



The OxDocs Institute
2009-2010 Annual Festival of New
Work
Playwright Submission Guidelines

Who is Eligible:

The OxDocs Annual Festival of New Work is an international competition intended to showcase promising and/or persistent talent in non-fiction writing for stage and screen. In particular, the contest seeks to provide platform for screenwriters and playwrights whose work focuses on improving intercultural understanding and insight across and within divided communities, such as those suffering from intractable conflict around cultural, religious, ethnic, racial, gender-related, or religious issues. The format or genre for which we are currently soliciting submissions is **non-fiction drama** (testimonial, adapted from real life, or ethnographic) for stage plays and **long-form documentary** (30 – 90 minutes) for film and television scripts.

The competition is open to all adult non-professional writers, regardless of nationality, although all work must be submitted in English. Students over the age of 16 may also submit their work, although a separate contest category is not provided for them. By “non-professional” we mean writers who do not derive the majority of their annual income (defined as 50% or more) directly from their creative writing endeavours, and/or who are non-union in status. If you are represented by a literary agent, you are not eligible to participate in this contest.

You may submit one (1) script in each of our two contest categories (stage and screen) per year.

How to Submit Your Work:

1. Complete the Script Submission Application Form and attach it as a cover letter to four (4) printed and **bound** copies of your manuscript. Please make sure that the script is formatted according to the general picture of professional standards – i.e., in some consistent and recognizable scriptwriting style. It is very important that you send us enough copies of your work. We need all four copies at the time you first send us your script or we cannot distribute them to the judges for assessment. **Make certain that all pages are numbered and that your name DOES NOT appear on the front of any page, including the title page. Your entry will be disqualified and any submission fees will be forfeited if your name or other identifying information appears on your scripts.**
2. Please send bound copies if at all possible. Otherwise, you risk losing pages when sending manuscripts to the judges.
3. Enclose a **clearly labeled** floppy disk or downloadable-CD in a **jewel-case or protective wrapper** with an electronic version of your script. **Do not send us scripts as e-mail attachments; they will be deleted unopened and will automatically disqualify you from participating in the contest.**
4. Enclose a check or money order with your suggested donation of \$10-\$15US, made payable to “**Dr. Kerric Harvey**” with the notation: “Submission donation –OxDocs” noted on the subject line. At this time we can only accept submission fees made payable in U.S. dollars. Please do not send cash. **You must include a separate submission fee for each script you submit.**
5. Complete and sign one (1) copy of the “Submission Release from Liability Form” for **each script** that you submit and enclose it with your application form, disk, copies, and check. We cannot process your submission without this form.
6. We regret that we are unable to return your submission materials, so please don’t send us anything that you cannot do without.
7. Although we don’t require it, we strongly suggest that you **copyright your work** before sending it to us or to any other public contest or submission venue. Instructions and the necessary forms for doing this (for the United States) can be obtained at www.copyright.gov. It’s a much easier and cheaper process than you might expect, and you do not have to be a U.S. citizen in order to benefit from copyright protection in U.S. contexts.
8. Send the entire package to us by or before the deadline indicated on the Submission Application Form. Your entry must be post-marked by or before the closing date for contest submissions, May 31, 2010. We will determine whether your materials reach us in time **by the date by which they are post-marked.**

We know postage is expensive, so to help reduce your costs, consider mailing your submissions as Media Mail or in a Priority Mail flat-rate box. There is a flat-fee for the box, regardless of the weight.

If you enclose a stamped, pre-addressed postcard along with your submission, we will be happy to notify you by that means when your materials have arrived safely. Be sure you label this card clearly with your own name and address, and list the title of the work you have submitted. This "safe arrival" card cannot be mailed back to you if you have not affixed sufficient postage to it.

9. It is in every one's best interest if you send your work by registered, certified, or express mail, so that your package will be trackable while it is in transit. **We are not responsible for loss, delay, or disaster of your materials while they are being sent to us and can permit no re-submission of your contest entry should such events cause you to miss the submission deadline.**

AGAIN: Your entry MUST BE post-marked by or before the closing date for contest submissions May 31, 2010.

Contest Rules and Policies:

1. Stage scripts must be completed, original (no adaptations) **non-fiction** dramatic productions, of between 30 and 90 minutes' duration. They may be one, two, or three acts, as suits the writer, but all work will be judged in a single category. In other words, a one-act will be assessed by the same criteria as would a full-length, three-act play. Recent examples of this format in action include "The Vagina Monologues," "The Laramie Project," "The Coven," and "Birth." Projects which are heavily based on true events but which you have dramatized significantly for the purposes of story-telling structure are also eligible.
2. Entries in the film/television category may be fully developed screenplays or television scripts, (typically running 40 – 60 pages) complete with specific background information on the documentary topic and attachments indicating the character, accessibility, and intended use of expert sources and primary research material within the body of the program.

There will be only one judging category for all levels of "finished" documentary scripts; we permit the submission of scripts in which specific content may be indicated but not included (as in, for example, a script notation along the lines of: "Interview with Nelson Mandela here, in which he discusses...") only in acknowledgement of the fluid nature of the genre and the degree to which it is sometimes impractical, impossible, or undesirable to over-script a program before actual production commences.

Again: There will be separate prizes awarded between stage scripts and screen scripts categories, but not for different types of script within each of the stage or screen categories.

3. Authors retain all rights to their work, but by participating in the contest, grant OxDocs the right to use excerpts from their scripts as illustrations of Institute activities, and to display the title, slug line, and author contact information on the OxDocs web page.
4. All decisions of the judges are final without recourse to objection, argument, appeal, or legal challenge, and all judges will remain anonymous.
5. All scripts and accompanying materials must be submitted in English and must be the writer's original and demonstrably legally-owned work. The easiest way to document your ownership is to copyright your work before sending it to us.
6. Any and all copyright, liability, intellectual property, ownership, and clearance issues (including musical) are the sole responsibility of the author. OxDocs, its individuals, associates, and affiliates accept no responsibility for any issues related to copyright infringement or dispute, ownership issues, slander, liable, or recognizable persons, and all related matters.
7. Only new work – meaning that which has not been produced, published, or publicly performed for monetary gain at the time of submission – is eligible for submission. Readings of one's work within a class, workshop, or writers' circle is permissible; however, a staged reading for an audience outside your community

of peers will be considered a “public performance” and disqualifies your script for submission. We will conduct a random Web check of your submitted titles and key words; if your script shows up you will be automatically deleted from the candidate pool and your submission fees will be forfeited.

8. You may only submit one script or treatment in each of our two categories (stage and screen) per year.
9. You are welcome to re-submit your script in subsequent years if you so desire, as long as it was not a “winning” script in a previous contest cycle.
10. Translations, adaptations of some one else’s work, musicals, and collaborative group pieces cannot be considered at this time. However, co-authorship is permissible.
11. The contest is open to non-professionals over the age of 16. Parental or guardian signature on the Submission Form is required for under-age participants. No restrictions on citizenship are in place for contest entries. Dramatists Guild of America and its international peers is not grounds for disqualification; however, membership in professional-level associations, such as the Screen Writers Guild **does** disqualify writers from participating, since they are evidence of on-going professional-level status.
12. OxDocs, its individuals, affiliates, and associates do not accept responsibility for the welfare of materials in transit to us through public or private mail or courier systems, and is not liable for the consequences of any problems which may arise during this period.

13. OxDocs, its individuals, affiliates, and associates accept no responsibility for any infringement, appropriation, or compromise of contest participants' work which may or may not arise from their involvement with this contest, before, during, or after any part of the OxDocs process.

OxDocs is a private, independent organization and as such reserves the right to adjust or adapt all policies, prizes, deadlines, and other operational specifics of this contest and its others programmes as needed, including without notice if necessary.

Contest Judging Criteria:

Each entry will be read by a panel of three judges in a blind review process (meaning that we do not know who wrote the scripts we are reading). Each judge will assign points to the work based on a 1 – 5 scale, against a list of 10 assessment criteria, with “1” being low and “5” being high indicators on the measurement instrument.

The assessment criteria for both stage and screen entries are as follows (order of listing does not indicate precedence):

1. Originality of concept
2. Important of topic or question
3. Timeliness
4. Use of language
5. Structural logic and cohesion
6. Effective use of presenting medium
7. Story-telling ability, including characterization
8. Fairness (based on variety, credibility and credibility / rigour / appropriateness of sources, experts, and evidence)
9. Appropriate use of story-telling / informational elements
10. Overall appeal

Entrants in the Tony McAuley Award category will be judged against this scale plus a second set of assessment criteria which reflect the scope, nature, and subject matter of his own work during his extensive career. Please read on for more details.

Contest Prizes and Awards:

NOTE: In the spirit of encouraging and promoting new work by emerging writers, **ALL** submitting authors regardless of category or eventual scoring performance will receive a Certificate of Participation and the benefit of having their submitted work publicized by having its “slug line,” or producer’s description, displayed on our “Festival Entries” page for at least one year following their submission date. This display consists of the title of your script, a slug line (one or two sentence description of the piece) and author contact information. (Please note that if your slug line exceeds the space limit we reserve the right to edit it ourselves before posting.)

Authors are invited to encourage other parties who may be interested in their work to visit the OxDocs Festival Entries page as a component in the production conversation. **Remember:** By participating in our contest, you are automatically guaranteed that at least three working professionals in media production will read your script!

Main Prizes:

1. *First Place Prize Winners* in each of the two categories (stage and screen) will receive a certificate of achievement and the prizes listed in each category below.

SCREEN

For winning film/television scripts, OxDocs will award a Screenwriter’s Start-Up Package, including but not limited to, 1) a copy of *Raindance Writers’ Lab: Write and Sell the Hot Screenplay* by Elliott Grove, founder of the Raindance Film Festival, the UK’s largest independent film festival; 2) a copy of *The Screenwriter’s Guide to Agents and Managers* by John Scott Lewinski; 3) a \$20 gift card to Office Depot for printing and mailing supplies

STAGE

For winning stage scripts, the performance of a ten-minute excerpt from the winning script, all fees paid, by the prestigious FirstStage Playwrights Express Festival as part of an annual public reading festival in Hollywood, California, by professional actors. And a videotape of playwright’s work performed at this event.

2. **Second Place Prize Winners** in each of the two categories (stage and screen) will receive a certificate of achievement and the prizes listed in each category below.

SCREEN

For winning film/television scripts, OxDocs will award a copy of *Raindance Writers' Lab: Write and Sell the Hot Screenplay* by Elliott Grove, founder of the Raindance Film Festival, the UK's largest independent film festival.

STAGE

For winning stage scripts, OxDocs will award a copy of *The Art and Craft of Playwriting* by Jeffrey Hatcher.

3. **Third Place Prize Winners** in each of the two categories (stage and screen) will receive certificates of merit.

OxDocs reserves the right to not award any or all of the above prizes if no scripts adequately reflect these criteria during a given contest cycle.

In addition to the regularly-awarded prizes, OxDocs hopes to select a documentary film or television script to receive the special *Tony McAuley Award for New Writers in Social Justice Documentary* in honour of the late Tony McAuley, an Irish BBC producer whose career spanned more than thirty decades of ground-breaking work in film, radio, television, and music.

Only fully completed screen documentary scripts will be considered for this singular honour. You do not need to apply separately in order to be considered for the Tony McAuley prize; simply check off the box on your Submission Application Form which indicates your candidacy for it. **However, if you decide to compete for the Tony McAuley Award, you are not eligible to win any other prizes in that year's Festival competition.**

Winners of the Tony McAuley Award receive a detailed script analysis from a professional scriptwriting coach (estimated value \$750).

In addition to the regular script assessment criteria described earlier, submissions for The Tony McAuley Award will also be judged by additional criteria which relates directly to the interests and concerns of Tony's own career with BBC-Northern Ireland and elsewhere.

Thematically, work submitted for the Tony McAuley award must be concerned with one or more of the following topics or subjects:

1. Focuses on a theme, topic, person, or event of directly related to Irish history, culture, music, theological and/or metaphysical belief systems, literature, myth and folklore, language, and/or the dramatic arts.
2. Explores some aspect of a relationship between Irish politics and the arts, either directly (as in, for example, the role of literature in the build-up to the Easter

Rising) or indirectly (as in, for example, the inadvertent community-building role of Celtic music among Irish people re-settling in Atlantic Canada).

3. Utilizes authentic Irish talent and resources, such as musicians, artists, scholars, performers, locations, artifacts, literature, and so on.
4. Is deeply concerned with Irish identity, both at home and abroad, including the many world-wide receiver locations of the Irish Diaspora (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the U.S., etc.)
5. Contains a historical component which is linked to contemporary Irish issues, or encourages a new way of looking at the relationship between an aspect of politics and culture in Ireland's past which has bearing on present-day situations and events (as in, for example, U-2's work as an advocate for the rights and welfare of the African nations).

Scripts which satisfy the topical requirements will then be assessed according to the following criteria, this time on a 1 – 10 scale:

1. Story-telling skill
2. Relevance to contemporary world and/or Irish issues
3. Bridge-building potential among factions
4. Historical and/or cultural nuancing and sensitivity
5. Clear grasp of key issues, stakes, and players in the story

OxDocs reserves the right to not award the Tony McAuley Prize if no scripts adequately reflect these criteria during a given contest cycle.