

# what is the international thespian society

**The International Thespian Society** is an honor society for high school students involved in theatre and the performing arts. Founded in 1929, this organization has grown to become a significant part of the educational landscape, providing a platform for students to showcase their talents, celebrate their achievements, and promote the theatre arts in schools across the globe. With a mission to recognize student achievements in theatre and encourage the pursuit of excellence in the performing arts, the International Thespian Society (ITS) plays a crucial role in shaping the future of young performers and artists.

## History of the International Thespian Society

The International Thespian Society was established by the Educational Theatre Association (EdTA) in 1929, originally as a way to honor students engaged in theatre arts. The founding members recognized the need for an organization that would inspire high school students to pursue theatre arts while providing a support network for their endeavors.

- 1929: Founded by Paul L. Smith at the University of Cincinnati.
- 1950s: Expanded to include a national festival, celebrating students' work in theatre.
- 1980s: Gained international recognition, allowing students from various countries to join.
- Present: Continues to grow, with thousands of chapters in high schools across the United States and beyond.

## Membership Criteria

Membership in the International Thespian Society is a prestigious honor and comes with specific criteria that students must meet to be inducted. The requirements for membership typically include:

1. Participation: Students must have participated in a certain number of theatrical productions, either as performers or in technical roles.
2. Character: A demonstration of good character and a commitment to the values of the society.
3. School Affiliation: Membership is granted through a school's affiliated troupe, which varies in number based on the school's size and commitment to the theatre arts.
4. Grade Point Average (GPA): Some troupes may have GPA requirements, although this varies by school.

## Types of Membership

The International Thespian Society offers several types of membership, including:

- Active Membership: For students currently involved in theatre activities.
- Alumni Membership: For those who have graduated but wish to remain connected to the society.
- Adult Membership: For educators and theatre professionals supporting the mission of the society.

# Benefits of Membership

Becoming a member of the International Thespian Society comes with numerous benefits that can greatly enhance a student's theatrical experience:

1. **Recognition:** Members receive recognition for their achievements in theatre, both at the local and national levels.
2. **Scholarship Opportunities:** ITS offers several scholarships for college-bound students pursuing a career in the performing arts.
3. **Networking:** Membership provides access to a vast network of theatre students, educators, and professionals, promoting collaboration and mentorship.
4. **Performance Opportunities:** Members have the chance to participate in various productions, festivals, and competitions, showcasing their talents to a broader audience.
5. **Educational Resources:** Access to workshops, training sessions, and educational materials to help students further develop their skills in theatre.

# Thespian Troupes

The foundation of the International Thespian Society lies in its local chapters, known as Thespian Troupes. Each troupe is affiliated with a specific school and operates under the guidelines set by the society. Here are some key aspects of Thespian Troupes:

- **Troupe Numbering:** Each troupe is assigned a unique number upon its chartering, which identifies it within the society.
- **Leadership:** Troupes are typically led by student officers, often guided by a faculty advisor who oversees the troupe's activities.
- **Activities:** Troupes engage in a variety of activities, including performances, workshops, and community service projects to promote theatre within their schools and communities.
- **Troupe Events:** Many troupes host events such as fundraisers, auditions, and showcases to encourage participation from all students interested in the performing arts.

# The International Thespian Festival

One of the hallmark events of the International Thespian Society is the International Thespian Festival, held annually to celebrate student achievement in theatre. This festival offers a platform for students to showcase their talents and learn from industry professionals. Key features of the festival include:

1. **Performances:** Students perform a variety of pieces, from one-act plays to musical numbers, often in front of an audience of their peers and professionals.
2. **Workshops:** A range of workshops conducted by experienced theatre artists, covering topics such as acting techniques, stage management, and playwriting.
3. **Awards:** Various awards are presented to recognize outstanding performances, production design, and technical excellence.
4. **Networking:** An opportunity for students to meet and interact with others passionate about theatre,

including educators, industry professionals, and fellow aspiring performers.

## **Community Engagement and Outreach**

The International Thespian Society emphasizes the importance of community engagement and outreach. Members are encouraged to give back to their communities through various initiatives that promote the arts:

- Community Theatre: Many troupes collaborate with local community theatres, providing support and resources for their productions.
- Workshops for Younger Students: Older Thespians often conduct workshops for younger students, fostering an interest in theatre at an early age.
- Charitable Initiatives: Troupes may participate in charity events, using theatre to raise funds and awareness for various causes.

## **The Future of the International Thespian Society**

As the International Thespian Society continues to evolve, it remains committed to its mission of fostering and celebrating the art of theatre among high school students. The future of the society looks promising, as it adapts to changes in the educational landscape and the performing arts industry. Some of the anticipated developments include:

1. Increased Accessibility: Expanding membership opportunities to include diverse backgrounds and underrepresented groups within the performing arts.
2. Virtual Engagement: Leveraging technology to offer virtual workshops, performances, and networking opportunities, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. Global Reach: Continued expansion of the society's international presence, fostering connections among young performers worldwide.

In conclusion, the International Thespian Society serves as a vital resource for students interested in the performing arts, providing recognition, opportunities, and a supportive community. Through its commitment to excellence and education in theatre, the ITS not only enriches the lives of its members but also contributes to the cultural fabric of communities around the world. Whether through performances, workshops, or community outreach, the society continues to inspire young artists to dream big and pursue their passions in theatre.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is the International Thespian Society?**

The International Thespian Society (ITS) is an honor society for high school students involved in theatre, celebrating their achievements and fostering their passion for the performing arts.

## **How can students become members of the International Thespian Society?**

Students can become members by earning points through participation in theatre-related activities, such as performances, crew work, and attending workshops, and being inducted by their school's Thespian troupe.

## **What benefits do members of the International Thespian Society receive?**

Members enjoy various benefits, including access to scholarships, networking opportunities, exclusive events, and the chance to participate in state and national festivals that showcase their talents.

## **Is the International Thespian Society affiliated with any larger organizations?**

Yes, the International Thespian Society is a division of the Educational Theatre Association (EdTA), which promotes quality theatre education and supports educators and students in the performing arts.

## **What types of events does the International Thespian Society host?**

The ITS hosts various events, including the International Thespian Festival, state festivals, and workshops, providing members with opportunities to perform, learn, and connect with fellow theatre enthusiasts.

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