



**National Conference / National Championship Tournament
Information and Registration Package**

March 15, 2009

Dear Fellow Educators:

The American Readers Theater association (ARTa) is back for its 9th year, returning again to the campus of Mt. San Antonio in Walnut, California – in a newly remodeled building. We invite you and your students to attend the ARTa National Conference on May 1, 2009 followed immediately by the American Readers Theater Championships May 2-3, 2009.

Our conference this year will highlight performance works-in-progress making the transition from forensics to public performance with special artist grants (details at readerstheater.org), as well as an open invitation to join our 2010 tournament planning team for our exciting 10th anniversary year in 2010.

ARTa remains the only national forensics conference and competition devoted exclusively to readers theater . Students at any level are eligible to compete. Not merely an elimination tournament, ARTc will once again feature its distinctive specialty awards nominated and selected by a jury of judges. Continuing the popular tradition, the top four finalist theaters will compete on a theater stage for final evaluation by a panel of entertainment industry professionals as well as the coveted audience award in a community-wide presentation.

ARTa and its national tournament continue to welcome new teams each year, and we hope that this year again brings new friends and more great performances. Be part of the exciting tradition where speech and theater converge...and ART is bound to occur!

James D. Nguyen, Tournament Director

****special note – not all rooms will be carpeted this year***

2009 ARTa Conference — Friday, May 1, 2009

The 2009 ARTa conference will be held Friday, May 2nd from noon to 4:00pm on the campus of Mt. San Antonio College.

This year's conference begins with a planning session for the 2010 ARTa national conference and tournament, the 10th anniversary event. There is interest in making some changes to the ARTa organization to add a student scholarship component and to seek ongoing sponsorships from the entertainment industry to further showcase readers theater and provide opportunities for student success. We are also considering hosting the 10th anniversary event in a public theater space and promoting the event more widely.

This year's conference will also feature performance works-in-progress for artists who hope to make the transition from forensics to public performance. Selected local presenters are eligible for a \$300 performance grant for the conference, Presenters more than 200 miles from Mt. San Antonio College are eligible for a \$400 grant; both are presented in exchange for judging a minimum of three rounds at ARTa. **Apply at ReadersTheater.org.**

Our third session is a practical training session for anyone who would like to participate in the organization. Nine-time tournament director Jimmy Nguyen will lead a session to explain the scheduling and tabulation process for ARTa, as well as some of the other steps involved in hosting and directing the tournament. Anyone interested in a future role in ARTa management is encouraged to attend.

Schedule for the Conference:

11:30-12:00	Registration
12:00-1:30	Session One: ARTa 10: Vision and Planning (concurrent with lunch)
1:30-1:45	Break
1:45-3:00	Session 2: Introduction of Guest Artists; Performances and Dialogue
3:00-3:15	Break
3:15-4:00	Session 3: ARTa Tournament Management Practicum
4:00	Drawing of codes for tournament; Distribution of schematics & jury materials

Students are welcome to participate in the day's events. The conference fee is just \$20 per person and includes lunch. Please register by April 27, 2009. Professional development documentation available upon request. Contact Liesel Reinhart of Mt. San Antonio College with questions: Email: lreinhart@mtsac.edu Office Phone: (909) 594-5611 x4616

Hotel Information

The Tournament Hotel is, once again, the Hampton Inn West Covina.
3145 E. Garvey Rd., No., West Covina, California, 91791
626-967-5800 Room rate is \$99/night

Directions and Travel

Host school Mt. San Antonio College is at 1100 N. Grand Ave. Walnut, CA 91789 at the intersection of Temple and Grand Avenues.

Map: <http://www.mtsac.edu/maps/>

Preliminary rounds will be held in building 26D in the center of campus. Parking is available in Staff lot D-2 directly south of the building (enter from Temple Ave between Bonita Dive and Grand Ave). An elevator is available. Registration and breakfast will be in the first level courtyard, one level above the ground (G) floor.

Contact Liesel Reinhart of Mt. San Antonio College with questions about the venue:

Email: lreinhart@mtsac.edu

Office Phone: (909) 594-5611 x4616

LAX, Ontario, Burbank, and Long Beach airports are within a 45 minute drive of campus (traffic permitting). Of these, Ontario is the most convenient to the tournament site.

Entries

Enter via email to forensics@mtsac.edu with the following information:

- School name, address and phone
- Contact person name, email and phone
- Name of each theater and all cast members
- Name of judge(s)
- Name of additional guests (if any) for whom you are buying a meal package.

The tournament entry deadline is 5:00 p.m. PST on MONDAY, APRIL 27th, 2009. However, to help ARTa and our host school make arrangements, please send a preliminary entry estimate as soon as you know you will attend ARTa to the email above. Any entry after the deadline must be approved by the tournament director. Entries will be confirmed via email by midnight MON, April 27th.

ARTa Membership And Fees

Membership in ARTa is open to any individual or school interested in advancing the art of Readers Theater. School membership is required to enter teams in competition. Individual memberships are available for those interested persons currently unaffiliated with a competition team. ARTa is a non-profit venture. Membership dues and fees fund the ARTa national conference, the ARTc national tournament, and the ARTa website. Programs in dire financial need should contact the tournament director or host about fee deferrals or waivers. We don't want finances to be a barrier to participation!

Through May 4, 2009 ARTa fees are:

Annual school membership*	\$30
Annual individual membership*	\$15
ARTa Conference	\$20
ARTa Participant fee	\$20 per person (judge, student, coach or guest) to cover breakfast Sat. & lunches Sat.and Sun
Entry fee:	\$100 per theater
Judging:	\$100 uncovered fee per theater. One judge covers one theater

Checks should be made payable to ARTa.

Competition Rules

In keeping with ARTa's goal of advancing the art form, ARTc supports only the following strict rules:

- ARTc Rule 1: All readers theaters entered must consist of three or more students.
ARTc Rule 2: The time limit for each performance is 25 minutes. Reasonable time for set up and take down shall be permitted and shall not be counted in the 25 minute time limit.

All other performance choices are at the discretion of the performers and are not subject to any other rules or norms.

Competition Format and Scoring

Since it is difficult to anticipate the number of entries and therefore the optimal competition format and schedule, we will ensure the following for the tournament:

Preliminary Rounds

Each theater will be guaranteed a minimum of 3 preliminary round performances, but will likely have 4-5. Teams must be available for performance on both Saturday and Sunday of the tournament. Theaters will compete in panels of preferably 3 and, at most 4, theaters. Judges will allow a 5-minute intermission after the 2nd theater. Each preliminary round will have a panel of judges. Depending on judge availability, we anticipate using 2-3 judges per preliminary round. After each round, judges are required to confer with each other in a private session that is to last a minimum of 5 minutes and a maximum of 10 minutes. The goal of this discussion is not for judges to influence each others decision of placement, though ARTa recognizes that such changes may occur and welcomes them. Judges will rank each theater in their round. If a preliminary round contains 4 theaters, judges will rank only down to 3rd place.

Judges will also assign each theater rating points based on a 50 point scale (with a minimum rating score of 30 points). A judge's rating points must correspond with the judge's ranks (*i.e.*, higher rating points cannot be assigned to lower-ranked theaters). So that both rank and rating points have meaning, ARTa uses a unique system that combines the two. A judge's individual rank will be converted to a point value: a 1st place rank is worth 50 points; a 2nd place rank is worth 45 points; and a 3rd place rank is worth 40

points. The point value for that rank will be added to that judge’s rating points for the theater for a total “Score”. Therefore, each individual judge’s ballot will be worth a possible 100 points. Here is an example of the effect of one judge’s ballot:

Entry	Rank	Rank Points	Rating Points	Total Score
RT A	1	50	49	99
RT B	2	45	48	93
RT C	3	40	40	80

After the preliminary rounds, a theater’s lowest overall score will be dropped. The remaining judges’ scores will be added together. The theaters with the highest point totals advance to elimination rounds. Semi-Finals are possible if entries warrant. Ties for advancement to the elimination rounds will be broken as follows: (1) If tied theaters met in preliminary round(s), judge’s preference based on ranks in such round(s); (2) Best ranking points only (i.e., rating points are dropped); (3) Successive dropping of high and low scores.

Semi-Finals

If held, Semi-Final rounds will be judged by panels of 3-5 judges. Judges will assign a rank and rating points, under the system used for the Preliminary Rounds. Before scoring, judges are required to engage in a discussion of at least 5 minutes and no more than 10 minutes. A theater’s lowest score in the Semi-Final Round will be dropped. The remaining scores from the Semi-Final Round will be weighted so that the Semi-Final Round is equal in weight to the Preliminary Round, and then added to the Preliminary Round scores. The four theaters with the highest cumulative point total from both the Preliminary and Semi-Final Rounds will advance to the Final Round.

Ties for advancing to the Final Round will be broken in the following order: (1) Scores from the Semi-Final Round only; (2) If tied theaters are in the same Semi-Final Round panel, judges’ preferences from ranks in that round; (3) Ranking points only from the Semi-Final Round; (4) If tied theaters met in preliminary round(s), judge’s preference based on ranks from such preliminary round(s); (5) Cumulative point total from the Preliminary Rounds. If entries are insufficient to warrant semi-finals, an additional preliminary round may be held in their place.

Final Round

The top four theaters will perform in a final round showcase, open to the public, in a theater-type performance space. The Final Round will be evaluated by a panel of 9 to 11 judges including no more than 50% entertainment industry professionals (casting directors, actors, authors, musicians, etc.).

In the Final Round, all scores from the Preliminary and Semi-Final Rounds are discarded. Final Round judges will assign each theater a rank from 1 to 4. No rating points will be assigned. No discussion session among the judges is required before ranks are assigned in the Final Round.

If a theater receives 1st place ranks from a majority of the Final Round judges, that theater is automatically designated Champion of the tournament. Otherwise, all placements in the Final Round are determined by the cumulative total of ranks in the Final Round. Ties will be broken in this order: (1) Judges' preference; (2) Number of 1st place rankings; (3) Number of 2nd place rankings; (4) Number of 3rd place rankings; (5) Cumulative point totals after the Semi-Final Round.

Specialty Finals

At the discretion of the tournament director, ARTa will stage a "World Premiere Final" during the ARTa tournament to recognize the top performances making their debut at the ARTa tournament. The tournament director will consider the following in making a decision: availability of judges; time in the schedule; number of non-advancing world premiere theaters.

Eligibility

All theaters entered in ARTc must consist of currently-enrolled students (such as university, college community college, graduate program, high school, beauty academy, etc.) Enrollment is subject to verification at the Tournament Director's discretion. "Hybrid" theaters, consisting of students from multiple schools, are permitted. Please note on entry.

Judging

For the final round only, ARTa may use entertainment industry professionals as judges. Entertainment industry judges will not comprise more than 50% of the final round panel, and shall be selected at the Tournament Director's sole discretion. This year's invited critics include active members of the film, television, publishing and music industries.

Given ARTa's goal to make ARTc the fairest national tournament and its unique competition format, numerous judges will be needed. (In past years, each theater was evaluated by as many as nine judges throughout preliminary rounds, and eleven judges in the final round, as well as the special Jury panel of judges). It is imperative that each entrant's judging commitment be fulfilled.

2009 Tentative Tournament Schedule

A detailed competition format and schedule will be set after entries are confirmed and will be emailed to all teams by Friday, May 2nd (or sooner). The following is the tentative competition schedule:

Saturday, May 2, 2009

8:30 am	Classrooms unlocked for practice*
9:00 am	Breakfast and Tournament Registration (Continental Breakfast provided by ARTa)
9:30 am	Opening Meeting for Directors, Performers, & Judges
10 to 11:45am	Round I
11:45 to 1:30pm	Box Lunch (provided by ARTa)
2 to 3:45 pm	Round II
3:45 to 5:30 pm	Round III

NOTE: The Saturday schedule may be extended based on entries but will not begin earlier than listed nor end later than 7pm.

*Please contact Liesel Reinhart at lreinhart@mtsac.edu for a practice room reservation. You will be given a room number in advance and will have sole use of that room until round 1.

Sunday, May 3, 2009

10:00 to 11:45am	Round IV <classrooms will not be open early for practice>
11:45 am	Pizza Lunch (provided by ARTa)
12:15 pm	Announcement of semi finalists and Nominees for Jury Awards
12:30 pm	World Premiere Final (tentative)
1:30	Semifinal Round
3:30 pm	Final Round (top four theaters) The final round is open to the public.
5:30 pm	Cookies and punch reception
6:00 pm	Awards Ceremony

NOTE: The Sunday schedule may be collapsed based on entries but will not begin earlier than listed and will not end later than 7pm.

Awards

ARTa provides unique and distinctive awards, different each year and always individually hand-crafted works of art.

Tournament Awards

Tournament awards will be given to each readers theater that advances to the semi-finals and beyond.

A "World Premiere Award" will be given to the highest placing theater that makes its first competitive appearance (at any forensics or readers' theater competition).

The "Audience Award" will be given to the audience's favorite theater in the Final Round, as determined by audience vote.

Jury Awards

ARTa recognizes that the art form of readers theater encompasses skills in a variety of areas and rewards those different achievements through the following special "jury" awards. Jury Awards are determined during prelim performances and advancement to elimination rounds is not required to be eligible. Jury Awards include:

Outstanding Female Performer

for the female performer whose individual performance is deemed the most outstanding

Outstanding Male Performer

for the male performer whose individual performance is deemed the most outstanding

Outstanding Ensemble Cast Performance

for the theater cast which creates the most outstanding ensemble effect

Outstanding Achievement in Script

for the theater script deemed most effective

Outstanding Achievement in Music or Sound

for the theater which demonstrates the most effective use of music/sound

Outstanding Achievement in Set

for the theater which demonstrates the most effective use of set and/or set pieces

Outstanding Achievement in Blocking

for the theater which demonstrates the most effective use of movement and blocking

Outstanding Achievement in Costuming

for the theater which demonstrates the most effective use of costume or ensemble dress

Special Award for Thematic Excellence or Creative Innovation

for the theater which presents an innovative and/or challenging theme OR best advances the art form through innovation

These honors will be determined by a special jury, whose members will view all of the readers theaters entered. (Each theater will be viewed by as many jury members as possible, but may not necessarily be viewed by the entire jury). The jury members may or may not serve as judges for the actual tournament depending on the depth of the available judging pool.

Digital Video Recordings of ARTc Performances

ARTa will record at least one performance by each theater using a digital video camera. This recording will be done at no charge to the theater, and each theater entered will receive a free digital recording of its performance. ARTa will maintain copies of all video recordings for archive purposes. We're sorry, but tapes of other teams' theaters cannot be provided due to copyright laws. Please email lreinhardt@mtsac.edu to request access to these tapes for academic research. Entry into the tournament constitutes consent to ARTa's recording of each Readers Theater performance and recording of each individual performer. Recordings will not be sold for profit or distributed.

Contact Information

Contact ARTa by e-mail with questions about the organization at artchamps@aol.com

Entries should be sent to forensics@mtsac.edu

Tournament host Liesel Reinhart can be reached at: lreinhardt@mtsac.edu or (909) 594-5611 x6304

Tournament director Jimmy Nguyen can be reached at jnguyen@wildman.com

On the web @ www.readerstheater.org