

## RUNNING A LOCAL THEATREFEST



### Introduction

**TheatreFest** is New Zealand's preeminent national short-play festival where theatre groups and secondary schools from around Aotearoa enter any form of performance art, either competitively or non-competitively. Where all participating teams entered receive adjudication.

Those entering competitively are eligible for selection to progress to the next round of *TheatreFest*, Regionals.

- **Local TheatreFest:** is organised within a Region that makes it easy for groups to travel to, and can be held any time up to August of any given year.
- **Four Regional TheatreFest:** upper and lower North Island, upper and lower South Island, are hosted by a group within each of those Regions, and are generally held in the latter parts of August.
- **ShowCase:** is normally held the third weekend in September where up to eight presentations are selected from *TheatreFest*, for the National *ShowCase*.

At each level, the performances are usually Saturday evening and Sunday afternoon, allowing time for travel and technical rehearsals. Once dates are known, Adjudicator's are appointed for each *TheatreFest* Levels, by Theatre New Zealand.

Groups entering *TheatreFest* are to complete an **Entry Form**, due early July. (Dates TBC) All groups must be financial members of Theatre NZ. The *TheatreFest* Regional Co-ordinators receive ALL entry forms and disperses them to the Local Organiser.

Conditions of Entry for **TheatreFest** and **General Information** sheet, can be found on the TNZ *TheatreFest* website - <https://www.theatrenz.co.nz/index.php/theatrefest>

# Organising a Local TheatreFest

Consider this as easy as mounting a mini production and training programme.

When organising a *TheatreFest*, at whatever level, a **Local TheatreFest Organising Group** needs to be set up to run the festival and should consist of the following:

## Local TheatreFest Organiser

To oversee the efficient running of *TheatreFest* and liaises with the Regional Coordinator as the main contact person.

## Stage Manager who is responsible for:

- The overall smooth running of the Festival rehearsals, performances and backstage,
- All aspects of Health and Safety, ensuring teams adhere to the Festival Rules.
- Organising dressing room space and backstage space for storage of set and props for up to four teams per performance/session. Teams are responsible for:
- Getting their set and props on and off the stage during both rehearsal and performance – in performance it is 10 minutes set up and 5 minutes to strike.
- Note; the SM and crew are **NOT** responsible for any of this nor are they responsible for providing set and props for teams unless in exceptional circumstances and, the has arranged this, prior to *TheatreFest*.
- The requirement of the venue is to provide a 'Black Box' stage.

## Technical Management

- A Lighting and Sound Technician who is/are responsible for setting up lights and sound equipment, based on information supplied by the teams and overseeing all lighting & sound requirements.
- Lighting: a basic rig, then specials and other lighting requirements are added in, depending on the lighting plan supplied by the team. The Lighting Technician may or may not operate depending on whether or not the team supplies their own operator.
- Sound: a Sound Technician sets up an appropriate sound system to oversee all the sound requirements for the teams. The Sound Technician may or may not operate, depending on what is requested by the teams.
- If teams are supplying their own operators, explain clearly how the in-house system works. Ensure all teams adhere to all instructions from the venues Technical Manager/Lighting/Sound Technician.

## Venue Stage Plan and Technical Facilities

- Prepare a plan of the stage and possibly the auditorium with dimensions included and where black tabs/legs will be hung, for entrances and exits.
- Indicate if a cyclorama is also hung.
- If the stage is raised and if there are steps up to the stage, where they are placed.
- Provide a list of lights and sound equipment available (including where the speakers are situated).
- If any special technical equipment such as a follow spot, data projector, hazer etc is not available at the venue they are to be supplied by the teams.

## Time Keeper

Times each presentation from *house lights down to house lights up* and records the time on a time sheet supplied by the *TheatreFest* Regional Coordinator.

This is to be given to the SM at the end of *TheatreFest* who is to advise the Organising Group, if any presentation runs over the 50-minute time limit.

## Adjudicators Minder

- To assist and look after the adjudicator during *TheatreFest*.
- Includes meeting the adjudicator when they arrive in town, and if they have no vehicle, take them to their accommodation, check they have everything they require and also taking them to and from the venue if they require transport.
- The Minder is also responsible for taking the adjudicator for a tour of the venue, including backstage and being introduced to all Festival staff and helpers, especially the SM and TM. This can be done during a time when the teams are not rehearsing and well before the performances begin.
- During the performances the Minder sits with the adjudicator and attends to anything the adjudicator may require and also sits-in during the Greenroom team talk, to indicate when 10 minutes is up. The Minder is not required to go through a script of the play unless asked to by the adjudicator.

## Team Liaison Person/s

- To be responsible for meeting teams when they first arrive at the venue
- To show them around and with the SM, where their dressing room is and where to unload/store any set and props.
- To be available to assist with anything the team may require during their participation.

## Front of House Manager

- Oversees the FOH including running the box office and door sales, foyer displays, catering and bar if part of *TheatreFest*, plus organising Ushers.
- Arranging a system of booking and selling tickets and advising the local community and especially teams how to book tickets.
- With the Ushers, ensure the comfort and safety of the audience and to show them to their seats in a courteous and friendly manner.
- To know all safety and emergency procedures of the venue.
- To run the bar if one is operating as per the venues license/instructions and to provide food as responsible hosts. To cater for after show functions.

## Marketing

- Publicise the event as widely as possible, setting up details on social media, press releases in local newspapers, plus interviews. Advise other Groups/Schools that *TheatreFest* is on and involve students as volunteers to help with running *TheatreFest*.
- The title of the event is normally the Region/Local *TheatreFest*, i.e. Hamilton Local *TheatreFest*.
- Ensure how to book tickets is well distributed, especially to teams, and decide if any complimentary tickets are going to be given out to special guests or donors etc.

## Prepare a Budget

*See separate spreadsheet.*

- The adjudicators travel and accommodation are the responsibility of the Local *TheatreFest* Organising Group up to \$400. Anything over this is covered by TNZ.
- TNZ pays the adjudicators fee. Apply for local grants if this is considered appropriate.
- Income is generated mainly from ticket sales, normally \$20 and \$15 for unwaged, students, seniors etc. Teams could be charged \$10 a ticket for the nights they are not performing. Free the night they are performing.
- A social function at the end is always a good idea but keep catering costs down by using self-catering.
- Running a cash bar/nibble nook can also bring in more revenue.

## **Prior to *TheatreFest* Entries Closing: Adjudicator**

- The Local Organiser will liaise with the Adjudicator regarding travel to and from *TheatreFest* location and arrange accommodation of which the Local *TheatreFest* Organising Group is responsible for paying – unless the Adjudicator has private contacts.
- If flights are involved it may be that the adjudicator books and pays for them, and then is reimbursed by the Local *TheatreFest* Organising Group.

## **Once *TheatreFest* Entries Close**

Entries from groups wanting to participate in *TheatreFest* are lodged online and processed by the *TheatreFest* Regional Coordinator.

Once entries close the *TheatreFest* Regional Coordinator will send to the Local Organiser the following:

- Copies of the entry forms with contact details, the cast and crew list along with a brief synopsis for inclusion in the Programme
- Copies of their stage and lighting plans
- Scripts of each presentation sent in electronically
- The Regional Coordinator is responsible for sending copies of the scripts to the Adjudicator
- The Local *TheatreFest* Organising Group will draw up a programme of performances and technical rehearsals schedule (up to 60 minutes per team maximum).

When creating a programme make it interesting and varied, taking into account the length of each presentation, the style of presentation such as comedy, drama, musical etc, and the size of the cast. Also, how far teams are to travel or if they are local may also be a determining factor, as they may ask for a particular session. Each session of performances would normally have up to four presentations.

## **Programme and Rehearsal Times**

Once the playing order is determined and the rehearsal times of each have been set, the teams will need to be contacted and sent the following:

- Their rehearsal time and where they are performing in the programme
- The prepared stage and lighting plan (or list) of the venue
- The contact details of their Team Liaison Person
- Request for any changes to the cast and crew for the programme.
- Welcome pack of information about the location (including a map of where the venue is)
- Information on how to book tickets

Ensure all teams respond in a timely manner.

A meeting of directors and technical teams in the venue prior to *TheatreFest* is sometimes useful, for those who haven't seen the venue, in order to familiarise themselves with it.

## **On The Day**

During their rehearsal, teams should focus on it being a technical rehearsal to sort out lights, sound, vocal dynamics, actors testing acoustics in the venue and, becoming familiar with the stage lay-out rather than a full rehearsal of the production. Once the tech rehearsal is over, ensure that the teams are back into the theatre well before the start of their presentation. Discipline backstage during rehearsals and presentations is the responsibility of the Stage Manager.

Help to engender the 'Festival Spirit' by giving teams unused seats at the back of the auditorium.

## The Format for Each Session

- After each presentation teams have five minutes to strike their set, then return to the auditorium and sit in allocated seats (front row) to hear the adjudicator.
- Once the teams are seated the Adjudicator goes up on stage and gives a five-minute public adjudication.
- After this the Adjudicator goes with the team and the minder to the Greenroom for a ten-minute team talk. (ensure that there are sufficient chairs in the Greenroom)
- During this time the next team are setting up their presentation on stage
- Once the Adjudicator and Minder have returned and are ready, the next presentation can begin.
- During the ten-minute set up, no technical or lighting change is done unless absolutely necessary.
- The Adjudicator will need a desk two-thirds back in the auditorium, with a lamp (blue gel on) a water jug and glass. No audience are to sit in the seats immediately behind the Adjudicator or in the half row (to either the left or right of the desk), so they have easy access to and from the stage. Choose the side nearest the stage access.
- At the end of *TheatreFest* the Minder arranges for a quiet place for the adjudicator to sit and consult their marking sheet and work out any awards and, those productions they would recommend going forward to the next level.

## Awards Ceremony

The very final event of a *TheatreFest* is the Awards Ceremony. A range of awards have been identified and are available from the Regional Co-ordinator. However, Local *TheatreFest* Organising Group in conjunction with the adjudicator can determine additional awards if deemed necessary.

Award Certificates are now standardised throughout the country, using a Theatre New Zealand *TheatreFest* template, which the *TheatreFest* Regional Coordinator will supply.

**It is imperative that at the conclusion of the Awards Ceremony, an announcement of those presentations selected to go forward to the Regional TheatreFest is made.**

A **social function** to allow everyone to unwind after Award presentation is often a good way to finish off. *TheatreFest*. Manaakitanga engenders a real 'Festival Spirit'.

A report-form to be completed on the Adjudicator and sent back to the TheatreFest Regional coordinator, along with a feed-back form for to the National Executive, with recommendations on any aspect for the improvement of running future festivals.

## TheatreFest Local Awards (Encouraging) / He Tohu Kairangi "We only fail when we fail to try"

- **Certificate of Participation**
- **Magic Moment**
- **Distinction in Acting**
- **Distinction in Directing**
- **Distinction in Ensemble Playing**
- **Distinction in Overall Design**
- **Distinction in Use of Music (Recorded or Live)**
- **Distinction Award**
  - Production of a New Zealand Play
  - Production of a Comedy/Farce
  - Production of a Drama
  - Overall Production

