



Coahoma Community College

Coahoma County Higher Education Center

Cutrer Mansion

3240 Friars Point Road

Clarksdale, MS 38614-9799

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August 16, 2024

Dear Mississippi Theater Educators:

My name is Jen Waller, and I am writing on behalf of the Mississippi Delta Tennessee Williams Festival (MDTWF) held every October in Clarksdale, Mississippi. I serve as festival director and have been on the leadership team since 2018.

With this letter, I am writing to invite you and your students to participate in our annual **Student Drama Competition** to be held on **Saturday, October 19, 2024**, starting at 9 am at the Coahoma County Higher Education Center/Cutrer Mansion, 109 Clark Street, Clarksdale.

We offer trophies to student winners and prize money to the winning theater programs. Layla Young of StoryWorks Theater Company (<https://www.storyworkstheater.org/who-we-are>) will serve as our coordinator for the Student Drama Competition again this year. We would love for your school theatre program to participate this year.

**For 32 years now, our festival has celebrated the life, work, and legacy of
one of the greatest American playwrights of all time,
Tennessee Williams.**

Williams was connected to Clarksdale through his maternal grandparents, the Rev. and Mrs. Walter E. Dakin, and spent his summers here as a child. In his memoirs, he wrote that his grandparents were “the source of the greatest support and kindness” to him. His affection for them is reflected in his frequent references to Clarksdale and the MS Delta throughout his works.

During our festival, we bring together professional actors, Williams scholars, English/Humanities experts, students from around the State, and Williams enthusiasts from around the world. We strive to offer our visitors a weekend filled with learning, sharing, and fun.



We also are pleased to share that our festival is always free and open to the public. The dates for the **32nd Annual MS Delta Tennessee Williams Festival** are **October 17-19**, Thursday through Saturday. This year, we are focusing on the apprentice play *Spring Storm*.

Williams wrote this play, set in the fictional town of Port Tyler, Mississippi, in 1937-1938 while finishing his undergraduate degree in the theater department at the University of Iowa. The play is about the unrequited love of four young people in a small Delta town near the Mississippi River which closely resembles Clarksdale. The play features local landmarks in Coahoma County such as Moon Lake, Friars Point, the Carnegie Public Library and St. George's Episcopal Church. It is also filled with character types and story elements that Williams would develop in several of his later plays.

The festival will also feature a performance of *Spring Storm* by the Tennessee Williams Theater Company of New Orleans, directed by Salvatore Mannino, on Saturday afternoon as the final porch play performance, which will take place around 4:00 pm.

Our goal is for the Student Drama Competition to be a mostly in-person event, but we are considering a virtual option for those schools that cannot make the journey to Clarksdale. Let us know if that is something you are interested in.

I have attached a copy of the **Intent to Participate** and the **Registration Form** to this email. The Intent to Participate form is due back to me on **September 19** and the Registration is due back on **October 1**. The material performed must be from a Tennessee Williams play (full-length or one-act). Students are judged on acting ability, movement, voice (such as how audible and articulate they are), memorization and stage presence. The form and this letter should give you all of the information that you need to know to participate, but feel free to reach out to me if you need any additional information.

In closing, please know that we have a wonderful and impactful weekend planned that I know you will enjoy; however, we do not have our full schedule posted yet. We are still finalizing the details and hope to have it up on our website in early September. To receive email updates and see additional information on festivals past, go to our festival website, <https://deltawilliamsfestival.com/>.

Thank you for all the work that you do every single day for students around the great State of Mississippi. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Very best regards,

Jen Waller

Director, Mississippi Delta Tennessee Williams Festival