



NATIONAL
SHAKESPEARE
COMPETITION

Atlanta Branch

The English-Speaking Union

Expanding Minds, Strengthening Friendships, Unlocking Opportunities

Shakespeare Competition Newsletter Summer 2020

It has been a challenging spring for the country with the onset of the COVID pandemic. In the music and arts world, most organizations, performers and artists were forced to cancel their events. But a few displayed brilliant resiliency and continued on via the new on-line streaming tools such as Zoom, Skype, Facebook Live, and Instagram Live.

One such organization was the ESU National HQ who took extraordinary steps to save the annual Shakespeare Competition by replacing the in-person competition in NYC with an all-video format. They improvised on the fly and created a glitch-free program via YouTube. It was a great display of American can-do spirit! We sent our congratulations to Betty Trevino-Roth, Senior Manager of the ESU School and Teacher Programs (and a former teacher). She replied:

Thank you so much for your kind words. It truly was a labor of love. We felt so terrible for these students that were being denied the rites of passage that are so important to American youth- prom, graduation, sports championships, field days. We felt like it was the least we could do.



The 49 Branch competition winners filmed themselves performing in their living rooms or on their high school stages. Here is our Atlanta Competition winner, Arden Adams.



Ava Blum, a 14-year old student at DC's Georgetown Day School, was the youngest ever to win! Read about her extraordinary preparation here: [DC Theater Scene magazine](#)

A Year in the Life of the Atlanta ESU Shakespeare Competition Committee

Preparation for the next year's competition begins five minutes after the present year's competition concludes -- we chat with the Playhouse and pick a date. Care must be taken to not choose the same weekend as the [GA Thespians Conference!](#)

In June we might generate a newsletter (ahem) to remind the membership of the importance of this service that we provide for the students and teachers every year.

In August and September we send emails to last year's schools plus a few new schools that we are reaching out to. To select new schools, we study their webpages and make a list of the ones with drama programs or drama clubs.

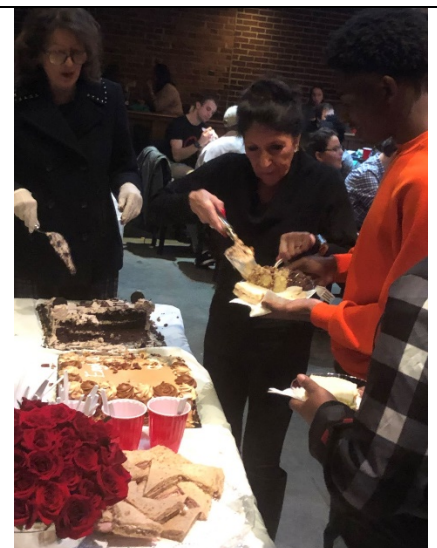
By October the National ESU has posted the sign-up page on line. Teachers start signing in their schools. Our Branch sends a welcome to each one.

In November and December the schools continue to sign up. We answer their questions and offer encouragement. We stay in touch with National.

By January the teachers and the students are staging their own competitions to select one or two students to advance to our Branch competition.

In February lots of people spring into action:

- The programs, judges' forms, etc, must be created and printed.
- The hospitality chair must organize the celebratory desserts.
- The Shakespeare Tavern must pick the three judges (Equity Actors!).
- The check-in desk and its materials must be prepared.
- The emcee's remarks must be prepared.
- At 10 am on the day of the show, the committee and some volunteers set up.
- The students start arriving at noon, performing at 1 pm, and leaving at 3 pm.
- Later, the photos are organized, and 50 are uploaded to our Branch webpage.



What It's All About

Getting young people excited about Shakespeare and the English Language goes to the heart of what our organization is about. Those of us who work on the Shakespeare Competition Committee feel blessed to take part. It's deeply satisfying to make a difference in young people's lives. (Contact us if you'd like to help.)



Winning students and their teachers.



When you renew your membership this year, please consider supporting this program by joining at a Patron Level or by making a specific contribution to our Shakespeare Competition Fund. Just \$25 per member would cover our costs and leave our General Fund untouched for other programs.



The Atlanta ESU Branch held its annual Shakespeare Competition on February 23, 2020, on the stage of the Atlanta Shakespeare Playhouse. Twenty-four students from fourteen schools competed. See photo album and story here: www.esuus.org/atlanta/

Next competition: February 21, 2021.

Q: Who is excited about our ESU Shakespeare Competitions? A: Everybody!

Here are some excerpts from our correspondence this year:

From the teachers:

“Thank you SO much – our [school] competition is later this year – can’t wait!”

“YES! We are excited to enter and we will BE there !!!”

“Last year was such a good experience that involvement from our students has quadrupled! I appreciate you and your efforts to promote young people through the arts!”

From the judges:

“Thank you for having us! It was a joy to be a part of and a great reminder of what I love about Shakespeare.”

From the parents of last year’s winner in Atlanta who repeated:

“Arden will be working hard for a repeat win! It was a privilege and an honor for her to represent the Atlanta region last year. She also still keeps up with all of the students from last year; it was extremely special.”

From the students:

Dear ESU Atlanta Branch,

2020

I would like to thank you for the amazing opportunity provided. The Shakespeare competition was a great experience where I could ^{act} on a professional stage, and view and meet other young actors who have a passion for Shakespeare's literature. I'm so glad there are organizations such as ESU who are involved in connecting and inspiring young artists. The whole event was well-run and the refreshments were wonderful. Thank you for providing this incredible experience!

- Anne Marie Atsobrook, 2nd runner-up