



# PHOENIX

MSAAA NEWSLETTER

**2017 REUNION  
GENERAL INFORMATION &  
SILENT AUCTION**

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**THE RISING PHOENIX  
SCHOLARSHIP  
TAKES EFFECT**

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**TIME TO VOTE!  
2017 MSAAA ELECTION  
BALLOTS AVAILABLE**

**ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT  
JALEN GILBERT**



# President's Note

In the words of Warren Buffet: "Someone is sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree a long time ago." When I became involved with MSAAA a couple years ago, it was suggested that to grow the alumni association, alumni should stop asking "What can MSA do for me?" and instead ask themselves, "What can I do to give back to MSA?"

Through that simple philosophy of altruism, MSAAA has grown into a legitimate organization that is making a difference not only in networking current alumni and building alliances, but by supporting our future alumni. No matter what our personal beliefs may be, when we received that acceptance letter in the mail two, five, or twelve years ago, we were the same. We were all given the extraordinary opportunity to become something greater than ourselves, an opportunity to rise up from the ashes and of course—imagine, create, and realize a better future for Mississippi.

This common goal still binds us together, and every day MSA alumni are lifting each other up and spreading their wings together. It is a privilege to serve this organization, and I hope in the future many more alumni will join us in continuing to grow MSAAA through the "Spirit of Whitworth," and as the song goes: "Like the magic, feathered phoenix, now we rise, we fly, we shine."

Sincerely,

Brianna Moore-Christa, MSAAA President



*Do you want to be a contributor? Please send your submission to [msartsalumni@gmail.com](mailto:msartsalumni@gmail.com) for approval.*



## 10TH EDITION

### EDITOR

Brianna Moore-Christa\*

### EDITORIAL PRODUCER

Lauren Butler\*

### WRITERS

Cam Bonelli

### GRAPHIC DESIGNERS

Lauren Butler\*  
Shelby Hamilton

### COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Brianna Moore-Christa\*  
Lauren Butler\*  
Shelby Hamilton  
Cam Bonelli

Officers are marked with an asterisk (\*).

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## ABOUT THE COVER ARTIST

# JESSE THAMES

*Vortex*

3' x 4'

This lively oil painting bursts with color, setting the tone for spring, as life unfolds and awakens around us. This vortex of color encourages us to activate our power of transformation. View more of Jesse's art [here](#).



# 2017

## MSAAA REUNION INFORMATION

May 19–May 20

We are excited to be hosting our 2017 class reunion this year for all graduated classes of MSA and Whitworth College. The reunion is a great opportunity to catch up with old friends, explore the new changes on campus, and support MSA and our alumni organization. Plus, registered alumni will be entered into a drawing for a chance to win a **free MSAAA t-shirt!** Entry fee to the event for non MSAAA members is **\$15 per person** at the door. MSAAA members get in

free at the reunion. 100% of proceeds will go to the Rising Phoenix Scholarship. Email [briannamr37@gmail.com](mailto:briannamr37@gmail.com) for questions or for lodging information! Free lodging off-campus is available on a limited basis. Free off-campus camp space is also available.



Visit our [Facebook](#) page to follow updates about this event.

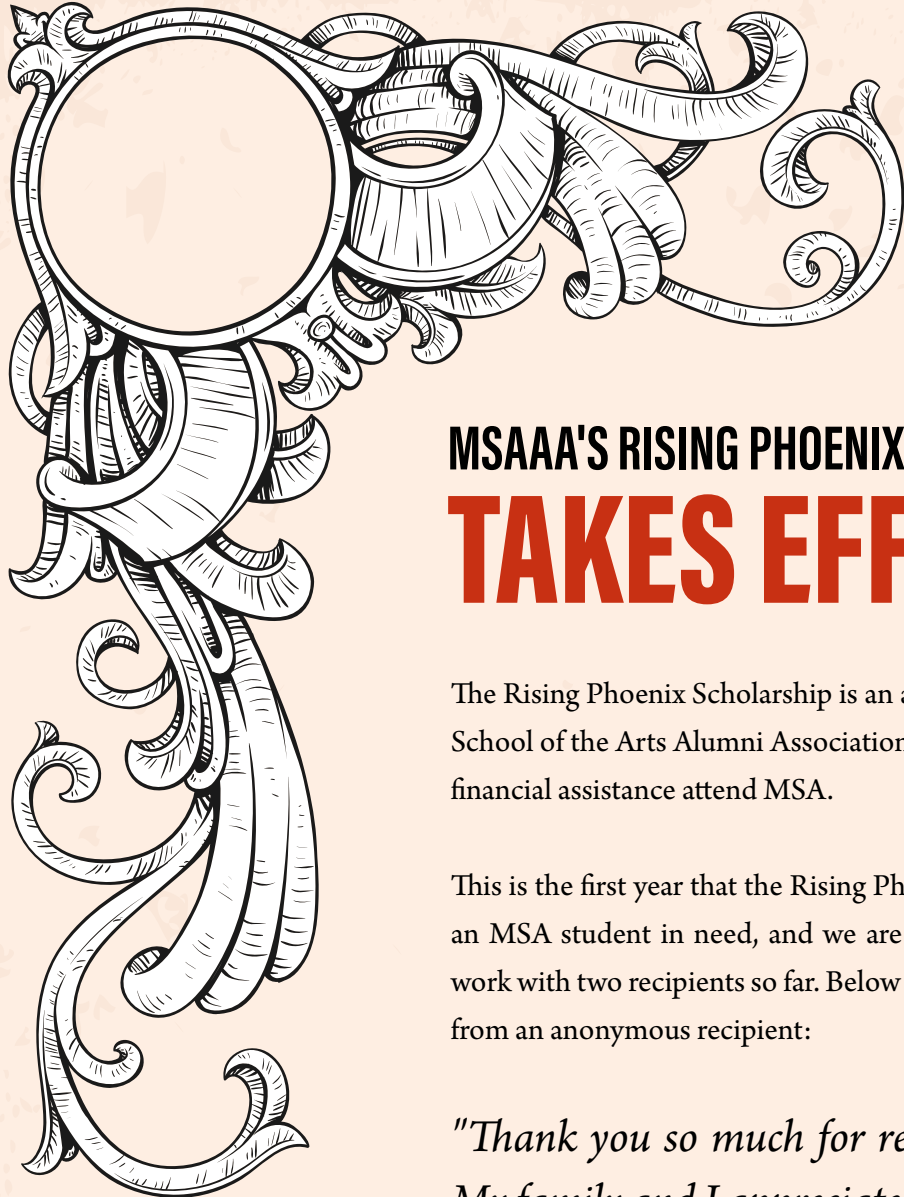
### Friday, May 19

Registration	5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.	Enochs Hall
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### Saturday, May 20

Registration and Breakfast	8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.	Enochs Hall
Lunch	12:00 p.m.	Enochs Hall
MSAAA Annual Meeting	1:00 p.m.	Enochs Black Box Theater
Tour of Campus	2:00 p.m.	Elizabeth Cottage
Water Balloon Fight	3:00 p.m.	Bell Tower





## MSAAA'S RISING PHOENIX SCHOLARSHIP **TAKES EFFECT**

The Rising Phoenix Scholarship is an alumni funded scholarship created by Mississippi School of the Arts Alumni Association to help talented students who may be in need of financial assistance attend MSA.

This is the first year that the Rising Phoenix Scholarship has been implemented to help an MSA student in need, and we are extremely encouraged to see our scholarship at work with two recipients so far. Below is a testament to the effectiveness our scholarship from an anonymous recipient:

*"Thank you so much for relieving me of my outstanding fees! My family and I appreciate it a lot. I cannot express to you how grateful we are. Happy Valentine's Day, and thank you for the perfect gift!"*

The Rising Phoenix Scholarship is a wonderful way to invest in our relationships with MSA and support its students. All association membership fees and donated proceeds that go to MSA Alumni Association contribute to the funding of the scholarship.

Let's continue to support MSA and make a difference in these amazing students' lives!

**DONATE TODAY**

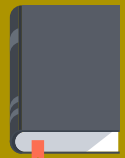
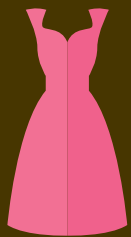




## MSAAA 2017 REUNION SILENT AUCTION

Can't make it to the reunion but still want to help raise money for the Rising Phoenix Scholarship? Awesome! MSAAA is looking for item donations for a silent auction that will take place during the reunion on May 20th.

Email [briannamr37@gmail.com](mailto:briannamr37@gmail.com) if you're interested in donating an item. Ideas for donations include original artwork, handmade items, etc.



## IT'S OFFICIAL

On March 7, 2017, MSAAA's official bylaws were signed and notarized, further solidifying and validating our organization's structure. Adopting official and legal bylaws is an important step to ensure that current and future officers have a firm foundation to build on and helps define the structure of our organization's goals so that we are set up for success now and in the future.



## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

# JALEN GILBERT

By Cam Bonelli

"A lot of people's expectations of me were lowered because I came from the South—they thought I couldn't do it," said MSA alumni and actor Jalen Gilbert: "When they saw me come in and work hard, they said 'Who is this kid?'"

Many people underestimate Mississippians' ability to pursue anything, especially artistic. However, the Magnolia State is not sparse in talent. Being an artist from Mississippi will not hinder success, rather it is the mentality an artist has that determines his path.

Like the assuredness of humidity on a Mississippi summer day, Jalen stuck to a determined mindset and strong work ethic. He has booked short films and appeared on a television series. Recently YUP! milk, a food and beverage company based in Chicago, cast Jalen for a national commercial for the movement #NothingHour.

Instead of trying to appease casting agents, Jalen arrived at the auditions and felt like being in a goofy

mood. "It was one of those moments when I satisfied myself, and they responded to it and loved it," said Jalen. "I changed up some lines, and they went with it. It didn't feel like work—it felt like playing."

Jalen graduated from MSA in 2012 and attended DePaul University in Chicago that August. After graduating from DePaul, Jalen explained that the university took the students to New York and Los Angeles for casting, and he was able to find an agent.

"I booked a student short film, 'Medicine,' which was released March 31," said Jalen. "Then I got booked for a small part in *The Exorcist* television series. It was so cool—I got my own trailer on the set. People were waiting on me hand and foot, and I thought 'Stop it.'"

Unfamiliar with that sort of treatment, Jalen affirmed that humility and hard work are the determining factors of those who use their talents to achieve their dreams.

“**...everyone has something to bring to the table, but it's who wants to work hard that gets it.**”



"What I learned at MSA is that everyone has something to bring to the table, but it's who wants to work hard that gets it," Jalen stated. "[When I moved to Chicago], I felt like I was a step ahead of everyone else. It's definitely wanting it more." Jalen proved this method during his time at MSA.

Mississippi School of the Arts dance instructor (and mentor to Jalen) Tammy Stanford witnessed his strong work ethic and drive to reach further in her class, even when the challenges proved difficult. "Jalen came into my program with strong character traits and a hard-working ethic," Tammy recalled. "He was generous and fair minded, always encouraging others to be their best. He didn't prefer the spotlight and was eager to dig deep to find answers to the hard questions and problems I gave to the class."

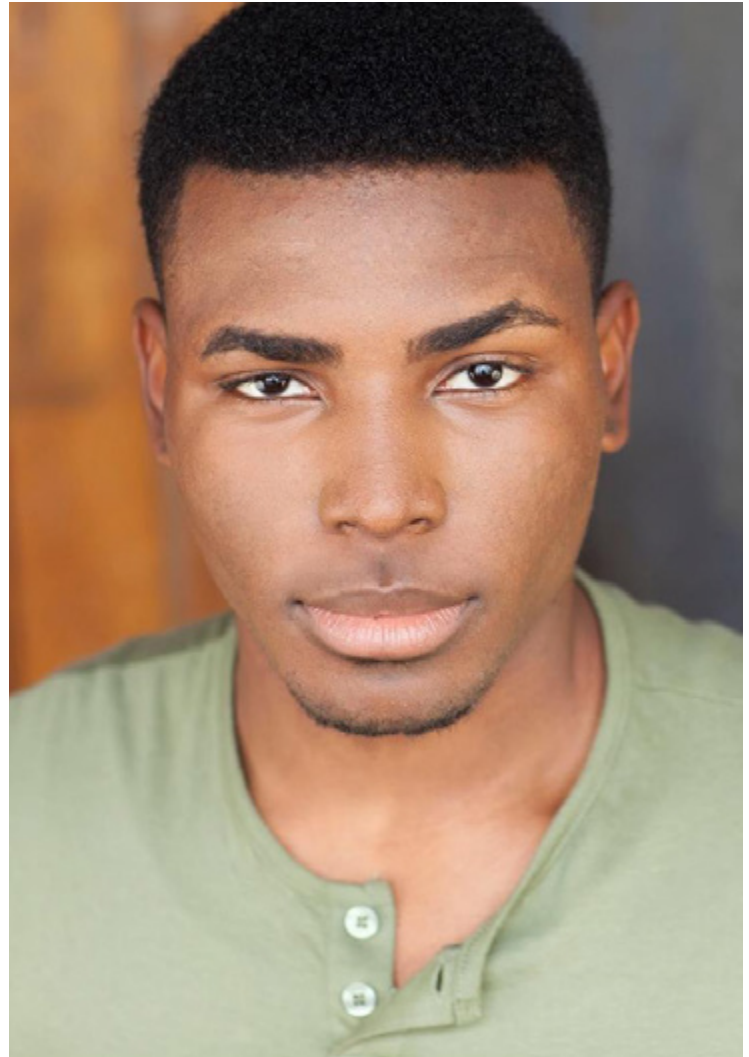
Throughout his career, Jalen has been able to master one fundamental habit and secret of success: confidence. "One can't have confidence of something they don't know well," stated Tammy. She also acknowledged how Jalen's awareness of his form and technique allow him to directly connect with his natural ability to express different states of emotion with fluidity and intention.

With his current successes, Jalen's plans are to continue building his reputation in Chicago and writing a one-man show, which he hopes to release by the end of the year. He attributes his success and confidence to attending MSA. "MSA helped give me the confidence," Jalen testified. "If I hadn't gone to MSA, I wouldn't have had the confidence to go out on my own—from Mississippi to Chicago."

Near the end of his sophomore year in high school, Jalen said he had considered quitting acting and entering the Base Pair program, a medical program at Murrah High School, until he ran into former classmate, Ciara

McMillian, in the hallway. "I asked her what she was doing, and she said she was applying for MSA," Jalen recalled. "She explained what the school was and right there; I decided to apply too. I got accepted, and well, you see where I am now."

In a word of "what if," "no," and "maybe" Jalen said that one place offers a small glint of hope. "Even if the whole world tells you "no"—MSA is that small light of 'yes.'"



# 2017 MSAAA OFFICER ELECTIONS

# NOW ACCEPTING BALLOTS

As we move into another year, it's time once again to decide who will serve our alumni association as officers in this year's 2017 MSAAA officer elections. **Right now we are accepting ballot submissions!** Thank you to those who have expressed interest in this blossoming organization. Link to the ballot and submission rules are listed below:

Please click the link below and complete your ballot:

**[2017 MSAAA OFFICER ELECTION BALLOT](#)**

Use this form to vote for who you want to serve as 2017 MSAAA (Mississippi School of the Arts Alumni Association) Officers. Ballots must be submitted by **10 p.m. May 1, 2017**. Individuals are allowed only one ballot submission. Only MSAAA members who have paid their annual membership dues are eligible to vote. Membership dues are \$10.00 and can be paid [here](#) at the school store on MSA's website. **Ballots will be nullified if membership dues are not paid within 24 hours of your ballot submission.**

**Candidates are listed on the next page.**

## GENERAL OFFICER DESCRIPTIONS

**PRESIDENT** He/She works directly with the vice president to organize meetings, and maintain effective communications between officers, representatives, alumni and MSA. The president is directly responsible for administering social media pages and the email account. The president must attend the yearly reunion in order to facilitate the yearly member's meeting as well as chair over all regularly scheduled meetings and organizes the alumni booth at Ole Brook Festival. Promotes the welfare and further the objectives of this Association. Plays a lead role in fundraising activities and other events.

**VICE PRESIDENT** Assists the president with organizing meetings, coordinating events, and maintaining communications between all officers, representatives and alumni. The vice president must attend all regularly scheduled meetings. He/She promotes the welfare and further the objectives of MSAAA. In the case that the president resigns or takes a leave of absence, the vice president will assume the president's responsibility and authority.

**SECRETARY** Records minutes from each meeting, helps maintain effective communication between officers, representatives, alumni, and MSA. Attends all regularly scheduled meetings and assists the president and vice-president as needed. The secretary promotes the welfare and further the objectives of this Association.

**REPRESENTATIVES** They play important supporting roles with MSAAA and alumni of their discipline. Representatives are responsible for the participation of their own disciplines during MSAAA events and should have the desire to provide opportunities for alumni associated with their field. They should bring new ideas to association regarding the involvement of the disciplines they represent, and they must be able to take initiative to carry out their ideas.



## PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE

**Brianna Moore-Christa**  
*Visual Discipline 2005*



## VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE

**Lauren Butler**  
*Visual Discipline 2006*



## VISUAL REPRESENTATIVE CANDIDATE

**Shelby Hamilton**  
*Visual Discipline 2009*



As Vice-President running for President in 2016, Brianna's goals were to continue raising money for the Rising Phoenix Scholarship and build connections between Brookhaven organizations and MSAAA for the benefit of MSA and its alumni, as well as expand the alumni database and increase membership in MSAAA. Over the past year as President, she oversaw the organization and planning of the 11th MSA Reunion, which included alumni from Whitworth College as well, a tradition that will continue this year for the 12th Reunion, as well as the implementation of the Rising Phoenix Scholarship, which was awarded to two MSA students this year, a junior and a senior. "I believe the most important things that MSAAA accomplished

this year, however, was the implementation of clear bylaws for our officers and merging MSAAA's financial account with the MSA Foundation to make it easier for alumni to connect with MSA and join the association. "I look forward to continuing to grow the association by building connections between alumni not only of MSA, but Whitworth as well."

2010-2011 Secretary

2014-2017 Class Representative (Class of 2005)

2014-2017 Newsletter Co-Editor

2015-2016 Vice-President

2016-2017 President

Lauren Butler currently serves as Vice President for MSAAA. Along with managing the newsletter *The Phoenix Quarterly* for over two consecutive years, she has played a role in reviewing bylaws as well as contributing ideas to specifically support MSA alumni. She has also supported alumni by organizing alumni exhibitions during Festival South 2016 in Hattiesburg, MS.

Raising money for the Rising Phoenix Scholarship is an important goal each year, and Lauren plans to design and sell MSAAA t-shirts to help raise funds as well as sell advertisement space in the newsletter. Lauren also hopes to increase MSA alumni involvement by forming closer relationships with graduating class presidents and representatives from previous years.

Having worked several years in team-oriented corporate environments and independently as a freelance graphic designer and illustrator, Lauren is equipped with knowledge, skills, and resources to coordinate teams, create processes, work efficiently, and formulate creative solutions. As a current officer of the association, Lauren knows that the ability to make effective, strategic decisions with clear understanding is essential to manage an ever-growing organization and have a positive impact.

2014-2016: Newsletter Producer

2015-2016: Visual Representative

2016-2017: Vice President

After graduating from MSA, Shelby Hamilton pursued her passion for art by attending Memphis College of Art and graduated with a BFA in Illustration. From there she taught art classes at the Jewish Community Center in Memphis, TN, worked with graphic design and social media at Delta Technical College in Horn Lake, MS, and became the Internal Communication and Design Specialist for Caesars Entertainment Mid-South in Robinsonville, MS. Shelby has knowledge in fine art and digital art, and she works with both on a daily basis. She understands the hardships that young artists face in small business and large corporations when continuing with their visual, artistic passion.

Shelby has worked closely with the MSAAA Newsletter Committee to create cover art pieces and has helped with the initial development of

*The Phoenix Quarterly* since its beginning in 2014. She has also produced other internal graphics for MSAAA.

Shelby hopes to set up a mentoring program between alumni and recent graduates to help young artists achieve what they want out of their art and to set them on the best possible path. Networking is very important, and the most MSA alumni can do is help network with one another. Shelby hopes to help provide more opportunities for MSA alumni to showcase their art around their community and worldwide if possible through competitions, showcases, and sales. She would like for our alumni to know what current students are learning and how they are growing through a school that they passionately support.

# ABSTRACT ART YOU CAN WEAR



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## MSA ALUMNAE SING FROM **THE SOUL**

**C**ontemporary gospel, a modern form of Christian music, is a genre of pop music that became popular in the 1960s as a more modern musical alternative to hymns and gospel music. Contemporary Christian artists are recognized at the Grammy awards, on the Billboard 200, accounts for 3.6 % of all record sales in the United States, and is the fastest growing radio market in the US. At least two MSA Alumni are making steady waves in the genre, with album releases, label signings, and huge fan followings:

Destiny Stone, a 2015 graduate, has plans to release her second solo album at the end of April according to the *Salisbury Post*. Her first album, *All Original* featured the soulful single "Colorblind" which is rated five stars on Google Play. One reviewer states, "Colorblind is amazing!!! This song will take you on a journey that you will never forget!" The single is available to preview on [Youtube](#).

Jasmine Murray, 2010 graduate, released a new single in February titled *Fearless* which was #6 for Billboard's Christian Digital Song Sales. She recently opened for MercyMe on tour and several fans inspired by the message of her new single have gotten "fearless" tattoos. Her debut EP is expected this year. *Fearless* is also available to preview on [Youtube](#).



# AD SPACE AVAILABLE!

## FREE FOR YOUR FIRST EDITION

Do you have a product or service to sell? Are you an artist in need of promotion?

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When it comes to fund raising, MSAAA wants to help support our association by integrating with our members and our local communities in Mississippi through selling ads in our newsletter *The Phoenix Quarterly*. All proceeds go to our Rising Phoenix Scholarship that helps fund a special incoming MSA junior each year. We even have volunteer designers to create your ad.

Ads will run for 12 months. Don't miss out on this amazing deal and help support MSA and our alumni association!

Request more information at [msartsalumni@gmail.com](mailto:msartsalumni@gmail.com).

**Pricing is listed below:**

**\*\*\*TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OUR AWESOME PRICES!\*\*\***

**Full Page ad:** \$50/year per ad

**Half Page ad:** \$30/year per ad (FREE for your first edition)

**Quarter ad:** \$15/year per ad

If you or someone you know is interested in buying an ad, please email [msartsalumni@gmail.com](mailto:msartsalumni@gmail.com)



# MSA EVENTS

For more information visit the MSA event calendar [here](#).

## **Visual Art Senior Showcase**

4/18, 4/25, 5/2

6:00 p.m.

*Enochs Gallery*

## **Literary Art Showcase**

4/24, 5/1

6:00 p.m.

*Elizabeth Cottage*

## **Media Arts Showcase**

5/4

7:00 p.m.

*Enochs Gallery*

## **Musical Theatre Showcase (Tentative)**

4/21

*Enoch Black Box Theater*

## **Senior Vocal Recital**

*Alumni interested in forming an alumni choir should plan to attend this event and the reunion to meet with Pat.*

4/28

7:00 p.m.

*Lampton Auditorium*

## **Junior Informal Dance Showcase**

4/27

7:00 p.m.

*Enoch Black Box Theater*

## **Senior Informal Dance Showcase**

5/11

7:00 p.m.

*Enoch Black Box Theater*

## **MSA Chorale Concert**

5/12

7:00 p.m.

*Lampton Auditorium*

## SUPPORT MSA RENOVATIONS

# BUY A COMMEMORATIVE BRICK

By purchasing an engraved brick you are given the means by which to become a lasting part of the Mississippi School of the Arts. Each newly engraved brick will be placed in the walkway of Lampton Auditorium at MSA. You will also be contributing to further improvements to the campus and facilities at MSA. Order forms are available at Mississippi School of the Arts or by clicking [here](#).

**\$100**  
4"x8" Brick

**\$250**  
8"x8" Brick

**\$500**  
8"x8" Granite  
Custom Paver



**NETWORK WITH OTHER ALUMNI**

# **JOIN MSAAA'S LINKEDIN GROUP**

Thanks to alumni suggestions, we now have a professional networking group LinkedIn for MSA alumni specifically! The goal of this group is for members to share industry-related resources, knowledge, and job opportunities.

Visit our page here:

<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/8539706>



## **FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK**

Stay up to date on opportunities, events, and what your fellow alumni are doing by following MSAAA on Facebook! If you are a member of our MSAAA Facebook group, make sure to follow us by checking the "Notifications" box on the top right hand side of our page. You don't want to miss out on the exciting things that are happening!

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/msaaa/>





# Bylaws of the Mississippi School of the Arts Alumni Association



## **Article I. Name, Purpose.**

Section 1. Name. The name of the organization shall be the Mississippi School of the Arts Alumni Association.

Section 2. Purposes. The purposes of the Association are to serve as a charitable organization which promotes the welfare of the Mississippi School of the Arts and provides a means by which alumni of the Mississippi School of the Arts and members of the community may contribute to the welfare of MSA. Such means may include, but are not limited to; encouragement of the enrollment of qualified persons to the Association; scholarship aid to current students of MSA, participation in community service projects, sponsorship of fund raising events that will benefit MSA directly or which will benefit the association in the raising of funds for scholarships; performing public relations work on behalf of MSA by initiating, facilitating and participating in non-political programs which will foster continued support of MSA.

## **Article II. Membership.**

Section 1. Members. Any person who has been accepted into the Mississippi School of the Arts shall become a member upon payment of annual dues or a one-time life membership fee.

Section 2. Honorary Members. The President of the Association may award honorary memberships. Honorary members shall be exempt from dues.

Section 3. Members' Rights and Duties. Members shall elect officers of the Association and participate in an annual meeting.

Section 4. Resignation. Any member or officer of the Association may resign by giving written notice to an officer of the association.

## **Article III. Meetings.**

Section 1. Annual Meeting. The Annual Meeting of the membership shall be held during the yearly reunion in May. Written notice stating the place, day, and hour of such meeting shall be published in the alumni newsletter, on the MSA website, and on the MSAAA facebook page by the January preceeding the reunion. Any matter relating to the affairs of the association may be brought up at the annual meeting

Section 2. Special Meetings. Special meetings of officers may be called by the President and Vice- President of the Association, or upon written petition of one fifth (1/5) of the members of the Association directed to the president, the president shall call a special meeting for the purpose specified in the petition and cause notice thereof to be given. No special meeting shall be called without written notice to all elected officers.

## **Article IV Officers.**

Section 1. Number and Title. The officers of the Association shall be: a president; a vice-president; and a secretary.

Section 2. Election, Term of Office, and Vacancies. The officers of the Association shall be elected in the first week of May prior to the Reunion for a term of one (1) year each. They shall take office immediately following said election. A vacancy among officers shall be filled as needed by the president and vice-president. All officers shall be, and remain during their term, members of the Association as defined in Article II.

Section 3. Duties and Powers. The duties of the officers shall be as follows:

- a. President. With the help of the vice-president, organizes meetings, reunions and fund raisers, maintains communications between officers and representatives, and communicates with MSA to plan the yearly reunion. The president must attend the eunion in order to facilitate the annual member's meeting.

b. Vice-President. With the help of the president, organizes meetings, maintains communications between officers and representatives, communicates with MSA to plan the yearly reunion.

c. Secretary. Takes minutes of all meetings and maintains communications between officers, representatives, and members as needed.

## **Article V. Foundation**

Section 1. Composition and Duties. The property, affair, and business of the Association shall be managed by the Mississippi School of the Arts Foundation and board of directors. The board of directors shall exercise all of the powers of the Association except such as are by law, or by the bylaws, conferred upon, or reserved to, the officers and members of the association.

## **Article VI. Financial.**

Section 1. Tax Exempt Status. The Association shall operate in such a manner as to retain a 501 ( C ) 3 charity status.

Section 2. Income. Income received by the Association may include, but is not limited to, annual dues, life membership fees, designated and undesignated contributions, event income, and designated and undesignated bequests.

a. Dues. Annual membership dues shall be set by current officers.

b. Life Membership Fees. Life Membership fees shall be set by current officers.

c. Contributions. The Association may solicit, in conjunction with requests for dues, or at other times, contributions for a specific purpose or for the general support of the Association.

d. Event Income. All income derived from the operation of events shall become part of the general funds of the Association.

e. Bequests. The Association may solicit, in conjunction with requests for dues, or at other times, bequests for a specific purpose or for the general support of the association. Bequests and income shall become part of the general funds of the association.

Section 3. Scholarship. The Association shall maintain a permanent Scholarship Fund, the Rising Phoenix Scholarship, for the financial support, while at MSA, of those students recommended by the director of MSA. All association funds generated in a calendar year shall be used to fund the Rising Phoenix Scholarship.

## **Article VII. Amendment, Restrictions, and Repeal.**

Section 1. Amendments. These bylaws may be amended, repealed, or added to, and new bylaws may be adopted at any annual or special meeting of the officers by the affirmative vote of a majority of the officers, in person or by proxy.

Section 2. Restrictions to Amendment. These bylaws shall not be altered or amended in such manner as to permit any member, officer, or MSA employee to receive profit from the operations of this Association, or to receive any part of the property or assets of the Association upon its dissolution or termination, or to permit any substantial part of the activities of the Association to consist of attempting to influence legislation, or of engaging in any political campaign for or against a candidate for public office.







Without your input and contributions, the tenth edition of our MSAAA newsletter would not have been possible. *The Phoenix Quarterly* is made by the alumni for the alumni. If you would like to contribute to future editions or have suggestions please reach out to our newsletter committee by emailing us at [msartsalumni@gmail.com](mailto:msartsalumni@gmail.com).

You can download previous editions of *The Phoenix Quarterly* [here](#).

Thanks for reading and be sure to share!



**Brianna Moore-Christa**  
President

**Lauren Butler**  
Vice President