



2011 MTA Festival Held at Riley Center

The 2011 MTA Festival brought to Meridian over 550 people, 15 plays, over 14 workshops, 2 staged readings, exhibitors, and more. Although we have been to Meridian many times, this year marked the first time the MSU Riley Center hosted the 4-day theatre festival. With this being a new venue for our festival, we tried to prepare the host organizers and Riley Center staff for the festival weekend. But, alas, words can't explain all that happens over the long weekend. Thanks to the dedicated staff and volunteers, the Riley Center turned out to be an excellent venue for the festival. We are indebted to the dedicated and hard-working staff members at the Riley Center and the volunteers from The Company of Angels and Meridian High

School. Ronnie Miller, Elliott Street, Steve Nabors, and Elizabeth Thomas worked many long hours planning the festival, making calls and looking for ways to make this a memorable experience for attendees.

This year's festival included a wide range of productions in both the community theatre and the high school divisions. Community theatre productions ranged from classics such as *Antigone* to new works like *Unshelved* and *At the Floating Palace*.



In talking with the adjudicators, it was obvious that they were very impressed with the quality of the productions

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MTA Congratulates SETC 2011 Participants and Winners

Over 4,000 people descended on downtown Atlanta to participate in the 2011 Southeastern Theatre Conference. After many productions, auditions and workshops, everyone attended the awards banquet to hear the results of the festival.

I am very pleased to announce that Mississippi did very well! We were very well represented by Just Over the Rainbow Theatre, Starkville Community Theatre, Starkville High School and Oxford High School. These theatres attended and represented MS after having been passed on through the MTA Festival in January. WINGS also participated in the Fringe Festival, and DeSoto Central High School participated in the Theatre for Youth Theatre. Congratulations to all of these theatres for their excellent work.

Congratulations to Tom Booth (Tupelo Community Theatre) who was elected as Treasurer for SETC. He will serve on the Executive Board of SETC.

Not only was Mississippi well represented by some wonderful productions, we were also very well represented by workshop presenters and others serving in an official capacity at SETC. Lynn Nelson (Tupelo Community Theatre) served as Community Theatre Chair; Suz Allmon (Oak Grove High), Secondary Division Vice Chair; Lyle Tate (Starkville Community Theatre) served as Community Theatre Festival Vice Chair; John Davenport (Oxford High) served as Undergraduate Auditions Coordinator; and Lee Crouse (MUW) served as Movement Chair. Robin Carr (USM) is the Chair of the Voice and Speech Committee and brought Patsy Rodenburg in as the first Featured Guest Artist. Michael Barnett (UM) is Vice Chair of the Design/Tech Commission; Carey Hansen (UM) is chair of the SETC Costume Scholarships and presides over the Design South costume panel.

Congratulations to everyone who participated in SETC 2011.

The awards in the community theatre division from MS include:

- Runner Up Best Production, Starkville Community Theatre
- All Star Cast Members: JORTS' Ruth Ann Black ("Daisey") and Michael Marks ("Hoke") from *Driving Miss Daisy*; Madeline Golden ("Vernadet") from *Dixie Swim Club* (Starkville Community Theatre)
- Best Ensemble (Cast of Starkville Community Theatre's *Dixie Swim Club*)
- Best Hair and Wigs (Jansen Fair, Starkville Community Theatre)

The awards in the high school division from MS include:

- Best Supporting Actor — Rex Ames, Starkville High
- All Star — Hal Sullivan; Davis Richardson (Starkville); Joseph Kelly and Colin Shutes (Oxford)
- Best Interpretation of a Classic — Oxford High School
- Best Dramaturgy — Starkville High School

From The President

MAY 2011

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Spring is already here! It seems just like yesterday that we were in Meridian at the beautiful Riley Center having another wonderful festival. Time surely is flying by this year and I hope everyone is having a wonderful theatrical season. We had a wonderful time in Meridian and want to thank once again the people who made it a great success! Company of Angels Theatre, the Resident Company of the Historic Temple Theater, and our outstanding Festival Coordinators Ronnie Miller, Elliot Street, Elizabeth Thomas, and Steve Nabors worked endless hours to help us have the great festival we had this year. Not to mention all the wonderful people in the wings, our volunteers that keep everything moving right on track-



we are so grateful for the support!

We are so proud of the productions that we sent to SETC this year to represent Mississippi. SETC was held in Atlanta this year, and Mississippi's productions definitely held their own. We were well represented by Just Over the Rainbow Theatre (JORT), Starkville Community Theatre, Starkville High School and Oxford High School. WINGS and Desoto Central also participated in the Theatre for Youth Festival. Congratulations to these theatres for their excellent work.

I am so proud that our wonderful Denise Halbach was honored for her years of service to her state, region, and SETC by receiving the Lifetime Achievement Award. We are so proud of you and the work you have done and continue to do!

We are really looking forward to the upcoming festival that will be held on the coast next year. The board is working hard on the details and hope to see you there in January!

~ Suzanne Allmon, President

Silent Auction Benefits MTA Scholarship Fund

MTA's first silent auction to benefit its scholarship fund was a tremendous success. We raised more than \$800—not bad for our first effort!

Groups and individuals from across the state donated a variety of items ranging from "Broadway Cares" items to crystal stemware to lighting from Theatrical Lighting Systems to signed copies of books by famous authors.

Perhaps the most exciting contribution to the auction was from Meridian native Sela Ward, who did an original piece of art for the auction—an oil pastel on paper.

The money from these auctions goes to the MTA scholarship fund, the winner of which receives a \$2,000 scholarship paid out over four years. High school seniors who plan to pursue a theatre-related major at a Mississippi college or university and who are interested in applying for the scholarship should go to the MTA web site mta-online.org to apply.

The MTA scholarship committee currently consists of Lee Dempsey, Janice Weaver, and Thomas Hardy, chair. We plan to hold another auction at next year's festival, and we encourage MTA members to be generous again and donate items to be auctioned off. Anyone interested in donating something should contact Thomas Hardy at tdhardy@comcast.net. The earlier we get items to auction off, the sooner we can put them on the MTA web site to drum up interest in them.

We are already negotiating for items from celebrities



who are Mississippi natives, and we will post these items on the MTA web site as soon as we have details.

So come on fellow MTA members! Let's donate things to the auction and help keep our scholarship fund growing! The future of Mississippi theatre depends on us.

Tonya Hays Wins Association's Cowboy Maloney Award

The Mississippi Theatre Association Board of Directors has selected Tonya Hays to receive the Cowboy Maloney Award.

This award is given to an individual who has significantly added to the successful operation of the MTA and has promoted theatre throughout Mississippi. The board looks at actions that reflect a positive image, regional recognition, long tenure and program establishment and/or administrative service.

Hays has served the MTA as Vice President and President as well as creating the 10-Minute, Playwriting and Theatre for Youth initiatives, while also serving as chairman of these divisions.

She was awarded an Artist's Fellowship in 2000 from the Mississippi Arts Commission for the



writing and production of the theatre for youth play *Dragon Dreams*, which focused on the myths and legends of China. She recently signed a contract with Dramatic Publishing to publish her one-act version of *The Trojan Women*.

Hays was recognized by the President's Committee on the

Arts and the Humanities with the Coming Up Taller Award, which she received from Laura Bush at the White House. The Southeastern Theatre Conference presented her the Sara Spencer Award for her work in theatre for youth. She has also received a Governor's Award and has had numerous Key Award students as recognized by the SETC.

Hays is the director of the WINGS Performing Arts Program at the Lynn Meadows Discovery Center in Gulfport, Miss. WINGS is a program dedicated to nurturing talent and spirit in young people.

"I believe theatre is the most powerful tool for changing lives and the way we view life," Hays said in her artist statement. "I hope my work inspires, educates and promotes understanding."

Paula Mabry Receives First Community Theatre Award

The first recipient of the MTA's Outstanding Contribution to Theatre in Mississippi was presented to Paula Mabry of Starkville during the MTA awards ceremony in January. This award was established in 2010 by the MTA Board of Directors as a means of recognizing the outstanding contributions that our members make throughout the State of Mississippi.

Mabry was nominated by Starkville Community Theatre not only for her contributions to Starkville Community Theatre but also for her work as a teacher at Starkville High School and the MSU Summer Scholars program. Alison Stamps noted in her nomination letter that "her ongoing devotion to outreach for Starkville Community Theatre is the main reason that she is the perfect candidate for recognition. Paula represents all that we need to keep our programming strong and inspire individuals to become involved in theatre, especially in the

realm of community theatres."

In addition to serving on a wide variety of committees at SCT, she has directed 9 main stage productions for SCT and 2 MTA festival productions and won the Best Director Award for both productions. During her 35-year tenure in the Starkville School District she directed 15 productions for the high school as well as directed the MSU Summer Scholars production for 24 years. She has also served on the Mississippi Alliance for Arts Education and the Starkville Area Council.

According to Stamps, "Her hard work and devotion often go unrecognized, and SCT wants to take this opportunity to show her that we, but more importantly the community and state, acknowledge all of her contributions to theatre. She is not just a member of SCT; she is the nurturing resource for all of Starkville, the surrounding community, and the state."



Stephen Cunetto, a former student and long-time friend, presented the award to Mabry during the MTA awards ceremony. During the presentation Cunetto noted that the MTA Officers felt that Mabry was most deserving of this award and they were thrilled to be able to recognize her for her contributions and her devotion to her craft.

To nominate someone for this award visit the MTA website.

MTA Heads to the MS Gulf Coast in 2012



It has been years since MTA has been on the MS Gulf Coast; so MTA plans to have the festival in Gulfport and other locations in the area in January 2012. Ryan Pierini, Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College, is the local arrangements coordinator and will be working with theatres all across the Mississippi coast to host the theatre festival.

The last time we were on the coast was in 2004 when our main host site was Biloxi Middle School. This year we are fortunate to return to Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College, Jefferson Davis campus.

If you are interested in assisting with the local arrangements, please contact Ryan Pierini at ryan.pierini@mgccc.cc.ms.us or Tonya Hays at tshays777@aol.com. We appreciate Ryan and Tonya for taking on this responsibility and for bringing MTA back to the Mississippi coast. Mark your calendars for MTA 2012 – January 12-15, 2012.

Call for Scripts for the 2011 MTA Playwriting Competition

Playwriting is a unique discipline. It gives a writer the hope of having his/her words realized by others – literally putting words into the hands of directors and the mouths of actors. It's a truly collaborative art form, and one we're proud to celebrate at the Mississippi Theatre Association festival. Since 2007, MTA has been issuing a call for original scripts by Mississippi playwrights. Our competition has two divisions – a youth division, for students under the age of 18; and an adult division, for playwrights 18 and above.

The winner of each of these two categories receives a staged reading at the annual MTA festival, including a response from an established playwright (the past two

years, award-winning playwrights Mark Dunn and Gary Garrison each took a turn serving as the final judge and respondent); free MTA festival registration – and a cash prize!

All Mississippi playwrights are encouraged to submit their one-act plays to this competition. We know you have stories to tell, and an important part in moving from page to stage is submitting your work.

Share your scripts, and start weaving your words into the fabric of Mississippi's rich literary tapestry! Submissions are accepted April 1-October 1; the winner will be announced in December, with their work and award presented at the 2012 MTA festival in January 2012.

To submit your entry or review



the entire rules, visit www.mta-online.org and click on "Playwriting Competition."

Questions about the adult playwriting competition? Contact Beth: beth_kander@yahoo.com

Questions about the youth playwriting competition? Contact Tonya: tshays777@aol.com

**Make your donation today to support
the Mississippi Theatre Association Scholarship Endowment:**

MTA Scholarship Endowment
c/o CREATE Foundation, Inc.
P.O. Box 1053
Tupelo, MS 38802

**We need your help reaching
our goal of \$20,000.
No amount is too small.**

Using Copyrighted Music in Theatrical Productions

Does your theatre use music in your productions? Is music used during intermission? Have you ever used music to underscore a poignant moment during a production? If you answered yes to any of these questions – did you consider getting copyright permission?

As with using any copyrighted work, permission must be secured by all types of theatre organizations including community theatres, school theatre, professional and university theatres, in order to use copyrighted works including using the music within a production, revue, cabaret, or musical. By obtaining a license, the theatre has entered into an agreement with the rights holder to perform the work and provide the copyright holder with payment. Just as theatres pay for the rights to perform a copyrighted play, theatres must also consider the use of music in their productions to ensure that they have a legal agreement that provides them with the rights to perform the music.

In a good faith effort to comply with copyright laws, many theatres have elected to get an ASCAP (American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers) or BMI (Broadcast Media, Inc.) license to cover their use of music. ASCAP and BMI are performing rights

organizations established to work with composers, songwriters and publishers to make their works available to entities interested in using their music. These organizations have the right to license their works to other entities to perform their music in non-dramatic settings. However, contrary to popular belief, ASCAP licenses do not provide theatres the right to use music during the course of a production or to cover the use of music in a cabaret or revue. The key to understanding an ASCAP license is understanding the term “non-dramatic” use of the music. An ASCAP license only provides a theatre the right to use music during pre-show, post-show or intermission. It does NOT give the theatre the right to use music during a production to enhance the moment.

We have all seen it—as the lovers approach for the climatic kiss, music begins to play and swells as the moment becomes more passionate. This can certainly be an effective ploy to further engage the audience, but first secure the rights to the music or use music that is in the public domain.

In order to use copyrighted music in this fashion a license is required. To secure the rights, the theatre must contact the rights holder. This can

be a very time-intensive process tracking down the rights holder and, depending on the songwriter and publisher, it could be expensive.

So, as you work on your next production, whether it is a straight play and you want to use music to add to the dramatic moment or a musical revue of favorite songs or a full musical production – don't violate copyright laws and put your organization at risk of a lawsuit. Either get a license or find music that is in the public domain.

To learn more about using music in a theatrical production visit these sites.

AACT FAQ:

http://www.aact2.org/resource/resmgr/docs/ascap_q_a09.pdf

10 Reasons to Not Use Copyrighted Music:

<http://www.theatreface.com/profiles/blogs/ten-reasons-to-not-use>

ASCAP FAQ:

<http://www.ascap.com/licensing/licensingfaq.html>

Public Domain Music:

<http://www.pdinfo.com/>

Festival

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and admitted that it was a very difficult decision. The adjudicators were very complimentary of the entire festival and commented multiple times on the professionalism, hospitality and the programming that was provided throughout the festival. It is always great to hear positive comments coming from individuals who run similar festivals in other states.

Judith Stevens-Ly, at the recommendation of our friend Gary Garrison, was our final adjudicator for the playwriting competition and attended the festival to lead a playwriting discussion and to lead the talkbacks following the staged readings of the winners of the youth and adult playwriting

competitions. The workshop was attended by youth and adult playwrights interested in learning more about playwriting and the business of getting published. This portion of the festival was funded by a grant from the Mississippi Humanities Council.

The festival included a wide variety of workshops including workshops on acting for film, kinesthetic response, theatrical lighting, and vocal techniques. The festival also included a Community Theatre Summit that brought together community theatre leaders from around the state to engage in a discussion about the state of community theatres in Mississippi.

At the end of the weekend, adjudicators made their final decision, and awards were presented to the winners. For a complete listing of the awards presented visit the MTA website at <http://www.mta-online.org>.

Shakespeare Brought to a New Generation in Jackson

New Stage Theatre's full-length production of *Twelfth Night* was held at the Jackson Academy Performing Arts Center February 7-16, while the theatre was in an exclusive "Shakespeare in High School Residency" at Jackson Academy and was part of Shakespeare for a New Generation, a national initiative sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts in cooperation with Arts Midwest.

New Stage Theatre is one of 40 nonprofit, professional theatre companies that received a grant of \$25,000 to participate in Shakespeare for a New Generation from June 1, 2010-May 31, 2011. Part of the NEA's Shakespeare in American Communities initiative, Shakespeare for a New Generation introduces middle- and high-school students to the power of live theatre and the masterpieces of William Shakespeare. Managed by Arts Midwest, the program has benefitted more than 1.5 million students and their teachers with live performances and educational activities since the program began in 2003.

New Stage was in full residence at Jackson Academy



beginning in January of 2011, but staff from New Stage began presenting classroom and production sessions in October 2010. While in residence, staff conducted Shakespeare workshops, consulted in set construction, and conducted sessions in drama classes. Tickets were also given to four JPS schools – Jim Hill High School, Lanier High School, Siwell Middle School, and North West Middle School. These schools received a Stand Up with Shakespeare workshop with Francine Reynolds and the cast of *Twelfth Night*. The production SchoolFest matinees sold out completely, more than 4,000 students attended the performances from across the state.

Cast of *Dixie Swim Club* meets Playwrights at SETC

During the 2011 Southeastern Theatre Conference (SETC), Starkville Community Theatre's cast of *The Dixie Swim Club* had the privilege of meeting the play's authors - Jessie Jones, Nicholas Hope & Jamie Wooten. Jones contacted Lyle Tate, production director, a few weeks prior to SETC to say that she, Hope and Wooten would love to meet the cast/crew and asked them to stop by the Dramatist Play Service, Inc., booth at the conference, where they were signing copies of their scripts. Tate said "We thoroughly enjoyed getting to meet these fun, genuine, kind people, who made a special effort to make US feel special on the day of our performance at SETC."



(front row, left to right) Jessie Jones, Madeline Golden, Lyle Tate; (second row, left to right) Cindy Ruff, Terry McDowell, Debbie Dunaway, Marianne Ulmer; (third row, left to right) Nicholas Hope, Jamie Wooten.

Create your own calendar and share your dates with the state!
Visit www.mta-online.org/1370 for details.

Historic Lyric Theatre Receives Facelift and Honor



In the entertainment business, facelifts for older actresses are not uncommon. The success may vary, depending on the performer and the professionals working on her! The Lyric, home of Tupelo Community Theatre since 1984, is pleased to show off her “new face.” Recent work on the “grand dame” has restored windows, plaster, and drivet on the facade and repainted the building with a bold and vibrant art deco theme in five colors. The marquee was remodeled by repairing the metal frame, repainting the marquee itself, and adding eye-catching neon. The project is topped off by a historic plaque, recently unveiled at TCT’s 40th Anniversary celebration, which honors the groups fourteen original founders.

As TCT was preparing to begin work on the building in 2010 they were asked to allow the Lyric to

serve as the image for The 2011 Governor’s Awards for Excellence in the Arts. These awards are presented annually to outstanding writers, artists, performers, craftsmen and educators who have made significant and lasting contributions through their work as well as to corporations or organizations on the basis of their dedication to arts advancement. To commemorate the event each year, the Commission prints a poster for the Governor’s Awards. The poster boasts photography highlighting the influence the arts have on government, from a rose chandelier at the Governor’s Mansion to a Native American copper breastplate found in Mississippi. The current series of posters feature arts facilities across the state that has received a grant through MAC’s Building Fund for the Arts.

Two Theatre Students Advance to National KCACTF

by Tearanny Street
University of Southern Mississippi

Two University of Southern Mississippi theatre students are heading to Washington, D.C., in April as national finalists for the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival (KCACTF).

Cody Stockstill of Gulfport, Miss., and Thomas Sowers of Starkville, Miss., advanced to the national festival as finalists after attending the KCACTF Region IV event in Daytona Beach, Fla. KCACTF provides professional feedback for the work theatre students do in department plays. A total of 19 students and five faculty members were nominated for KCACTF Region IV in Daytona Beach.

At the regional conference, students have the opportunity to share their work with colleagues from the 10-state region and to compete for national recognition. Only eight designers from the entire country win the awards in each category and advance to the national festival.

Stockstill, a third-year master of fine arts in scenic and costume design student, was nominated in two

design categories, but won the Barbizon Award in Scenic Design for his work on the Department of Theatre and Dance’s production of *The Learned Ladies* that was performed during the fall semester.

“I, along with other students from the program, went to Daytona Beach to compete in the regional festival. I took two of my designs completed here and displayed my work and my process to working professionals in the design area,” Stockstill said.

Sowers, a senior sound design major, was also nominated for two sound design categories, but took home the Sound Design Award for his work on the department’s production of *Marat/Sade* last semester.

“*Marat/Sade* takes place in the bathhouse of an asylum in 1808, so I had to make a lot of steam hisses, pipe groans and water dripping sounds to complete the space,” said Sowers. “It’s really an incredible honor to represent our university and state.”

This is the second consecutive year that Sowers advanced to the national festival in sound design. “It felt great to win at regionals especially for the second year in a row,” said Sowers. “Now I get to go back and defend my title.”

Other 2011 festival sponsors include Ida Cunetto, Mississippi Writer's Guild, Theatrical Lighting Systems, Inc., Bob & Karen Rea, Citizens Bank of Meridian, New-South Ford-Nissan.



Mississippi Theatre Association
 1247 Bardwell Road
 Starkville, MS 39759

Denise Halbach wins SETC Suzanne M. Davis Award

During the 2011 The Southeastern Theatre Conference the association awarded the 2011 Suzanne M. Davis Memorial Award winner to Mississippi's own Denise Halbach. The Davis Award, SETC's most prestigious honor, is established to recognize one member each year for distinguished service to SETC.

Denise Halbach's involvement in SETC spans over three decades. Her service to the organization

has been all encompassing with involvement in all five divisions of the organization, including directing the production that won the 2010 Community Theatre Festival in Lexington. She is a former SETC President and has served two terms as secretary and administrative vice-president. She has chaired and been a member of numerous committees – the auditions committee, the Keap Committee to only name two of

the vast number - all of which have benefited from her knowledge and experience, according to Alan Litsey, Board President.

"The energy and excitement of the Southeastern Theatre Conference has continued to be inspirational to me in my work and I consider SETC's 4,000 plus members to be some of my dearest and closest friends," Halbach said.

Mississippi Theatre Association Board of Directors

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