

# SHORT & SWEET

## Plays from all over the world entered in Minnesota Shorts Festival

By Madeline McBride  
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In its third year, the Minnesota Shorts Festival has grabbed international attention from playwrights, and a little bit of everything is planned to entertain its audience this year.

"People are going to walk away from this saying, 'Wow,'" said Greg Abbott, the coordinator of the festival and a local playwright.

To be held Thursday and Friday, Sept. 8-9, at West High School, a record 123 plays were submitted this year. Abbott said plays came from many places in the U.S. and even one from Australia.

After the plays were judged by six members of the Minneapolis Playwright Center, 20 were chosen to be performed. The only requirement is that they be 15 minutes or less.

Among the 20 winners is Kendall Sherwood, the script coordinator for TNT's "The Closer." Her play in the Shorts Festival is "Table for Four" and will be performed Friday night.

"Plays and TV have more in common than TV and film. ... TV and theater are both character-centered instead of plot-driven," Sherwood said. "I have to turn on different sides of my brain for each medium."

Sherwood has been writing plays for about five years.

"I studied theater in undergrad and dabbled in playwriting and had a really positive experience at WordBRIDGE



Amy Scruggs (left) and Launa Helder get into character while practicing for "Gayby's Playdate," by Jan O'Connor.

Playwright's Laboratory that encouraged me to keep going," she said.

Sherwood has had readings of many of her full-length plays and several 10-minute pieces performed in Chicago, New York and Los Angeles. She said the reason she submitted a play to the festival is because she's "constantly trying to get (her) work out there, and 10-minute plays are often the easiest way to do it." "They're very trendy," she said.

Mitch DeDeyn, a recent Minnesota State University graduate, was in the festival last year and will be in the festival again this year. He originally learned about it through

a flyer at MSU.

"I think it's great that this festival is getting the attention of some of the bigger writers out there," he said. "It's a good venue both for emerging and established writers."

Last year, DeDeyn's play was a tragedy, but this year he went a different direction with "The Teleport Marketer."

"It's a science fiction comedy," DeDeyn said.

Other plays range from a play about someone who thinks they're a superhero (by Mark Harvey Levine, Pasadena, Calif.) to one about a woman suffering from post-partum psychosis (Connie Schindewolf, Bradenton, Fla.).

Levine's play, "Superhero," is the featured play Thursday.

And even with the plays being submitted from further away, the Minnesota festival is still keeping it local with Minnesota writers.

There are plays written by area college students, local residents and even a Mankato West High School ninth-grade student, Sophia Tomany.

"You get a really nice picture from all the theater groups in the area," Abbott said. "This is the one time where you see all of them together."

It's not just the different groups coming together that's

fun to watch, but also the collaboration of people coming together to put on each play, he said.

The two nights of the event will have different themed plays. Thursday will be the mild themed night, with content appropriate for youth 8 and older, and Friday will be the wild night, with content appropriate for youth 13 and older.

"For a night out, it's really fun," Abbot said.

### If You Go

**What**  
2011 Minnesota Shorts Festival

**When**  
7:30 p.m. Thursday and Friday, Sept. 8-9

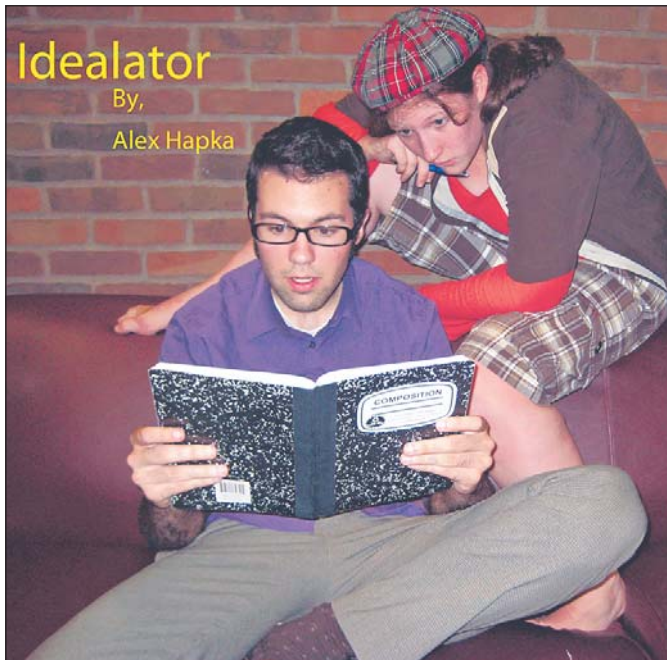
**Where**  
Mankato West High School, 1531 S. Riverfront Drive

**Admission**  
\$10 for adults and \$9 for seniors and students; or \$15 for a two-day pass. Tickets purchased in advance are \$1 off.

**Info**  
mnshorts.com  
The festival is possible because of a grant through Prairie Lakes Regional Art Council, which allows for each playwright chosen to receive \$100.



Michaella Crnkovic, (left) Jennifer Potocnik (center) and Cynthia Riebesell rehearse for Sophia Tomany's play, "The Basket."



Submitted photos

"Idealator's" actors Russel Dugger, left, and Kat Lutze practice for the play by Alex Hapka.