

4th Annual  
Playhouse West-Philadelphia  
40 DAYS / 40 NIGHTS FILM CHALLENGE



**COMPETITION GOAL:**  
**Dramatize a Premise or Theme**

**February 3, 2023 – March 15, 2023**

**INITIAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR PRODUCTION TEAMS**

PLEASE READ THE INSTRUCTIONS THOROUGHLY.

We are challenging the filmmakers to use their film to dramatize a solid, clear, premise or theme.

The **PREMISE**, or **THEME** is the ruling idea of the story that has a point to it. This point is dramatized through the characters and action of the story. You may also consider the theme as the “spine” or “armature”, meaning the central idea that binds or holds the story together and gives it a form and structure, a thread that ties it all together, leading to a climax and resolution. This theme, premise or spine is what gives the story a purpose for being told. It’s the *why* you are telling the story.

**STEPS TO PARTICIPATE:**

**1. REGISTER PRODUCTION TEAMS ONLINE: By February 1, 2023**

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

- **Production Team Name**
- **Working Title of the Film**
- **One Sentence Synopsis**

Don't state the whole story or everything that happens, just give a sort of TV Guide synopsis. Here are some examples:

- After the sudden death of her husband in Iraq, a soldier's widow and mother of three tries to put her life back together in her small, southern town.
- Two friendly rivals living in the same apartment complex compete for the affections of a beautiful new tenant.
- A popular high school teacher fights to save his reputation after he's accused of corrupting a minor.

- **Genre**
- **Main Producer / Playhouse West Affiliation / Contact Information**

**REQUIRED:** A Playhouse West student, current or former, must be the main producer.  
Additionally, the lead actor must be a current or former Playhouse West member.

- Non-PW members may be used to complete the cast, direct the film, or serve on the production crew, if you wish.

## 2. SHORT FILM REQUIREMENTS

Filmmakers have full artistic control over the films and their content. However, on Friday, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 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 three (3:00) minutes to a maximum of forty minutes (40:00) in total running time, including all credits.
- 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 Film Challenge  
2023**

- **Accepted Genres:** Comedy, Romantic Comedy, Drama, Romance Drama, Suspense/Thriller, Horror
- **Genres not Accepted:** Sci-Fiction, Mockumentary/Pseudo-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. Everyone has stories to tell, dare to tell them. 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 stories could be completely fictional, or a fiction story based on a true story.
- 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 and member of the production team. A contract can help define roles and duties, as well as obligations and expectations for each person involved. 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. on Tuesday, March 16, 2022**. DROPBOX LINK: <https://www.dropbox.com/request/pbeZejXq0HyttoHmb3w3>
- Projects should be **exported as H.264, 1920x1080, with the highest quality and codec settings**. *Please 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.**

- Awards: This year we will select the top films from four categories:

##### **Comedy, Drama, Suspense/Thriller, and Horror**

- The top films from each category will receive an automatic selection and screening at the 10th Annual Playhouse West Film Festival-Philadelphia, August 18-20, 2023, 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 2023 PWFF-Philly submission deadline on May 21.