

ON CUE

The electronic newsletter of the Association of Community Theatres of Greater Cincinnati.

Fall 2007 Linda Roll, Editor

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ACT to help winners of Regional competition.

At the ACT board retreat, the board decided to help with funds to send our regional winners to the State OCTA competition. Each winning theatre group that goes on to the State competition, will receive \$300 to help offset the expense of taking an excerpt to the next level. Last year, OCTA put in place a \$10 musician fee for the State competition. Adding this to the \$300 from ACT, it is hoped that more groups will feel they can represent this region in Columbus in 2008.

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This year's OCTA regional competition/ACT banquet will be held June 26, 27& 28(depending upon the number of groups participating) Once again we will be holding the excerpts at Parish Auditorium in Hamilton. Because of some problems with the hotel over the past two years, ACT has decided to move the location of the banquet to the Embassy Suites in Blue Ash. Room rates are \$119 a night, but this includes a manager's reception in the afternoon as well as breakfast. Also reinstated this year is the hospitality room. You can make reservations now, or wait until closer to the regional competition. When calling the hotel, make sure you request the block of rooms for ACT.

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Midwinter Institute is fast approaching and for more information on this or on any OCTA service/program/form go to www.octaweb.org and you will find a whole bunch of information. The new OCTA webmaster, Rick Lee, is doing a great job of keeping the site updated.

OCTA is looking to bring a responder workshop to each region. This workshop will teach you how to judge a show. It would definitely help you as an ACT judge to look at a different viewpoint. It will be a two day workshop with training during Saturday and a visit to a show on Saturday evening. You would then write a critique of that show based upon what you have learned. On Sunday, you will go over the critique and see what you have done correctly and where you might need improvement. If you would like to take this training, please contact me at llroll69@hotmail.com or by

phone at 513-575-9351(my answering machine is almost always on, so start talking and if I am home, I will pick up the phone)

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In other OCTA news, at the October board retreat, several changes were made concerning the regional and state competitions.

1. The judges will have 3 minutes for their critiques at both the regional and state levels. In our region, the judges have had 3 minutes, but in other regions and at the state level they have had 5 minutes.
2. Each theatre will continue to have 45 minutes allocated for their excerpt. The change this year is that the first 40 minutes are for set up and the actual excerpt. At the end of 40 minutes, the stage will go black and all judging will cease. Once the lights come back up, the group will have 5 minutes to strike their set. This came about because of some technical problems some groups experienced during the 10 minute set up time limit. By doing this, it is hoped that there will not be the urgency to get things done. Just remember, your excerpt does NOT have to be 30 minutes in length. If it takes you 15 minutes to set up, then your excerpt can go for as long as 25 minutes. SO plan accordingly. You will NOT be eliminated from the competition if you go over that time limit. You will just not get judged on anything that happens after the blackout.
3. OCTA has also set the weekends for the different regionals for the 2000 and 2010 seasons. This is being done in an attempt to NOT have 2 regional competitions on the same weekend. It will be evaluated at the end of the 2009 season. The SW regional continues to be on the fourth weekend of June.
4. The last change that was made concerns the issue of showcasing. At this year's regional competitions, no theatre will be allowed to showcase. If a group presents an excerpt, are chosen to attend the state competition and then decline, then the alternate group will be invited to state. IF another group excerpts, gets chosen, then declines, there will be an empty slot from the region. As an example, each region gets 1 invite for each 4 shows being excerpted. So if there are say 13 groups excerpting, there would be 4 invitees plus one alternate selected by the judges. If 1 group drops out, we still have 4 excerpts going to state, but if 2 drop out, then we only have 3 slots and so on. This will be in effect for 2 years, but will be evaluated at the end of the first year.

This last issue caused some discussion at the recent ACT/OCTA meeting. The feeling is that this will cause groups NOT to participate in the regional competition. Our regional reps contacted each of their groups to get their feelings on the decision. These results will be presented to the group at the next meeting.

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EDITORIAL-AS I SEE IT

During the ACT Meeting, many concerns were raised. First, it appears to me that the big issue of showcasing is not the fact that OCTA is no longer allowing it, but rather OCTA did not allow all the theatres to have input into the issue. In addition, concerns were shared regarding time allowances, using a theatre at the state conference, and ultimately membership in OCTA. Here are a few thoughts on these topics:

1. The issue of Showcasing was originally brought to the OCTA board by the Southwest regional representatives. It started in the programming committee (which oversees this area), was received favorably and then taken to the whole OCTA board for a vote. The same procedure took place with the removal of showcasing. It was discussed at the programming committee then brought to the board for a vote. Each region has only 1 vote, no matter how many representatives a region has at any given meeting, and each board member has 1 vote. That is how this system works.
2. OCTA instituted a \$10 musician fee last year. This was proposed by the Southwest region, and passed with board approval.
3. OCTA instituted a 5 minute limit for the judges to critique the shows. The SW region requested for our region that time be kept at 3 minutes to accommodate our time structure. That request was granted. This year, they are reverting back to 3 minutes for judging at all regionals and the state competitions.
4. The 40 minute set up/performance issue was in response to requests from participants at this past conference, mainly from SW region theaters.
5. As for not having the state competition take place in a theatre, OCTA has been trying to find a theatre in every region that does not cost an arm and a leg to rent for the weekend. This has again been looked at in Columbus and in the NE region. The cost to have the competition take place in a "real" theatre would add anywhere from \$20-\$50 to the cost of the registration-plus, most of these theatres are located within the city and the hotel rates are normally higher. Looking at our region, no school will commit to allowing the use of their theatre before the

end of the school year. Can you realistically plan a competition, not knowing where it will take place? Parish Auditorium is under consideration for 2009, but how much does it cost, can it accommodate us and where is the nearest hotel? The closest hotel (other than the Hamiltonian) is in the Springdale area. What are you going to sacrifice to make this happen? Do you do away with workshops, which is the original function of OCTA? Do you have less theatre groups participate? Do you move it from Labor Day weekend, and if so when would this be? This problem is addressed EVERY year. It is not an easy issue to solve. People often complain of the cost of attending the conference. How much realistically is "too much"? There is a one day only fee to attend the conference; in addition there is the \$10 musician fee (which will be evaluated at the end of the 2008 conference). Should this \$10 fee be extended to all invitees who will only be participating in their one excerpt and then leaving? There are lots of things to consider.

To constantly hear that our region is sending "crappy shows" to the state competition (This was an actual comment made on the evaluation sheet from someone in the Southwest region at this past year's regional competition!) is rude and definitely not supportive of your fellow theatre mates.

Whether to continue your membership in OCTA is a decision that is made by the collective memberships of EACH theatre group. It is not determined by any one person in that group, nor should it be determined by ACT. It is YOUR decision and choice.

And if you don't like what is going on with OCTA, become part of the solution! Run for the OCTA board.

As we approach the end of another year, may your holidays be filled with peace and love.

Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukah, Happy Kwanza, Happy 2008!