

6th Annual
Playhouse West-Philadelphia

40 DAYS / 40 NIGHTS FILM CHALLENGE



2025 COMPETITION THEME: Love Stories

February 15, 2025 – March 26, 2025

INITIAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR PRODUCTION TEAMS

PLEASE READ THE INSTRUCTIONS THOROUGHLY.

The Theme for this year's challenge is: “Love Stories”. We are challenging filmmakers to tell a story that thematically uses love to dramatize a premise or theme. So many great stories, no matter what the genre, are actually love stories.

This does not mean that the film must be a traditional romance drama or romantic comedy kind of love story, where the boy gets (or doesn't get) the girl or visa versa. It certainly can be, of course. However, one could also dramatize a story where love is absent or lacking, where love is authentic or inauthentic, false, deceitful, overbearing or smothering, and many more. Also remember, there are stories of familial love, parental love, brotherly and sisterly love, love among friends, love between people and their pets, etc. The goal is just use the theme of love to dramatize something. Therefore, it is very important to define your theme or premise, and make sure it has something to do with... love!

Here are a few examples of how to define a premise or theme, in this case, using love:

- Authentic love enables courage.
- Authentic love conquers bigotry.
- Authentic love saves the crippled soul.
- Inauthentic love (or unequal love) destroys marriage.
- Deceitful love leads to jealousy and murder.
- Jealousy ruins love.
- Disloyalty destroys love.
- Overbearing love smothers love.
- Mutual respect enables love.
- Forgiveness opens one up to love.
- Cruelty degrades love.
- Selfless love cures the sick or hardened heart.
- Obsessive (or possessive) love destroy love.

The list of potential themes involving love is, of course, endless. For all of these themes there could actually be an opposite theme using same thematic elements. Remember, that all themes are dramatized based on the actions and/or qualities of a character or characters.

There will be several added elements/requirements in the Final Instructions, revealed on the first day of challenge.

STEPS TO PARTICIPATE:

1. REGISTER PRODUCTION TEAMS ONLINE: By February 15, 2025

Complete the Registration Form on our website: <https://www.playhousewest.com/40-days-40-nights-film-challenge>. You will need the following information:

- **Production Team Name**
- **Working Title of the Film**
- **Main Producer / Playhouse West Affiliation / Contact Information**

REQUIRED: A Playhouse West student (from any branch of the school), current or former, must be the main producer and contact person. Additionally, the main lead actor must be a current or former Playhouse West member (from any branch of the school).

- Non-Playhouse West members may be used to complete the cast, direct the film, co-write with a PW current or former member, or serve on the production crew.

2. SHORT FILM REQUIREMENTS

Filmmakers have full artistic control over the films and their content. However, on **Saturday, February 15th, at 8:30 a.m., each production team will be given FINAL INSTRUCTIONS,** detailing specific elements which must be incorporated into the film. We usually have one performance/character element, a story element and a cinematic element, all which must be organically and intrinsically incorporated into the action of the story.

- **REQUIRED RUNNING TIME:** a minimum of two (2:00) minutes to a maximum of thirty minutes (30:00) in total running time, including all credits. *However, we strongly encourage filmmakers to try and make a film that is 20 minutes or less.*
- The final end credit title for all completed films must state the following:

**This film was originally made as part of the
Playhouse West-Philadelphia
40 Days / 40 Nights Short Film Challenge
2025**

- **Accepted Genres:** Comedy, Romantic Comedy, Drama, Romance Drama, Suspense/Thriller, Horror, Sci-Fiction
- **Genres not Accepted:** Documentary, Animation

3. ADDITIONAL TIPS

- The best stories are usually very *personal* to the story-teller, so for us, the more personal the story is, the better. Additionally, we are looking for stories with a solid, clear theme or premise, meaning, that there is a clear point being dramatized by the action of the story. A personal story with a solid theme can be expressed in many ways and through different genres.
- The best stories are a cause and effect series, or chain of events, thematically wedded together, where the end is inevitable from the beginning. The action and moments should lead us, shot-by-shot and scene-by-scene, through the cause and effect events to a final climax and resolution.

Therefore, we encourage you to do a detailed outline of the story before beginning to write the script. A solid, clear and well-written outline will help you better see and achieve a true cause and effect story.

- Remember that movies are visual, and that an ounce of behavior is worth a pound of words. If you can show it, you don't need to say it.
- Avoid on-the-nose dialogue. Dialogue is best when it's subtextual.
- The more you prepare in pre-production, the better production will be. Part of pre-production is also preparing for post-production.
- We encourage everyone to create contracts for the production, for each cast member, member of the production team and tech crew. A contract can help define roles and duties, obligations and expectations for each person involved, including who is entitled to what credit, what order of credit, etc.. Contracts may help you avoid conflicts down the road.

4. TURNING IN THE COMPLETED FILM

- Each Production Team must submit an **MP4 file** of the completed film to the below Dropbox link by **11:59 p.m., PST, on Wednesday, March 26, 2025.**

DROPBOX LINK: [**40 DAYS/40 NIGHTS SHORT FILM CHALLENGE 2025**](#)

- Projects should be **exported as an MP4 file, export H.264, 1920x1080 aspect ratio, with the highest quality image and audio codec settings.** *Please strictly adhere to this!*
- Please preview your exported film entry for errors in it's entirety before submitting it.

5. **There will not be a public screening of these films.**

- Award: One film will receive an automatic selection and screening at the 12th Annual Playhouse West Film Festival-Philadelphia, August 22-24, 2025, and have the admission fee waived.
- All other entries are encouraged to submit their films to the PWFF-Philly.
- Furthermore, all productions completed, or not completed, will then have more time to re-shoot, re-edit, alter or enhance their films before the 2025 PWFF-Philly submission deadline on May 10.

Start putting together your production teams! Registration is now open!