BUCKS COUNTY PLAYHOUSE

70 South Main St
New Hope, PA 18938
BucksCountyPlayhouse.org



BUCKS COUNTY PLAYHOUSE student THEATER FESTIVAL HANDBOOK

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Welcome to the Festival!



The network of Bucks County Playhouse Student Theater Festival alumni is ever expanding and we are excited to welcome you and your show to our stage!

The Student Theater Festival at Bucks County Playhouse is in its 59th year! Originally known as Dramafest for one act plays, the Student Theater Festival has evolved into a multi–week celebration showcasing talented student performers from all over the region. Students perform on the historic stage, take workshops to develop their knowledge and skills in the arts and receive feedback from theater professionals.

When the Playhouse closed in 2010, Newtown Arts Company, located in Newtown, PA, hosted the Festival for the next two years. After a lavish $6 million renovation, the Playhouse reopened its doors in 2012 and welcomed the Student Theater Festival back to its stage along with a partnership with Newtown Arts Company, a relationship that remains a strong component of the Festival to this day.

Preparing for the Festival

Pre-Registration

- Please fill out the preregistration form, listing your first, second, and third choice preferences, along with the dates you're available and your preferred number of performance slot(s) —one or two 20 min performance slots, two maximum). We will make every effort to honor your top choices.
- Once preregistration closes, we'll build the festival program around everyone's availability and preferences.
- If a date fills up, we'll let schools know immediately and do our best to accommodate everyone, with priority given to registrations received first.

Registration & Payment

- You will receive a confirmation email with your assigned dates and times. That confirmation email will include a link to complete your official registration with payment. Please note: you are not officially registered until you receive this email.

Teacher Orientation

There will be a mandatory virtual orientation held for teachers, directors, and group leaders approximately one month prior to the Festival. This meeting is required regardless of previous attendance at Festival. During the meeting, BCP staff will review the updated Festival guidelines and safety protocols. This is the time to ask any questions you may have.

Cast & Crew List

Teachers/directors/group leaders will complete a form with cast & crew list information. This form is due two weeks prior to their date at the Festival. In addition to the program, this form is given to the adjudicators and allows them to provide more personal feedback.

Tech Rider

- Prior to the Festival, teachers/directors will receive a tech rider from BCP staff.
- This tech rider is a form that teachers/ directors fill out that includes all information about your production, such as title, run time, size of cast and crew, list of lighting and sound cues, and a list of the props and set pieces you plan to bring to the Festival.
- Schools must return this completed tech rider two weeks before their date at the Festival.
- These tech riders allow BCP production staff to pre-program in advance and are integral to making the day run smoothly. For this reason, no day of requests can be accommodated.

Rehearse the Changeover

We encourage schools/groups to rehearse and time, not only their performance, but the set up and clean up before and after their performance. This ensures the changeover between each performance goes as efficiently as possible at the Festival.

What to Bring

When considering which selection to present at the festival, also consider students will be adjudicated on their performances and ability to tell the story in the allotted time. They will not be judged on sets, props, or costumes. We recommend selecting pieces that do not require over the top elements to portray a meaningful story. We are looking for stories that can be told simply and truthfully that showcase your student's abilities.

About the Day

Sample Daily Schedule

- **8:30AM-9:00AM** Arrival/ Registration/Load In
- **9:00AM** - Welcome
- **9:30AM-10:30AM** - Workshop Session
- **10:45AM-11:45AM** - Workshop Session 2
- **11:45AM-12:45PM** - Lunch
- **12:45PM** - Welcome and Guest Artist Introduction
- **12:50PM-4:00PM** - Performances and Feedback
- **4:00PM-4:30PM** - Load-Out/Awards

Arrival and Checking In

Upon arrival to the Playhouse, teachers/ directors will check in at our theater lobby. At this time, welcome packets will be distributed including the day's schedule, wristbands, and workshop rosters. Schools will then be guided to the loading dock in which any tech elements can be dropped off. Welcome remarks will begin promptly at 9am and then students are dismissed for the morning's workshops.

Lunch

Participants are welcome to bring their own lunches and sit in our spacious courtyard or on the promenade along the river. There are ample tables, chairs and benches. There are also many quaint restaurants in New Hope for participants to explore during the lunch break.

New Hope-Lambertville Bridge

The New Hope-Lambertville bridge **CANNOT** accommodate school buses and charter buses. Buses should enter New Hope from New Jersey via the Route 202 bridge just north of town or via the 295 bridge to the south. Personal vehicles and vans can drive over the New Hope-Lambertville bridge.

Parking in the Playhouse Parking Lot

Parking in our lot is $3 per hour or $30 for the entire day (CARS & VANS ONLY). It is a public lot, so it is open to other visitors to New Hope so spaces in this lot are not guaranteed. Please note buses CANNOT park in our parking lot. However, we welcome buses to pull into our lot to drop off group members before finding additional parking.

Parking for Buses

If you are bringing a bus, you must park off-site following drop off of your students and supplies. Further information about bus parking will be provided closer to the Festival dates.

Parking in New Hope

Metered street parking can be found through out New Hope. You can pay at the kiosk meters on the street with cash or card, or use the ParkMobile app on your smart phone.

About the Day

Order of Performances

- Performance slots are arranged in an order to allow for the best flow of the afternoon performances and adjudication.
- BCP staff will make every effort to group performances of plays and musicals together in the daily schedule.



Workshops

- In the morning, each student takes two one-hour-long workshops. There are three to four workshops offered which may include, but are not limited to: movement, dance, tap/jazz, improv, theater games, Shakespearean acting, audition technique, panels with theater professionals, and a variety of other subjects.
- Teachers will be sent a form to take student's preferences that will be due two weeks before their date at the Festival.
- At check in, teachers/directors will receive rosters for each of the workshops. Attendance will be taken before each workshop.
- The workshops are an important part of the Festival experience. Because of this, we expect all students to attend the two workshops. Any students not present will not be considered during adjudication.
- **Students responsible for teching their show will have a separate workshop with a member of the production staff.**



About the Performances

Tech

- During the morning while students attend their workshop, a designated adult and any student technicians will work with Bucks County Playhouse production staff to prepare the technical elements of their performance.
- Each school will review their pre- programmed lighting and sound cues based off of the tech rider submitted
- Shows will be teched in the order of performances in the afternoon. Each school will receive approximately 15 minutes per segment to work with Bucks County Playhouse production staff to tech their performance(s).
- Teachers, advisers and directors must tech during their allotted time in the morning.
- All shows must be teched before the lunch break and before performances begin in the afternoon.
- Schools must submit a completed tech rider two weeks prior to their Festival date. Schools with incomplete tech riders will be provided with limited lighting and sound options.

Time Limit

- Performance slots are 20 minutes.
- Performances will be timed by Bucks County Playhouse staff.
- After 20 minutes, house lights will be brought up as a warning that time has run out. If the piece has not been completed by that time, the curtains will come down. This is to ensure that all performances receive the same amount of time and to keep the festival on schedule.
- There will be a 10-minute changeover between each performance. The onstage school will clear the stage and return to the theater and the next school will go backstage to prepare for their performance. Once the first school has returned to the house, the adjudicators will give them notes during the remaining time left in the changeover.
- Schools may sign up for a maximum of two time slots per day. Schools can perform two 20-minute segments of their show, for example an Act 1 and Act 2, but they will not be performed consecutively.

Stage Dimensions

- The stage depth is 30’ with about 15’ of wing space on either side.
- The proscenium height is 19’3” and width 29’9”.

About the Performances

Content

- Selected material can be from published sources and/or student-written/directed.
- To make the Student Theater Festival enjoyable for all participants, material should be suitable for a public performance before a general audience at your own school. We ask that selections contain no extreme adult language, nudity, sex, violence or other content that, in the view of the Festival, could be considered offensive.

Set, Props, and Costumes

- Storage, wing and dressing room space is extremely limited backstage at the Playhouse. For this reason, set pieces, backdrops, flats and large furniture pieces cannot be used.
- Only handheld props and smaller furniture pieces deemed essential can be brought to the Playhouse.
- Each participating schools will be provided with a 6ft x 2ft folding table in which all props/costumes/furniture pieces should fit on top of or below for storage. Any larger items cannot be accommodated without prior approval from our production staff and must be included in the rider.
- If requested in advance, the Playhouse can provide basic stage chairs and/or benches.
- No liquids of any kind are allowed on stage.
- **Footwear must be worn at all times in the Playhouse.**

Weapon Policy

- Safety for all students, teachers, staff and guests participating in the Student Theater Festival is of the utmost importance.*Please read our weapon policy carefully:**
- BCP defines a weapon as: anything that is traditionally considered a weapon (i.e. blades, batons/clubs, replica firearms, etc). or any item that can cause physical harm. Such items will not be allowed on stage.
- We recommended using props made out of safe materials.
- **BCP staff must be notified by the teacher/director of use of any and all weapons used in a performance upon registration and they must be noted on the school's tech rider.**
- On the day of the Festival, all weapons must be presented to Playhouse staff upon arrival.
- Bucks County Playhouse reserves the right to deny the use of any and all weapons used on our stage and in our facilities at any time.
- **The following are never allowed at the Festival:**
- Real blades or guns of any kind
- Guns with blanks
- Retractable knives or swords
- Blunted blades of any kind

*In accordance with the Actors' Equity Association Agreement and Rules Governing Employment in Small Professional Theaters Stage Fighting Policy and the Yale School of Drama

About the Performances

Sound

- Schools must provide a flash drive, digital files, or laptop of their musical tracks.
- Schools may have no more than three musicians if using live music. A piano or keyboard will be available. **Please notify the Festival Coordinator if you require a keyboard or piano.**
- All sound needs and preferences must be noted on your tech rider as we will not be able to accommodate day-of requests.

Feedback from Adjudicators

- Typically, the guest artists who lead the morning workshops will give feedback at the afternoon performances.
- This is done so the guest artists have a chance to meet the students in the morning and to provide continuity for the students throughout the day.
- Following each performance, when students have returned to their seats in the theater, adjudicators share their feedback. Feedback is positive in nature, designed to enhance the performance and provide insight on how students and teachers may improve future productions.

Awards

- Each day culminates with a short awards ceremony.
- Daily awards are given out to schools and individuals that show excellence in their performances.
- Adjudicators deliberate following the final performance of the day and award the schools and individuals that stood out to highlight their performances.
- Daily awards are subject to change and categories vary year to year and day to day during the Festival.

Please Note: The Festival does not focus on competition, but rather on a supportive environment to share talent, collaborate with theater students that they would not normally meet, and to encourage their fellow performers.



FAQs

What does it cost to attend the Festival?

- $75 per 20-minute performance slot
- $29 per student
- Free for teachers, advisors, and chaperones

Do I bring costumes?

Schools may bring costumes that they deem are essential in telling their story, however students will not be judged on them. We recommend wearing show shirts or stage blacks. Backstage space is limited and costume storage is unavailable.

Can I bring two segments of the same show?

Yes, schools can perform 20 minutes of Act 1 and Act 2 – but they will not be performed consecutively.

How many performances can I bring?

We limit schools to two performances per day. Schools may attend more than one day of the Festival and bring different performances on each date.

How do I sign up?

Fill out the pre-registration form, by October 30th. Registration links will be sent out by November 9th with instruction on how to finalize your registration.

How do I pay?

You may pay via credit card, check, or purchase order. Details on your preferred method will be in your registration email.

Is it open to the public? Can my students' families buy tickets?

- The Student Theater Festival afternoon performances (generally beginning at 12:50pm) are free and open to the public! Parents and members of the community are welcome to come watch students perform on the historic Playhouse stage free of charge!
- A schedule of performances will be listed on the monitors in the lobby as well as via QR code to view upon arrival.
- Families, please note: While we do our best to stay on schedule, your child's performance may not happen at the exact time it is scheduled. We recommend that you arrive before your child's schedule time and prepare for the possibility that we may be slightly ahead or behind schedule.

FAQs

What if my students don't want to take a dance class?

There are several options for workshops, and they change each year—improv, theater games, movement, Shakespeare, acting for the camera, audition prep, and more. In recent years, we have also offered workshops in technical theater like costume design and rigging as well as panels with the staff of the Playhouse. If there a workshop subject that your students are interested in, please reach out to the Festival Coordinator and we will take it into consideration.



Do my students have to attend the morning workshops?

Yes. The workshops are an important part of the Festival experience. We expect all students to attend these workshops unless they are teching their school's performance in the theater at their scheduled time. Students responsible for teching their show will have a separate workshop with a member of the production staff.



At a Glance

- To **Pre-register** a school or group for the Festival, fill out the form sent in our pre-registration email listing your first, second, and third choice preferences, along with the dates you're available and your preferred number of performance slot(s)

- You will receive a confirmation email with your assigned dates and times. That confirmation email will include a link to complete your official registration with **payment**.

- **Final payment** is due two weeks before your designated day, including the per student fee.

- The **cast & crew** form is due two weeks prior to your date at the Festival.

- Student's **preferences for workshops** will be due two weeks before their date at the Festival.

CONTACT US

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