

Massachusetts Middle School Drama Festival A Distinguished Tradition

The first Middle School Drama festival was held in the spring of 1995 at the Belmonte Middle School in Saugus, Massachusetts. John Gould, drama coach at Belmonte, had wanted to institute a drama festival so students from across the state could share their productions with children from other schools. The festival started with a theatre workshop for all students, followed by a monologue showcase and concluding with performances by participating schools. For the first few years, the festival was held after school, but as interest grew, the festival was moved to Saturdays to allow for more participants. The Massachusetts Middle School Drama Festival, Inc. was formed to assist in the preparation and planning of the yearly event. Having expanded to approximately 18 shows per festival, the Board knew that the time had come to expand to include more festival sites and more opportunities for middle school programs and teachers. During the 1998-1999 school year, the Massachusetts Middle School Drama Festival, Inc. and the Massachusetts High School Drama Guild, Inc. merged. With this merger, the middle school division aligned more with the high school festival, offered workshops for middle school teachers and students and has begun the process of instituting a networking resource for directors.

Organization of Festival

The Festival is organized at multiple sites in the spring. Individual excellence is recognized with the selection of a Festival All-Star Company at each site, with both technical and acting awards presented to participating students. Adjudicators award a gold, silver or bronze medal to each performance at the conclusion of the festival.

Overview of Festival Rules

- To enter the Festival, a school must be a member of the Massachusetts High School Drama Guild, with membership dues paid in full prior to the annual directors' meeting in March.
- For the purpose of this festival, Middle School refers to grades five (5) through nine (9), but you may only use students from your own school.
- A play selected for entry must be approved by the participating school's principal as indicated by his or her signature on the "*Drama Festival Entry Form.*"
- A school is responsible for obtaining permission from the publisher or author for the performance of its entry and for paying all applicable royalty fees. Permission to perform a cutting of a longer work or to combine two or more works under a banner title must also be obtained from the publisher(s).
- Proof of permission to perform and payment of royalty must be submitted by or at the Directors' Meeting in March.
- No play may exceed 30 minutes.
- A musical or cutting from a musical is not permitted unless the publisher grants specific written permission for the play to be performed without the sung material. Scene-change music, incidental music, background music, and songs that occur in the text of a non-musical play are permitted. Dance is permitted if it occurs in the text of a non-musical play. Interpretive movement, with or without music, is also permitted if it occurs in the text of a non-musical play. In any case, all music and/or dance must have prior approval from the Middle School Council President. Directors will fill out a use-of-music request form at the Directors' Meeting in March.

- Original plays are permitted.
- Plays may be student directed. In this case, a staff member or designated adult must accompany the student director to the Directors' Meeting and festival, and must act in a supervisory capacity.
- Each school will be given five (5) minutes to set up and five (5) minutes to strike their set.
- All technical elements, including set, lighting/sound design, and special effects, must be able to be accommodated by the existing physical and technical capabilities of the host schools. Since host schools vary greatly in their production resources, directors are strongly advised to keep the technical elements of their productions **simple and flexible**.
- Backstage supervision by one adult is encouraged. This may or may not be the director. **The adult may not setup or strike the set or participate in the production. The adult may act in a supervisory capacity only.** In addition, students are encouraged to run the lights and sound for each production. There is an opportunity to learn the host school's system at the tech rehearsal. Alternately, the host school will provide a technician to run the system. If so, directors must provide the host technician with a script, lighting and sound cues at the tech rehearsal.
- School may use whatever set pieces are necessary for their production provided they fit through a standard single doorway.
- Schools must abide by the host school's safety and fire codes.
- Safety of students performing is paramount to the Guild. If elements of the set, use of the set, or blocking seem to pose a physical hazard to the students, then the Guild reserves the right to require modifications to be made before performing, and the on-site supervisor has the right to make the decision.
- Attendance of the director, cast and crew is required at all performances except the one immediately proceeding their own.
- All festival directors must attend the organizational meeting on March 21, 2009 at the Lynnfield Middle School in Lynnfield.

Festival Entry Deadline

The "Drama Festival Entry Form" must be postmarked by February 1. Any entry postmarked after this date will be subject to a \$25.00 late fee. The Guild reserves the right to reject entries for late submission or non-payment of membership dues after February 1.

Wanted: Host Sites

The Guild is asking its member schools to consider serving as a host site for the Festival. We realize that hosting a festival is a major undertaking, and if you indicate an interest in doing so, we will send a hosting information packet for your consideration. It addresses questions you might have about facility, technical, and personnel requirements. If you are selected as a host site, we will offer every possible assistance to help you succeed. There is a particular need for host sites in the central and western areas. Your facility does not have to be state of the art; we will provide on-site consultation by qualified professionals that will help you maximize your facility's technical potential. For more details, please call Linda Jean Smith at (978) 256-3101.

MHSDG Middle School Festival Form

Will you host a festival? Yes No Would like more information about hosting

(PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT. NOTE: A Guild Membership Form must also be returned for this entry to be accepted.)

**Provide below information for the ADULT responsible for this production.
DO NOT enter information about student directors below.**

ADULT NAME _____

SCHOOL: _____ :

SCHOOL ADDRESS: _____ :

CITY: _____ ZIP CODE: _____ SCHOOL PHONE: () _____

PHONE NUMBER: (_____) _____

HOME ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ ZIP CODE: _____

EMAIL ADDRESS _____

(Print clearly. Use capitals and distinguish clearly between letters and numbers.)

PLAY TITLE: _____ AUTHOR: _____

PRODUCED BY ARRANGEMENT WITH: _____

Date application was made to publisher for royalty arrangements and license to perform, if applicable?

I understand that this entry, signed by both the adult responsible for the production **and** the school principal, must be postmarked no later than **February 1** or it will be subject to a **25.00 late fee**. I have read the "Overview of Festival Rules" listed on the "Massachusetts High School Drama Festival" insert and agree to abide by them. I further agree to obtain all rights and licenses required to present this play in live stage performance.

Signature of Adult Responsible for Production: _____ **Date:** _____

I approve this show for production, and the above-named adult director/supervisor.

Signature of Principal: _____ **Date:** _____

Mail completed form to: **MHSDG, Inc., P.O. BOX 93, CHELMSFORD, MA 01824**