

What to do about a "bad" respondent?

Try as we might to avoid it, occasionally, a school reports an unsatisfactory experience with a respondent. Sometime, this is a clash of cultures of criticism, and even a "good" respondent can have a bad night. If, however, you feel a respondent to one of your associate productions should not be out on the road, please contact your state chair to discuss the matter in some detail. In the case of a participating production, please talk to the regional chair. We can't address problems if we don't know they exist.

Respondent Responsibilities:

Before you go:

- Initiate contact with the director of the production or the designated contact person
- Confirm the date and time of the performance with the director in a timely fashion.
- Get clear travel directions to campus and to the theatre.
- Make arrangements for reimbursement of travel expenses. The host school pays half; ACTF picks up the other half upon receipt of your written report.
- The host school can expect to arrange and pay for lodging if you need to spend the night.
- Many schools invite you to dinner beforehand, giving you an opportunity to engage in collegial conversation.
- Determine the location, time and format of the oral response session.
- Determine if there are student designers on the production who wish to have their work considered for the design competitions. You must, then, look at the work. Offer advice on presentation, if asked. Be sure to check the appropriate spaces on the response form.
- Get the info you need for the cover sheet: running time (with intermission), capacity of house, etc.
- Collect two programs to send along with your written response to the regional chair.

At the response session:

- Remind the company about the dates and location of the Regional Festival, and encourage all to attend regardless of whether or not their work is selected for presentation.
- Respect the work the company has done in your response
- DON'T - talk about how you directed or would have directed the production
- DO - make the response session a conversation about the work by asking and inviting questions, as well as articulating your response
- Discuss the Irene Ryan nomination(s) with the director of the production. The director may nominate one eligible individual. The respondent may nominate up to one additional student for an associate production, or two for a participating production if they are truly exceptional. You are not obligated to nominate any additional Ryan candidates. Last year, we had about 340 productions entered in the Festival. Do the math!
- Determine if the school is willing to be considered for the **Evening of Scenes** if you think the production would be of interest to Festival-goers (associate entries only, please.)
- Determine if the Director would consider the **student stage manager** prepared to Stage Manage the National Ten-Minute Play Festival (each region gets to nominate one individual).
- If you are responding to a production directed by a student, determine whether that student should be considered for a Student Director position at the National Ten-Minute Play Festival.

After the response session:

- Write up your notes and send them off to the director and to the Regional Chair ASAP.
- Consider nominations for Certificate of Merit, Evening of Scenes, Student Stage Manager, and Student Director for the Ten-Minute Play Festival and include them in your report to the regional chair.
- A thank you note to the host school is a nice courtesy.

Written Response

The response is to be written TO THE DIRECTOR of the production in a timely manner. Failure to follow through on the written response has caused considerable ill will in the Region in the past, and I urge you to get this task done as soon as possible after your visit while your impressions are still vivid - let's say two weeks.

Response cover sheet

The information on this sheet is essential in organizing the Regional Festival and its attendant opportunities for students and programs.

- Student designers
- Ryan nominees
- Evening of Scenes
- Student director nominee for the Ten Minute Play Festival
- Student stage manager nominee for the Ten Minute Play Festival

Certificate of Merit Form

If there were truly exceptional elements in a production that you think deserve recognition, please submit this form. A certificate is presented for all programs and individuals nominated. In the past, certificates have been given for extraordinary achievement in design and technical areas, directing, stage management, dramaturgy and playwriting.

Respondent's Expense Reimbursement Form

When I receive this form along with a copy of your written response, I will send you a check for 50% of the expenses incurred. The other 50% is to be paid by the institution whose production you viewed. It may be necessary for you to complete paperwork for them at the time of your visit.

Guideline for the Written Critique:

- **CHOICE OF PLAY:** appropriate for the producing group? Good material?
- **OBSERVATIONS AND FEELINGS:** As I entered the theatre, I observed....I felt...I noticed...
- **PRODUCTION ELEMENTS:**
- Design/Technical Elements: Scenery, Costumes, Lighting, Sound, Makeup, Props, Special Stuff, Scene Changes,
- **ACTING:** Believability, Physical Work, Vocal Work (including dialect), Ensemble Playing, Moment to moment playing, Clarity of intention, beats, etc.
- **DIRECTING:** (This is tricky. Be tactful. You are talking about a faculty member's work in front of his/her students.) Concept, Use of space, Inventiveness, Pacing, Consistency, Style

What to do about an "inhospitable" host?

Then, too, there is the occasional problem of the "bad" host - one who offers a respondent little or no hospitality. Some respondents have reported not even begin greeted at the site. Again, let us know so we can address the problem. Host and respondent should be in contact well before the date determined for the visit to work out details of hospitality. Though it is not required, many schools invite a respondent, particularly one who has traveled some distance, for a meal prior to the performance. Not only is a road-weary colleague needing to eat, it provides a great opportunity for collegial exchange and may help frame the oral response session. If a respondent needs to stay overnight, it is the host school's obligation to provide lodging.

Host Responsibilities

- Communicate with the respondent prior to the visit to set a date
- Give clear directions to the theatre
- Determine hospitality needs
- Make sure someone greets the respondent upon arrival
- Make sure a ticket is provided (sometimes, a respondent will bring a guest - ask about this at the time you make arrangements.)
- Offer a meal or meals, if desired; it's a good opportunity to tell the respondent about your program, or about any special aspects of the production (a guest artist's work; stage combat work; an unusual interpretation) that you think she or he would benefit from. If the respondent must stay over, plan to provide both an evening meal and breakfast of some kind, perhaps the complimentary breakfast at the place of lodging.
- Provide lodging if needed (you are not expected to pay for a guest not sharing the same room.)
- Provide 50% reimbursement for travel (the mileage rate is 30 cents/mile.)
- Discuss Ryan nominations at the time of the visit, remembering that the director makes the first nomination; and that associate productions may have a total of two nominees, and participating productions a total of three. Receiving more than one nomination is at the discretion of your respondents!
- Discuss whether the respondent wishes to nominate the student stage manager or the Ten Minute Play opportunity at the Regional Festival.
- If you DO NOT want a written response, let the respondent know!