a new meaning as the cast begins rehearsals in St. Martin High School.

Bay St. Louis Little Theatre was destroyed but according to Board Chair Scott Darrag the theatre was not defeated. According to the Mississippi Arts Commission website Scott said, "I am determined to rebuild our playhouse (whether old or new) so that BSLLT can continue on. After all, the community WILL be there and will need to have access to the arts for entertainment sake. Photos to the right show what is left of Bay



There are similar stories all over the southern part of Mississippi. While the community colleges on the coast received some damage, high schools in the area were not so lucky. Deborah Craig, theatre teacher at Pearl River High School, reported that her school received a great deal of damage. Their band hall was destroyed and her theatre space is now being used as the band hall. She also reported that St. Stanislaus, Long Beach, Pass Christian and Bay St. Louis schools received a great deal of damage. Specifics are unknown at the printing of this newsletter.

In order to assist theatre organizations in their quest to rebuild, the Mississippi Theatre

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## Mississippi College / University Festival Hosted by MUW

Looking for some great entertainment in November? Don't miss an opportunity to see Mississippi colleges and universities full length productions during the *Mississippi Kennedy Center / American College Theatre Festival* November 2 -6, 2005. The festival of full length productions from Mississippi colleges and universities will be hosted by and held on the Mississippi University for Women campus.

According to festival host Peppy Bidy, Chair MUW Theatre Department, "The American College Theatre Festival allows students and faculty the opportunity to be part of an artistic community on a statewide, regional and national level. Audience members have the rare opportunity to see several theatre productions of various styles and genres back-to-back over the course of the week." Theatres interested in participating in the festival need to contact Charlie Bosworth at [cbos124@yahoo.com](mailto:cbos124@yahoo.com).

**MTA Festival 2006 — Continues**

Taking the lead from Biloxi Little Theatre — “the show will go on”. Plans are underway for 2006 Mississippi Theatre Association’s annual festival. The festival, which is being hosted by Starkville Community Theatre, Mississippi State University and Starkville High School, begins on January 12 with the College/University auditions for high school juniors and seniors and continues Friday through Sunday. The secondary and community theatre activities will be held at McComas Hall and the Theatre for Youth festival will be held at the College of Veterinary Medicine Auditorium.

According to Pattye Archer, local arrangements chair, “Starkville Community Theatre is very excited to be hosting the 2006 MTA Festival. Working with the Mississippi State University Department of Communication, the Starkville High School Drama Department and our wonderfully talented volunteers, we believe this year’s event will be the best ever.”

The festival provides something for everyone! College/University faculty will have an opportunity to attract students to their schools through the College/University Auditions. Community members and area schools will be invited to watch the **Theatre for Youth festival**, a free event on Friday. Nine high schools will compete for the top awards during the



Secondary Festival and seven or eight community theatres will compete in the Community Theatre festival.

The winner of the best production in both divisions will advance to the Southeastern Theatre Conference. High school students have an opportunity to audition for Mississippi Colleges and Universities, participate in the **10-Minute Play Festival** and a new event — an individual event festival that will feature monologues, duo acting, and scene acting. (More information will be posted on the MTA website in the coming weeks.) A variety of workshops will be offered for high schools students and community theatre participants and — there will be plenty of networking and socializing opportunities with parties scheduled for adults and students.

The MTA Board encourages theatres to attend the MTA festival even if you are not competing in the secondary or community theatre division. So much can be learned from watching the performances, meeting other theatre enthusiasts and attending the workshops. We hope that you will take this opportunity to join us.

Rather than sending two mail-outs, this newsletter serves as your call to register for the annual festival. Be sure to register and reserve your hotel rooms!

## High School Seniors and Juniors: College / University Auditions

High School seniors and juniors wanting to attend a Mississippi college or university should audition the MTA College/University Audition held on January 12, 2006 during the MTA festival. This is an excellent opportunity to test your skills at auditioning and to learn more about Mississippi colleges and universities.

As a part of the audition process, theatre faculty will provide a “talk back” session after the auditions and comment on what they observed during the auditions. This is a great way of learning more about the art of auditioning. If you know a high school senior or junior interested in theatre, be sure to give them this information. Forms will be available on the MTA website under Festivals.

*Colleges and Universities* are encouraged to attend and be a part of this process. To participate in the audition process – colleges/universities should download the online form from the MTA website.

## High Schools Encouraged to Attend Festival

The MTA festival is not just for high schools competing in the Secondary festival. Theatres can attend to observe the secondary festival and participate in the high school auditions, 10-Minute Play Festival, the individual events and workshops. To register your theatre, download the applicable forms from the MTA Festival website at <http://www.mta-online.org>.

Educators can obtain *Continuing Education Units (CEU)* for participating in the MTA festival.

## DONATE TO THE MTA HURRICANE KATRINA RELIEF FUND

FUNDS GO TO MISSISSIPPI THEATRES  
DAMAGED BY HURRICANE KATRINA.

SEND DONATIONS TO:

MTA KATRINA RELIEF FUND  
C/O STEPHEN CUNETTO  
1247 BARDWELL ROAD  
STARKVILLE, MS 39759

# Festival Registration



Complete the form to renew membership and register for the 2006 Festival OR **register ONLINE** at  
<http://www.mta-online.org>

**Registration Deadline: December 15, 2005**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Theatre or School Affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please supply email address above. Festival schedule will be distributed via email and the MTA website.**

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

<b>1.</b>	<p><b>MTA Membership Fee:                      Renew your membership even if you can't attend!</b></p> <p>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.</p> <p>____ Individual: \$20.00    ____ College Student: \$5.00    ____ High School Student: \$5.00</p>	\$ _____
<b>2.</b>	<p><b>MTA Festival Registration Fee:</b></p> <p>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):</p> <p>____ Individual: \$25.00    ____ College Student: \$20.00    ____ High School Student: \$20.00</p>	\$ _____
<b>3.</b>	<p><b>Please indicate below if you wish to purchase a T-Shirt. T-Shirts must be pre-paid.</b></p> <p>T-Shirt \$10.00    Quantity: _____    Size: (S, M, L, XL, XXL) _____</p>	\$ _____
<b>4.</b>	<p><b>Donate to the MTA Scholarship Fund.</b></p>	\$ _____
<b>5.</b>	<p><b>Donation to the MTA Hurricane Relief Fund. See website for details.</b></p>	\$ _____
<b>6.</b>	<p><b>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.</b></p>	\$ _____
<b>Total Amount Due (Total of Lines 1-6)</b>		\$ _____

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

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



## The Arts vs. Katrina

“Life beats down and crushes the soul and art reminds you that you have one.” This quote by Stella Adler was as true in the early 1900’s as it is today. With the recent Hurricane Katrina, many lives have been beaten down, battered and destroyed. By watching television, it started to appear that life in the United States as we knew it was coming to an end. Mass chaos was in the streets, gas lines were hours long, and the lack of attention to the needy, made us all thankful for what we have. Mississippi was not spared from the destruction, and some of our own towns, communities, and friends were directly affected. But as our communities began the slow process of building their lives again, there was, and is, hope among the rubble.

In this time of despair, the theatre community of Mississippi has been pulling together to help restore friendships, theatres, and lives that have been broken by the devastation. This teamwork has come from children’s theatres, secondary theatres, community theatres and regional organizations.

Actor’s Playhouse in Pearl, primarily a children’s theatre, is hosting a fundraising event on October 22 to benefit the MTA Hurricane Relief Fund. This will be a combined effort of Actor’s Playhouse with other theatres and individuals presenting snippets of shows from their upcoming seasons, singing, dancing, music, poetry reading, and show choir performances. All proceeds will go to benefit this fund, which will assist in the rebuilding of Mississippi Theatres.

Secondary schools have also taken a lead in this effort. Hattiesburg High School has had training with The University of Southern Mississippi’s Department of Oral History and Culture in interviewing techniques for oral history. These students were in the field while their schools were closed collecting data, both scientific, and anecdotal, for a permanent collection to be housed at USM. Their goal was to mount a docudrama using the information that they collect from evacuees and those whose lives have been impacted by the category 5 hurricane. The title is The Katrina Project: Hell and High Water. Through public performances, they hope to generate dollars for the hurricane relief effort. Also, The Blue Maskers of Pearl River Central High School are forwarding their April 30, 2006, performance box office receipts of Disney’s Aladdin, Jr. to the Katrina Relief fund.

Community Theatres are also helping in this healing process. Tupelo Community Theatre just raised over \$3,000 during their production of Always... Patsy Cline to give to North Mississippi evacuees from the Hurricane. 3/4 of the money is going to the Create Foundation, which they will match and distribute. 1/4 is going to Embrace MS Children, a

program that helps with school supplies for displaced students. The Center Players hosted a free production of Rehearsal for Murder for Metro-Jackson evacuees, and Christ Life Church provided free concessions. The attendees were “very” grateful and much discussion took place on what they had been through and how much the theatre experience meant to them during this time. Fondren Theatre Workshop and The Center Players worked together in sponsoring Off-Kilter’s SPORTANEOUS!: The Improv Athletic Games, a comedy extravaganza that offered laugh-out-loud fun that was clean enough for the whole family! This fast-paced comedy show featured 12 of the area’s best new improv talents. There were about 125 in attendance, and the group raised approximately \$5,000, which was donated to the American Red Cross Hurricane Katrina Relief Fund.

The Southeastern Theatre Conference has worked to evaluate the needs of Southeastern theatres, and has begun a Theatrical Equipment Drive. SETC was also contacted by a community theatre in California that wanted to “adopt” a theatre in the region damaged by Katrina. SETC contacted MTA who put them in contact with Biloxi Little Theatre president Judy Madden. As a result, Camino Real Playhouse in San Juan Capistrano, CA, donated the proceeds from their recent production to Biloxi Little Theatre.

As you can see, we have been beaten down, and our spirits have been crushed with the devastation that hit us, and still lies around. But with art, we have family and friends that pull together and pull us through. We have escape, and we have memories. It is in, and through the arts, that in times like these, we remember that we do, in fact, have a soul.

— Stacy Howell, Chair, Community Theatre Division

### See What’s Playing in Mississippi!

MTA has created an online calendar for Mississippi theatres to post their productions. This online calendar will provide theatres with additional publicity and provide a resource that theatre-goer can consult when traveling. MTA hopes this resource will facilitate theatres attending each others productions.

Each Mississippi theatre can request a username to post productions to the calendar. Please only request one username per theatre. Only productions should be added to the online calendar. Meetings, auditions, etc should not be posted.

To post your events to the calendar, request a username by going to the [http://www.mta-online.org/divisions/theatre\\_login.htm](http://www.mta-online.org/divisions/theatre_login.htm).

To view the calendar, go to the MTA website.



## MTA Scholarship Offered

For the third year the Mississippi Theatre Association will offer a college scholarship to an eligible high school senior. Interested students should go to the MTA website at <http://www.mta-online.org> for the scholarship application and submit it by **December 15, 2005**.

Any Mississippi high school student with at least a 2.5 GPA and who is planning to major in theatre or related major may apply for this \$500 stipend. The recipient must attend a Mississippi college, maintain a 2.5 GPA and complete 12 hours per semester (or equivalent quarter hours). The scholarship will be dispersed the second semester based on first semester grades and completed hours.

Don't miss this great opportunity to let MTA assist you with your continuing education!

**Note: If you know someone who might need this scholarship—please direct them to the MTA website for details.**

## Theatre for Youth Festival (Children's Festival)

This year's Theatre for Youth (Children's) Festival will be held on Friday, January 13, 2006 at the College of Veterinary Medicine Auditorium on the Mississippi State University campus.

We welcome everyone to participate in the Theatre for Youth (Children's) Festival this year. The Youth festival is a wonderful time for us to share our love for theatre with the elementary students in the surrounding area of Starkville, MS. Theatre students from the area will be bussed in to see the productions. According to Ronnie Miller, MTA 2005 festival host, "the youth festival brought in over one thousand students to see these productions. It is an excellent opportunity for under privileged children to experience live theatre."

The Youth Festival is open to all levels of theatre and is the only festival that is not competitive. We encourage everyone to get involved this year.

**To register your theatre to perform in the festival,** complete the online form at <http://www.mta-online.org>. For more information contact Ben Allmon at [ballmon@megagate.com](mailto:ballmon@megagate.com) or see the MTA website. Hope to see lots of you there!

## Southeast and Southwest High School Drama Festivals Combined for 2005

Due to the effect of Hurricane Katrina, the University of Southern Mississippi will host both the Southeast and Southwest High Schools for the High School Drama Festival. The festival will be held on November 30 - December 3, 2005 at the Performing Arts Center (PAC).

Southeast and Southwest festival coordinators Charlie Bosworth and Robin Aronson are working to combine the festivals for 2005. Although the festivals have been combined, three (3) representatives from the southeast and three (3) representatives from the southwest will be sent to the MTA Festival in January.

For more information contact Charlie Bosworth at [cbos124@yahoo.com](mailto:cbos124@yahoo.com) or Robin Aronson at [robin.aronson@usm.edu](mailto:robin.aronson@usm.edu)

## New Event added to MTA Festival

The 2006 MTA Festival will introduce an new aspect of showcasing the talents of our states secondary students: The *Individual Events Festival* will feature opportunities for monologue, duet and scene performances.



Please check the MTA website at <http://www.mta-online.org/>, for event descriptions, eligibility requirements, and deadlines.

## Opportunities for College Students Get your next acting gig at SETC!

Each March the Southeastern Theatre Conference hosts combined Professional Auditions for over 100 professional hiring theatres as part of their annual convention. SETC requires that all pre-professional actors (students and adults) be screened on the state level before being accepted to the auditions in March. Mississippi's Screening Auditions will be held on Sunday, December 4 at Millsaps College in Jackson.



For more information, contact SETC Screening Auditions Coordinator at [denise@setc.org](mailto:denise@setc.org) or by calling 601.953.3021, and you can download information and application forms at <http://www.setc.org/auditions/state/>.

Don't Miss the 2006 Mississippi Theatre Association's Festival  
January 12-15, 2006: Starkville, MS



*SETC, continued from page 1*

Association established the “**MTA Katrina Relief Fund**”. According to Stephen Cunetto, MTA Executive Director, “The fund was established to assist theatres that will need the financial support to rebuild or repair their theatres. Several members of the Board felt that since so much money was pouring into the region for individuals to rebuild their lives, we needed to do something to assist theatre organizations raise money.” MJ Etua, MTA President indicated that all of the funds raised will be distributed to theatres in Mississippi that were damaged by the storm.

**Theatres are encouraged to do what they do best – perform. Consider using your talents to provide a diversion for evacuees and raise funds for the “MTA Relief Fund” or the organization of your choosing.**

Deborah Craig, theatre teacher at Pearl River Central High School, notified MTA that her school plans to donate the proceeds of their January 22 performance of *Aladdin* to the MTA Katrina Relief Fund.

**Renew Your MTA Membership Today!**

*President, continued from page 1*

damage to the downtown playhouse. But that has not slowed down our planning and preparations for the January convention.

I recently returned from the SETC fall meeting in Charlotte, North Carolina. The compassion and support they are showing is wonderful. A number of things are in the works towards aiding those theatres in the areas hardest hit.

For the 2006 festival, we would like to introduce a new phase of showcasing our talented students. At the January convention, the Secondary Division will offer an individual event festival that will feature monologues, duo acting, and scene acting. Check the MTA

website in the coming weeks for this exciting new opportunity for our young actors.

This year, SETC will offer four "Keynote Emerging Artist of Promise Award" for a deserving high school student. The awards will go to scholarly students who show a strong interest in theatre arts and would like to experience SETC. Each of the recipients will receive a one-year student membership in SETC, a room during the festival, the March convention registration fee, and a ticket to the banquet. Information will be on the MTA and SETC websites in October.

Remember to keep the arts alive in Mississippi!

MJ Etua