

JUDGING STANDARDS 2010 – 2011



Dear Judges:

Thank you for volunteering to be an ATAC judge. Your role is a very important part of ATAC's effort to promote theatre arts in San Antonio. Your willingness to support San Antonio theatre arts makes you a very special theatre patron. You have already demonstrated that you possess the qualifications to be an adjudicator. Your resume' indicated to the board that you have many years experience as a participant in theatre, either in an academic context or in the community theatre arena. In many cases judges have an impressive amount of professional theatre experience as well. All of our judges love theatre and enjoy attending numerous theatre productions each year. Indeed, your participation as a judge is a labor of love and demonstrates your commitment to theatre excellence.

Any adjudication of a fine art is basically subjective. However, we have tried to present some guidelines that will help you to evaluate each production on its own merits rather than a comparison to other productions. Remember ATAC recognizes "theatre excellence" and does not force productions, technicians, or actors to compete with one another for an ATAC Globe Award; therefore, **it is important that as a judge you do not compare or rank productions.** Your ballots will reflect an evaluation that RATES the production on a scale of 1-10.

Please refer to the following for guidance:

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Again, thank you for your valuable time and expertise! It is our sincere hope that your participation as an ATAC adjudicator is an enjoyable one. If you have any questions concerning these suggested guidelines for adjudication, please contact any ATAC board member and discuss your thoughts and insights.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

1. **SHOULD I RECUSE MYSELF?** With some productions judges will have to recuse themselves from evaluating either the production or certain individuals (actors, designers/technicians, directors, etc.) Here are the guidelines you should follow:
 - A. Do not judge a production if you are on the board of that theatre company.
 - B. Do not judge a production if you are involved in the production (as a cast member, a designer/technician, director, etc) or even listed as an advisor.
 - C. Do not judge an actor, designer/technician, director, etc if that person is a member of your family or related to you in any way.
 - D. Do not judge an actor, designer/technician, director, etc if that person is a current student of yours.
 - E. Do not judge an actor, designer/technician, director, etc if they are a fellow employee.
 - F. Do not judge any part of a school production if you are a teacher at that school.

A judge MAY judge individual actors and/or technicians in a production if there is not conflict of interest. (Just because you may have a conflict of interest with one person in a production, does not mean you cannot judge the rest of that production. Simply recuse yourself from that one category.)

A judge MAY judge a FORMER student.

IF YOU FEEL AS THOUGH THERE MIGHT BE ANY CONFLICT OF INTEREST OR IF YOU CANNOT BE OBJECTIVE ABOUT A PRODUCTION, TECHNICIAN, OR ACTOR IT IS BEST TO RECUSE YOURSELF.

2. **COMP TICKETS:** Please check with each individual theatre for availability of comp tickets. Some theatres will give you a comp ticket, while others will offer a discount. Some theatres do not offer either comp or reduced price tickets. Try to bring a paying patron(s) with you if you receive a comp ticket.
3. *******KEEP A LOW PROFILE:** When attending a production do not announce to others in the audience that you are a judge. Do not bring a notebook and take notes during the performance. If you must make notations in the program do so during intermission. **DON'T MAKE COMMENTS ABOUT THE PLAY DURING INTERMISSION OR AFTER THE PERFORMANCE. OTHERS MAY BE EVESDROPPING AND YOU MAY END UP BEING QUOTED IN THE NEWSPAPER LATER THAT WEEK!!!**
4. **TRY NOT TO COMPARE THE PRODUCTION YOUR ARE ADJUDICATING TO OTHER PRODUCTIONS YOU HAVE SEEN OF THAT PLAY.** It may be unfair to compare the performance you see with other productions that were performed in other cities or other productions of the play produced in San Antonio. Your recollection of those productions changes over a period of time and many have a tendency to remember plays as being the “definitive” production of that play. Judge each play on its own merits.

5. **KEEP AN OPEN MIND.** One of the main purposes of theatre is to let you see the world from different perspectives and experience differing viewpoints and lifestyles. There may be times when what you see on stage will be something you disagree with or even find offensive. In situations like this, it is helpful to keep an open mind while you are watching the performance. Try to suspend your judgment based your own personal standards of ethics or morality if possible while you are watching the performance. After the performance, if you find that you are unable to objectively evaluate the play because of the content, you may want to recuse yourself from adjudicating that particular production.
6. **SEPARATE ACTING FROM TECH:** Consider the acting, directing, and the design/technical aspects of the production as SEPARATE evaluations. Many times a play might be lacking in technical superiority but may have wonderful acting, or be the other way around.
7. **DON'T COMPARE TO OTHER PRODUCTIONS:** Since we have moved from the ranking of plays to the RATING of a play, we not longer have to compare one show we have seen with another. Under our format numerous plays can be worthy of recognition.
8. **TRY NOT TO INFLUENCE OTHER JUDGES:** Off-handed comments to another judge before they experience the performance for themselves can create an expectation that may influence their opinion. Don't call other judges and tell them there is a "must see" play, or tell them to stay away from performances because you did not like the show. After you have completed your ballot is the appropriate time to discuss your reactions with others. Please refrain from discussing productions in a public forum, including Facebook and email blasts.
9. **DO NOT LEAVE THE THEATRE UNTIL THE PERFORMANCE HAS ENDED.** Although you may feel motivated to leave the theatre during intermission, please do not. There is probably no greater insult to a theatre company's production than to leave early. Of course if there is an emergency or illness a judge may excuse themselves. Heed the warnings that a theatre company may announce before you see the production: "Sexual Content," "Not Suited For Children," "Violent Content." Obviously, a judge may not submit a ballot unless they have seen the entire show.
10. **COMPARE THE BALLOT TO THE PROGRAM:** Sometimes the director/producer will make a last minute change of cast or crew in the program that was not turned in with ATAC asked for ballot information. Please keep your program and compare the names on the program to the names in the ballot to make sure there is agreement.

CODE OF ETHICS

In order to maintain objective criteria for judges, ATAC requests that the following Code of Ethics will be maintained:

- Judges will NOT judge any production in which they are a part of the production.
 - Judges will NOT adjudicate any production in which there are family members, relatives, or current students.
 - Judges will NOT adjudicate any production in which they are a member of the company's board of directors.
 - Artistic Directors, Co-Artistic Directors or production company administrators will not be eligible to adjudicate any production.
 - Judges will recuse themselves from adjudicating a production if they have any bias (moral and/or ethical) toward the selection or the content of a play. Judges will recuse themselves from adjudicating a production if they have ANY bias toward the production or the production company.
 - Judges will maintain a low profile at the productions they attend. Judges are asked not to identify themselves as ATAC judges to other theatre patrons, to members of the company, or to media representatives.
 - Judges will not discuss their ratings with actors, directors, company administrators, or other ATAC judges.
 - Judges will not discuss their opinions with other judges unless the other judges have seen the production and turned in their ballot.
- ** Any judge found not abiding by the Code of Ethics will be dismissed and their ballots not counted.**

KEY JUDGING CONSIDERATIONS

ACTING:

1. Was the actor you are evaluating believable, given the requirements of the play? If they were believable, how did they seem to accomplish this? If they weren't believable, what occurred to impair or destroy their believability? It is possible to dislike a character but still admire the actor's performance of that character. Often a criticism of an actor is, "they were just being themselves." Acting is far more complex than just being your own personality. Often the best performance seems to the untrained eye as if the actor isn't working hard to play their character.
2. Is the actor COMMITTED to the character? Does he/she respond physically, vocally, and emotionally to the characterization with proper responses? If the characterization asks the actor to grieve for the loss of a loved one, do they show a proper physical and emotional response that moves you?
3. Acting is more than just an individual performance. Evaluate the response of the individual actor to the other actors in the play. Look at the ensemble work. Did they work well together or were they working to upstage one another and draw attention to themselves? Good actors are giving as much as they are receiving from the other actors.
4. Try to judge each actor separately in the context of what their craft requires from them. Vocal characterization, physical movement, and the willingness to allow other characters to respond in the space of their character are all key elements of good adjudication.

DIRECTING:

1. The director unifies a production and frequently provides an interpretation of the text. Did there seem to be a unifying idea behind the production? If so, were you able to see it embodied in the production? Was it embodied in striking images or in the way the actors developed their performance? (This can be one of the most difficult aspects of a production to evaluate, even for very experienced theatre patrons!)
2. The director is normally not DIRECTLY responsible for the set design, costumes, lighting, make-up etc. However, they are responsible for coordinating these elements into a unified whole. Did all these elements come together within the context of what the director was given to work with?
3. How did the director move the actors around on stage? Were there any moments when you felt that such movement was particularly effective or ineffective? Were entrances and exits smooth? Were the characters given direction that enhanced their performance? Were characters placed in positions that made logical sense or heightened the audience's reactions to the action in the play?
4. Did the pace or rhythm of the production seem right? Did it drag or move swiftly?
5. Did one scene follow another in a unified format?

6. Did the director get the most out of what her or she had to work with? Often a production may not have the best equipment or facility to work with. Often a cast of actors may be uneven in terms of experience and/or talent. It is possible that some of the best direction you may see comes from productions that have the worst facilities or have actors that lack experience.

MUSIC DIRECTION:

1. Judges should focus on what is heard during the performance: Are the tempi correct? Is the orchestra playing in tune? Are the singers singing vigorously, on pitch, and in harmony with one another? Is the musical performance dull, or beautiful, or even exciting?
2. The music director gets the credit for the quality of singing and for the quality of the orchestra. The music director also gets credit for the loudness of the orchestra – is the orchestra drowning out the singers?
3. Globe Awards for music direction have been given to shows of all sorts of musical scores from exceedingly complex to very simple, and from live orchestras to pre-recorded tracks.

CHOREOGRAPHY

Judging considerations for choreography are currently under review and will be provided to judges before the beginning of the new 2010 – 2011 season (**see final page**)

DESIGN

***Some Considerations for Design:** Please note that theatrical designers sometimes have very little to do with the implementation of their designs. However, while designers aren't necessarily responsible for the construction quality of their designs, all good designers recognize, plan for, and design within the constraints/limitations of time, labor, and budget. In this way, every design, whether it be the most simple or the most complex, should be fulfilled to an acceptable level in regards to the quality of its construction/implementation.*

Think of it this way: Is a brilliant design really any good if it's not finished and ready for an audience?

COSTUME DESIGN:

1. What information was conveyed by the costumes about time, place, characters, and situation? What methods did the designer use to convey this information to you (i.e. style, color, texture, ornamentation, etc)? Please keep in mind that every production's approach is different, and it is not always necessary to convey all of these things. For example, the costumes may convey a specific year, but not convey any specific location or place. What is important is that the information conveyed seems appropriate.

2. What was the time period of the costumes (keep in mind that the designer's intention may have been to create a sense of "timeless")? Were the costumes realistic or stylized? Were the costumes from a period other than the period in which the play was written or originally set? If so, how did this affect your understanding of the production? Did the choice seem appropriate given the production's apparent approach?
3. Did the designer appear to use color (or lack thereof) to give you clues to the personalities of the characters? Was color (or lack of color) used effectively?
4. Did the costumes seem appropriate to the characters, their personality, social status, occupation, etc? Why or why not?
5. Did the costumes help you to understand conflicts, differing social groups, and interpersonal relationships? If so, how?

(PLEASE NOTE: COSTUME DESIGN HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH CONSTRUCTION AND SEWING. See above considerations.)

LIGHTING DESIGN

1. What information was conveyed by the lighting about time, place, characters, and situations? What methods did the designer use to convey this information to you? Please keep in mind that every production's approach is different, and it is not always necessary to convey all of these things. For example, the lighting may convey time of day, but not convey any specific location or place. What is important is that the information conveyed seems appropriate.
2. Describe the mood of the lighting. How was color and intensity used to affect the mood? Was the lighting appropriate for each scene?
3. Was the lighting stylized? Was it realistic or nonrealistic and did the approach seem consistent throughout the production?
4. Were the actors properly lit? Could they be seen? Please keep in mind that sometimes there may be a conscious choice that purposely makes them difficult to see. What is important is that the choices seem appropriate for the various moments of the action.
5. Did the lighting enhance or detract from the performance?

SOUND DESIGN

1. Was there an overall concept to the sound design? Was there a concept that complimented the production and the choice of the play?
2. Did the sound compliment the actions and the characters on stage? Did it enhance the quality of the actions the production or did it detract? Why or why not?

3. Did the sound convey the appropriate time period of the play, the setting and the action? Why or why not?
4. Did you believe the sound effects within the context of the play?

SET DESIGN

1. What information was conveyed by the scenery about time, place, characters, and situation? What methods did the designer use to convey this information to you (i.e. architectural style, color, texture, ornamentation, etc)? Please keep in mind that every production's approach is different, and it is not always necessary to convey all of these things. For example, the scenery may convey a specific room in a house, but not convey any specific year. What is important is that the information conveyed seems appropriate.
2. Did there appear to be an overall visual theme to the set design that was integrated into the demands of the production? Did the choice seem appropriate given the production's apparent approach?
3. What was the time period in which the scenery was set? Did the set represent a period other than the period in which the play was written or originally set? If so, how did this affect your understanding of the production? Did the choice seem appropriate given the production's apparent approach?
4. Did the set design enhance or impede the actions of the actors? Did the choice seem appropriate given the production's apparent approach?
5. Were changes in set design between scenes or acts smooth and incorporated into the timing of the play?
6. Was the set design aesthetically pleasing?

ORIGINAL SCRIPTS

ATAC is dedicated to encouraging new playwrights. Keep in mind that an original script is usually unpublished and is a "work in progress." A production of an original script often brings out inherent flaws that can only be evident once the script comes alive on stage. (In other words, try not to compare a new script to one written by Arthur Miller.)

There should be NO consideration given to the subject matter of the production. Judges should only take construction and quality of writing into account when scoring an original script.

ORIGINAL MUSIC

Some considerations for Original Music: Focus on the originality and suitability of the music for the show. A judge should not critique the actual performance of the music itself. The out-of-tune trumpet player and the overloud sound system are not a part of the composer's intent. By the same token, incredible performers can make a dull, lifeless score sound more brilliant.

Comedies and Dramas – Incidental Music.

Please remember this is *original* music composed for this production and not pre-existing music selected by the sound designer. Example: if a production uses an arrangement of traditional hymns as background music for “Our Town,” no matter effective that music may be, it is not original to this production.

Does the original music do the job it is supposed to do, that is, help set the overall mood of the show – dramatic, comedic? Or is the music non-specific – could be used for any show, the composer did not seem to be tuned into the mood of the show although the music may be attractive. Does the original music play an important part of the show as pre-show music, background music, scene transition music, and exit music?

Musicals

Does the music help carry the story forward? Does the music heighten emotions and help the writers create a world on the stage? When a character sings a song in a particular situation, does that song capture his/her personality and mood? Does the music seem non-specific or even out of place in the show? Is there variety in the musical score or does the music seem to all run together in a sort of commonness?

OVERALL PRODUCTION

1. Was this production, in your opinion, a memorable production?
2. Were you “moved” by this production? Did the production elicit the appropriate response from you? If it was a comedy were you entertained? If it was a drama were you emotionally moved?
3. Were all the elements in the production of a consistent high quality? Often you may find there some small errors, or one or two cast members who were uneven in comparison to the other actors (this is especially true in a large cast), but did the OVERALL production meet quality production standards?

ATAC SCORING GUIDELINES

While attempting to place a numerical score on an actor's performance or a designer's concept and execution of their work is difficult, ATAC judges should do their best to evaluate the performance/design fairly and uniformly.

There should be NO consideration given to the subject matter of the production. Judges should only take construction and quality of writing into account when scoring an original script.

The ATAC judging system asks judges to score each element of the production on a scale of Zero (0) to Ten (10). While it is true that the Producing Company and/or the Director of the production decide which category (Lead or Supporting) an actor is placed in, it is possible that an actor could be placed in the wrong category. Generally speaking, most shows cannot have all leads; also, a person that appears in only one scene, or has very few lines, usually would not qualify as Supporting). So, judges should be aware of the guidelines for inclusion in each category. (Please see next page for definitions of Leading and Supporting roles)

Also, it is less than likely that all aspects of a production (all actors and every technical element) will end up EXCELLENT. Judges must look at each actor/designer category individually when deciding on a score.

As for scoring, here are some guidelines:

❖ 9 - 10 Excellent

The acting/design is exceptional and definitely "award worthy". All of the aspects of "Above Average" are present and much more. A TEN (10) score pretty much means "perfection." It would be hard to expect someone else to do a better job in the role or the design element of the production.

❖ 7 - 8 Above Average

The acting/design is extremely good. On the acting side, the performer stood out (in a positive way) and it is clear that they did their homework, understood the role, and made a significant contribution to the production.

❖ 5 - 6 Average

The acting/design meets the needs of the production. There is nothing at all wrong with the acting/design, there is just nothing noteworthy. It should be pointed out that there is nothing wrong with this score. On a bell shaped curve, most scores would fall in this area.

❖ 3 - 4 Below Average

To some extent, the acting/design detract from the overall performance. Little, if anything is contributed to the overall success of the production.

❖ 0 - 2 Poor

Trying to be kind, this person probably should not have been involved in the production.

ACTING CATEGORIZATION

Leading Roles

To be considered as a Leading Role, ALL four requirements should be met. If not all requirements can be met as a Leading Role, then Supporting Role should be considered.

1. The character or characters who drive the main plot or theme of the show. The main plot should revolve around this character or characters. Some shows may have several leads (as when a show follows several stories as main plots).
2. The lead character undergoes a change during the course of the play.
3. The lead character is usually in every act.
4. The lead character has the majority of solos (in musicals) or the majority of spoken dialogue.

Supporting Roles

To be considered as a Supporting Role, ALL four requirements should be met. If not all requirements can be met as a Supporting Role, then category consideration is not allowed.

1. The supporting character usually assists or interacts with the lead character(s).
2. The supporting character may be involved in a subplot or secondary plot.
3. The supporting character has good character development and is well-rounded.
4. The supporting character usually has at least one solo (in musicals), is involved in a majority of ensemble numbers/scenes or has a great deal of dialogue.

Choreography

1. Choreography should support the intention of a song and of the story. Moves should also be appropriate for the character performing the dances. Whenever appropriate, choreography should advance the plot.
2. Choreography for a show should be period appropriate (you wouldn't want to see hip hop moves in a 50's musical). It should also be appropriate the genre of the musical (you wouldn't want to see an Irish jig in *Fiddler on the Roof*.)
3. When dances are created, they should be appropriate for the level of the dancers or actors.
4. Dances should be clean and well rehearsed.
5. If "copyography" happens, then credit should be given to the original choreographer. It is still a lot of work to teach ,clean and polish a dance even if you copy it off a DVD, but if the dances are not the choreographer's *original* work, then it should be stated in the program.