

A Guide to Receiving and Understanding The Festival Adjudication Process.

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Association of New Zealand Drama Adjudicators

The adjudication process is in essence informative and educational – for the players, directors, technicians and the audience.

The Adjudicator:

Expresses their opinion of excellence, based on specialized educational training and years of practical experience.

Although it could be seen as a subjective view; based on the execution of acting, over-all work, artistic achievement and technical skill in one production in one theatre space at one particular moment in time! No more no less.

The assessment framework used by the Adjudicator, considers the following aspects: the play genre, design/concept, direction, acting, overall impression. This brings an objective view to the adjudicator's thoughts.

Their responsibility is to offer a detached and impersonal view of the overall success and unity of the production. This can be confirming and dis-confirming.

Phase 1 – the on-stage adjudication.

Its main purpose is to enlighten the audience as to genre and style, coupled with immediate constructive feed-back to the players.

This in many cases helps the audience understand what they have just witnessed. Particularly, if it is outside their own theatrical experience. Audiences sometimes like to see if they agree with the Adjudicator, as things reach people differently.

The Adjudicator also addresses what the supports and challenges of the play/production were and how they were met. These often become the points for further discussion with the teams off-stage.

Phase 2 – the green-room follow-up:

One of the many difficulties new directors and teams have is in the immediate aftermath of a performance, when the blood is running hot and the performance energy still flowing, to assimilate the comments from the stage. So in the green-room they have the opportunity to clarify the comments made.

This is a discussion time so teams should contribute, to make it a two way process. They can seek clarification of terms used by the adjudicator.

It is a time for the adjudicator to fully explain and discuss with the team more deeply what worked and what seemed not to.

Phase 3 – the written report:

The written report is set out with the assessment framework headings, giving the adjudicator a guide towards a balance in their comments on the production. It is where topics raised and discussed previously may be expanded and given in greater detail. It also gives you time, to digest and process those comments.

It is also here that an adjudicator's personal strengths and style of approach, may enhance their comments.

For instance:

- Adjudicator 1 may focus on the literary aspects and be strong on voice work. Take their comments about the social implications and structure of the script, plus vocal dynamics and use them to deepen your production's approach to the author's intention, aligned with character growth.
- Adjudicator 2 may be a great visual exponent or expert at physical realization. Suggesting ways of staging that could enhance the actors' presence and character development. Use it to give variation both visually and aurally.
- Adjudicator 3 may be an advocate of truth and depth of emotional realization. This could be tied in to thought processing and breathing patterns, in other words 'inner action'. (Relevant also in comedy!)

Throughout the process of moving through the levels of a Festival, you will receive what may at first appear to be conflicting information from each adjudicator. It is not. This is because the current Adjudicator, has honed in on a different aspect of the production or style, to help you forward and deepen your work.

They are not telling you to change your production, but to find ways of enhancing it. It is not their job to tell you how to redirect your work. Don't be confused by this.

What they are offering are 'ways of working'. Of uncovering and expressing from various angles. Not re-jigging or re-directing your production.

Actors: you need to take what you can from each Adjudicator, what you understand at your current level of development and then apply it.

Directors: never stop finding new ways of working yourself either. In seeking to deepen your own work – in doing so, you will enhance everyone around you.

Criticism offered by an adjudicator is most helpful when seen by directors, actors, and technicians as coming from a theatrical/educational base. The emphasis should be on growth of theatre skills, stimulation of fresh ideas for discussion, and encouragement to apply newly understood theatrical principals in future productions.

The adjudication process is helping you to gain new skills, to enhance your work.

"Theatre is not a way of life – but a way to life".

Theatre is a 'team sport'. It also needs camaraderie and the joy of 'playing'.