



# Community Theatre Guidelines

## Eligibility

Any amateur community theatre company is eligible to participate if it meets the following criteria:

1. For competition at the Regional and National levels, “amateur community theatre” is characterized by its operation as a “non-profit organization.”
2. The community theatre must have been organized in Mississippi for at least one year prior to the state festival and must have produced at least two (2) shows prior to their state entry.
3. For establishing the date a community theatre was organized, documents acceptable by AACT include the organization’s charter and/or the organization’s bylaws.
  - a. These documents must be sent to the Community Theatre Chair prior to competing in the MTA Festival.
  - b. Any theatre advancing from MTA risks disqualification if its organizational structure was not in place twelve (12) months prior to their participation in the state festival.
  - c. The community theatre must have a decision-making Board from its community; or, in the case of a community theatre that is run by city/county recreational departments, it has an advisory board from its community. A community theatre connected with a university, college, or military theatre must have a governing board from the community.

- d. The community theatre must be characterized by its operation as a “non-profit organization,” with full 501(C)3 status registered with the state of Mississippi. Any theatre advancing from MTA risks disqualification if they do not meet the “not for profit” standard established by AACT.

## **Not Permitted to Perform**

1. Actors that are active members of Actors Equity and receive more than one-quarter of their annual income from work as actors.
2. Any person who receives more than half of their annual income from work as an actor.
3. The National host theatre or any group affiliated therewith.
4. Once a play is in rehearsal for the state festival competition, actors and technicians may not be paid, directly or indirectly, to rehearse or perform in that production.
  - a. This does not preclude members of the “production staff”, such as directors, designers, costumers, technical directors, etc. from receiving normal remuneration so long as no part is paid specifically for their “hands-on” production efforts.
  - b. Musicians who only provide accompaniment for production, and do not perform, directly or indirectly, are exempt from this requirement (i.e. they may be paid).

## **What May Be Presented**

1. Productions entered in a Festival may be a cutting of a full-length play or musical, a one-act play, or any other performance of a theatrical nature which are subject to additional rules listed in Section C, below.
2. The total length of each individual production, including introductions and time lapses between scenes, may not exceed 60 minutes.
3. If a performing company elects to have a curtain call, it must be included within the 60 minutes of performance time.
4. In addition, each production is allowed a maximum of 10 minutes setup time and 10 minutes strike time.
  - a. If a setup and/or strike is intended to set mood, establish character, or entertain the audience in any way, this time will be considered a part of the 60 minutes performance time.
  - b. Any lighting change; sound, whether recorded or live; movement (other than to a preset position on-stage) etc., will begin the 60 minutes. Similarly, only the complete cessation of such will complete this timing period.

5. The “Production Process” (Set-up/Production/Strike) should continue without significant delay until complete.
6. Should a production exceed any time limits, the performance will not be stopped.
  - a. Neither adjudicators nor the performing group will be informed of the “overtime”.
  - b. Productions exceeding any of the established time limits will be ineligible for selection as the winning production but are eligible for all other awards.
7. **This must be the first performance of the production in an adjudicated theatre festival within the state of Mississippi in the year preceding the festival.**
8. The winning production at MTA must be performed in the same form at Regional and National levels.
  - a. No actor, production staff, or technicians may be substituted, nor may material be added or withdrawn without written consent from the Festival Commission Chair.
  - b. For personnel change, the request must be because of relocation, disability, or similar hardship and must be legitimate, not for purposes of changing the show.
  - c. Adjustments in staging may be made to allow for differences in stage facilities.

## **Other Production Rules**

1. Any announcements or introductions must be made prior to setup or after strike; the overall continuity of production must not be interrupted.
2. Once production has begun, the house must be closed, but it should remain open during setup and strike.
3. Once in progress, a production may not be stopped or interrupted except for reasons of:
  - a. Public Safety – such as electrical outages, weather alert tornado, flood, etc.) or other “Acts of God”; or
  - b. Problems with Host Facility – such as equipment malfunction, working from wrong cue-book or disk, etc., which are temporary in nature and particularly affect the overall quality of the production.
  - c. Only the Host Facility Coordinator (this may be the Festival Chair) may determine and declare a Public Safety Problem.
  - d. The designated representative of the production company may also declare a problem with the Host Facility.
    - i. In such a case, the Festival Representative will immediately investigate the seriousness of the problem and its likely impact on the production.

- ii. If this declaration is denied, the production will be tallied last, similar to going over time.
- iii. In any case, the production may begin again from the point of interruption or the beginning, at the choice of the production's representative (subject to local conditions & time restraints.)
- iv. NOTE: Problems with the Host Facility should be invoked in only the most outrageous of circumstances. A missed lighting cue, noisy audience member, etc., are not grounds to declare a problem.

## **Requirement to Participate**

Before performing at the MTA Festival each participating theatre is required to submit to the Community Division Chair:

1. Proof of permission from the leasing agent and/or author to perform the play of its choice as it will be performed (i.e. as cut if relevant).
2. Proof of payment of royalty for this specific festival.
3. Proof of rights to use any relevant copyrighted music or media.
4. Four (4) copies of script with any relevant cuts marked as it is to be performed.
  - a. PHOTOCOPIES ARE UNACCEPTABLE UNLESS
    - i. It is an original script.
    - ii. It is not available in any other form (i.e. out of print or rented materials).
  - b. In the event of a copied script, the proof of permission must state the situation justifying a photocopy.
5. Such a non-refundable entry fee may be required when the contest notice is published.
  - a. If a theatre registers and then removes itself from the competition, the entry fees will not be returned.
  - b. If a larger number of theatres register than slots are allotted, a refund will be made.
6. The attached Entry / Information sheet.
7. The organization's charter and the organization's bylaws. Charters and bylaws for participating organizations will remain on file for 3 years with MTA.
8. A Director and/or Technical Director / designated person must be present at the Directors meeting/orientation.

## Facilities of the Host Theatre

1. The host must provide a proper theatre facility; one that is primarily intended for theatrical performances. The stage of the theatre is required to be in working order and fitted to mount a production with basic area lighting which may be used by all participating groups, but which may not be altered.
2. The MTA Host theatre shall provide or make available
  - a. A minimum, basic lighting plot (Festival “lighting hang”) that will include individually controlled cool and warm wash areas of eight (8) to ten (10) feet in dimension and such other instrumentation as necessary to completely illuminate the stage.
  - b. Six (6) dimmers or circuits for special lighting requirements for each performing group.
3. Special lighting and special effects (“specials”) are the responsibility of the entrant and permission for their use must be obtained from the host theatre.
  - a. If the host provides lighting specials, they must be made available to all participants.
  - b. Lighting specials may NOT exceed six (6) instruments in total whether furnished by the entrant and/or the host.
  - c. These specials may be set up during the company’s scheduled rehearsal period with instrument placement coordinated by the host theatre.
  - d. Any instrumentation, i.e. ellipsoidal, strobe, scene machine, scoop, strip lights, etc., plugged in one circuit shall be construed as one (1) special. In the case of scoops or strip lighting instrumentation, each grouping shall be considered as one (1) special, even though several color changes may be used.
  - e. It is the responsibility of the host technical director to strike and replug light specials as necessary between productions.
4. Non-lighting specials such as flash pot, fog machine, sound, etc., are not limited by any specific number but must be provided by the entrant, and like all scenic units must be set up and struck within the allotted ten (10) minutes setup and strike time.
  - a. If non-lighting specials require setup in the “House” of the performing center, these specials may be allowed by the Host Theatre and placed during the rehearsal period subject to the requirements of the next paragraph.
  - b. Any special sound effects, beyond the standard sound setup (Festival Sound Setup) provided by the Host Theatre, are the sole responsibility of the entrant.

5. If the entrant elects to supplement existing equipment, the Host Theatre will determine whether the placement of cables, microphones, speakers, etc., are detrimental to other performing groups. If it is deemed to be detrimental, then this equipment must be set up and struck within the standard setup and strike time.
6. Each participating theatre is responsible for furnishing any sets, props or furniture needed for its production. The Host Theatre may provide standard articles of furniture if requested to do so in advance.
7. The Host Theatre will allot each entrant offstage storage
  - a. The amount of space is a minimum of 10' x 10'.
  - b. Two similar "on deck" spaces will also be provided but may vary in location from festival to festival, as the Host Theatre conditions dictate.
  - c. The entrant will be permitted to preassemble any portion of his set provided that this assembly never exceeds the allotted space.
    - i. The participating group will schedule assembly time at the convenience of the host personnel.
    - ii. These spaces adjoin the performance area; it is from this location that productions "setup" to the performance area and "strike" therefrom.
8. No scenic devices (with the exception of light and allowed house specials), sound effects, or other items related to the production may be hung, placed, or positioned in the playing areas prior to the 10-minute setup time. Participating groups must plan their set storage according to specifications.
9. Equipment operation by performing groups is at the Host's option.

## **Rehearsal Time and Performance Order**

1. Dates and performance times for MTA festival participants will be scheduled by random drawing by the Division Chair immediately after the entry deadline. (NOTE: If two productions of the same play are scheduled back to back by luck of the draw, the division chair may change the schedule.)
2. The allotment of 30 minutes of rehearsal/technical time must be scheduled for each group in the performance space.
  - a. This time must include setup from the "on deck space" and strike time back to the "on deck space."
  - b. All personnel will begin and end in or directly adjacent to - if necessary - this space.

- c. All rehearsals will be closed except for the entrant and the festival production staff.
- d. Alternate rehearsal times may be allowed at the discretion of the festival chair.

## **Disqualification**

Failure to comply with festival rules will be grounds for disqualification. The decision of the Board of Directors is final.

## **Censorship**

1. MTA supports a policy permitting the widest possible range of dramatic material to be performed in the festival. Performing companies are expected to exercise taste, good judgment, and respect for the values of their Host Theatres.
2. Host theatres may notify their season patrons in advance if they have reason to believe a festival performance may be locally unacceptable or publish a disclaimer, but in NO CASE may they refuse to allow the company to perform.
3. Prior to attending the MTA festival, a “viewer discretion” statement must be made available to the Community Theatre Division Chair if the content is not acceptable for all age groups.

## **Waiver Procedure**

In any case where a waiver of rules or requirements may be sought, such must be in writing (to the Division Chair) and contain adequate detail as to the reason thereof. This may be as to participation, facilities, scheduling difficulties, adjudication, or any other, but must always meet the general test of a level playing field.