



The Theatre Council of Tasmania

Tasmanian Theatre Awards – Judging Guidelines

Effective 2025 Awards year (for assessments 1 Jan to 31 Dec 2024)

The Tasmanian Theatre Awards recognise excellence in theatrical productions that are produced by Tasmanian-based companies and performed within our State.

The following Guidelines provide a range of common criteria that can be referenced by individual judges as they assess various productions throughout the year for the Awards. They are designed to enhance the judges' objectivity.

They also serve as a framework that judges can use when discussing productions together as a panel, assisting in moderating and comparing individual assessments to agree upon Awards nominees and recipients.

The Guidelines are a tool to be used by judges to complement their own expertise and experience. They are not intended to be an exhaustive list of relevant criteria.

It is understood that every production is unique, and some of the listed criteria may not be relevant to a specific nominee or production. Equally, there may be other aspects of a production that are not covered below, but which judges may decide are relevant in making their assessment. Depending on the nature of the production, some criteria may be given more weight than others.

These Guidelines will also assist producers and theatre companies in understanding particular qualities that judges will consider in their assessment, supporting the development and recognition of excellence in Tasmanian theatre productions.

Where the eligibility of individuals or components of a production is unclear (e.g., whether a role is to be considered leading or supporting, or whether the sets or costumes are “designed” according to the criteria), these matters will be resolved by the Board of the Theatre Council of Tasmania or its delegate in consultation with the judges and, if required, the producers.

A producer may not nominate a production that has previously been assessed for the Awards in a prior year or years. However, they may nominate the same play, book or score provided it is a new production and not a restaging of a previously produced work.

Tasmanian Theatre Awards Categories

- Professional Theatre
- Community Theatre
- Musical Theatre
- Other Awards

Tasmanian Theatre Awards by Category

Please note that awards may be added, withdrawn or combined, and the specific awards presented in any given year will be determined at the discretion of the Theatre Council of Tasmania.

■ Professional Theatre

Best Production Professional Theatre
Best Direction Professional Theatre
Best Performance Professional Theatre (*2 award recipients*)
Best Ensemble Professional Theatre
Best Costume Design Professional Theatre
Best Stage Design Professional Theatre
Best Lighting or Video/Film Design Professional Theatre
Best Sound Design Professional Theatre

■ Community Theatre

Best Production Community Theatre
Best Direction Community Theatre
Best Male Leading Performance Community Theatre
Best Female Leading Performance Community Theatre
Best Male Supporting Performance Community Theatre
Best Female Supporting Performance Community Theatre
Best Ensemble Community Theatre
Best Costume Design Community Theatre
Best Stage Design Community Theatre
Best Lighting or Video/Film Design Community Theatre
Best Sound Design Community Theatre
Youth Achievement Community Theatre

■ Musical Theatre

Best Production Musical Theatre
Best Direction Musical Theatre
Best Musical Direction Musical Theatre
Best Choreography Musical Theatre
Best Male Leading Performance Musical Theatre
Best Female Leading Performance Musical Theatre
Best Male Supporting Performance Musical Theatre
Best Female Supporting Performance Musical Theatre
Best Ensemble Musical Theatre
Best Costume Design Musical Theatre
Best Stage Design Musical Theatre
Best Lighting or Video/Film Design Musical Theatre
Best Sound Design Musical Theatre
Youth Achievement Musical Theatre

■ Other Awards

Best New Writing
Lifetime Achievement Award

■ Judges Awards

Judges Award – Professional Theatre

Judges Award - Musical Theatre

Judges Award – Community Theatre

Judges Performance Award – Musical Theatre (Discretionary Award)

Judges Performance Award – Community Theatre (Discretionary Award)

Best Production

Eligible:

- Any production registered and assessed during the current judging year

Recommended criteria:

- Most effectively delivers the director's vision
- Effectively integrates the elements of good theatre making
- Demonstrates *genuine* audience engagement and impact
- No significant weak areas
- Rates highly across other relevant Award sub-categories

Best Direction

Eligible:

- Any individuals responsible for leading and directing the artistic vision and overall staging of a production registered and assessed during the current judging year

Recommended criteria:

- Unifies the production with an overarching vision or interpretation that engages the audience and makes a “world” for us to experience
- Integrates all aspects of the production such as interpretation, acting choices and style, performances, design, technical effects, music and choreography
- Creates an effective physical and/or emotional and/or intellectual relationship or “dynamic” between the actors and audience
- Shows sensitivity to the meanings of the work and, through the production, offers insights into some of the themes of the work
- Informs or enriches the work through background research and/or through interpretation
- Demonstrates an understanding of the text, subtext and context of the work
- Casts effectively, enabling actors to convincingly portray their roles
- Delivers effective characterisations and authentic relationships between characters
- Uses appropriate variation in pace, rhythm, style, pitch of performance and other dynamic performance elements to enrich meaning, enliven the work, and maintain audience engagement
- Makes effective use of the performance space, and of the actors and elements within the space, to enhance meaning and create visual variety
- Shows evidence of sufficient and effective rehearsal
- Employs effective solutions to any special demands of the production (e.g., extensive scene or costume changes, large cast, significant technical challenges)

Best Performance

Eligible:

- Any performance in a production registered and assessed during the current judging year
- In the Community Theatre and Musical Theatre categories, a leading performance is one that is clearly a signature role, involving a significant amount of stage time and/or spoken lines (and/or, in the case of Musical Theatre, musical numbers in which the performer sings a leading part); any other performance is a supporting performance. A role that is fundamental to the play as a whole. A producer may nominate multiple lead roles.
- Note that if roles are a shared role (i.e., Actors share the number of shows equally) or a show has two casts then these roles/casts will not be eligible for assessment under the Performance categories.

Recommended criteria:

- Creates a believable character that embodies the nature of the role
- Demonstrates understanding of the text, subtext and context of the work
- Supports characterisation through physical movement, posture and effective technique including projection, articulation, pacing, intonation and accents
- Communicates with and reacts to other actors
- Effectively uses space and positioning in relation to other actors and the audience
- Sustains a role through the entire performance, maintaining momentum, mood and focus
- Works as a team player

Additional criteria for Musical Theatre category:

- Suitable vocal quality and range for the role
- Demonstrates accuracy, evenness across vocal range and musicality, including attention to dynamics and phrasing
- “Sells” a song through characterisation and understanding of the context

Best Ensemble

Eligible:

- Entire cast of any production registered and assessed during the current judging year

Recommended criteria:

- Works together as a team to deliver the vision of the director, musical director and/or choreographer
- Demonstrates effective communication and engagement between team members and with the audience
- Shows evidence of mutual trust and support between team members and commitment to a shared purpose
- Achieves consistency and cohesiveness of performance across the entire team

Best Musical Direction

Eligible:

- Any individuals responsible for the delivery of the live musical elements (including singing, instrumental accompaniment and/or conducting) of a Musical Theatre production registered and assessed during the current judging year

Recommended criteria:

- Delivers an interpretation of the music that is stylistically suitable for the genre and that complements and supports the director's vision for the production
- Demonstrates attention to dynamics, articulation, diction and phrasing to ensure the music is interesting, expressive and effectively communicates mood and emotion
- Where the production involves no (or negligible) amplification of voices and/or accompaniment, achieves good balance within the instrumental accompaniment and vocal sections, and between vocalists and accompaniment
- Ensures appropriate casting of soloists (e.g., with regard to the vocal range and voice quality required for the role)
- Shows evidence of considered and effective allocation of vocal lines to ensure balanced harmonies
- Employs appropriate choice of tempi, properly maintained and controlled
- Maintains accuracy of intonation and rhythm
- Demonstrates tight ensemble work, both vocally and instrumentally
- Shows evidence of sufficient and effective rehearsal
- Maintains the integrity of the musical score (e.g., by not simplifying harmonies or making cuts to challenging sections of the music)

Best Choreography ■

Eligible:

- Any individuals responsible for the sequence of steps and movements in dance in a Musical Theatre production registered and assessed during the current judging year

Recommended criteria:

- Demonstrates originality and creativity that complements and supports the director's vision for the production
- Suits the style of the story, music, genre and/or period
- Incorporates variety across musical numbers and within routines (e.g., through the use of different groupings, rhythms, spacing, intensity and climaxes)
- Draws upon the lyrics and musical texture to support the narrative or emotional content of the music
- Creatively uses the performance space, set and/or props
- Suits the abilities of the performers and caters effectively for different skill levels
- Demonstrates precision within ensemble work
- Ensures that solo dance work is consistent with the characterisation and nature of the role
- Shows evidence of sufficient and effective rehearsal
- Employs effective solutions to any special challenges (e.g., stage/space limitations, costumes, cast size)

Best Costume Design

Eligible:

- Any individuals responsible for the designing, making and/or sourcing costumes that are used in a production registered and assessed during the current judging year.
- If costumes are a combination of original and sourced items, there must be evidence provided that the nominee(s) had significant design input into the final costume plot and have specified which costumes have been sourced and which have been designed/made specifically for that production (ie. original).
- This evidence would be in the form of overall costume plot/plan, drawings, concepts, research, colour palette to work with the set and other elements including how sourced items would be incorporated into the overall costume plot. If original items have been produced for the show, then evidence would include designs and photos of the construction stages of these items.
- Producers can nominate additional individuals under this category in the areas of wig, hair and makeup design if that individual is separate to the Costume Design nominee and if that element was a SIGNIFICANT part of the overall Costume Design.
- A significant proportion of the overall Costume Design would be designed/created/made in Tasmania to be eligible.

Recommended criteria:

- Supports the key characteristics of specific roles and performers' characterisations
- Accounts for different relationships between characters and changes in character development
- Appropriately fitted for different body sizes
- Through purposeful design, creatively complements and supports the director's vision for the production
- Reinforces the style, tone, mood, atmosphere or themes of the production
- Demonstrates excellence and innovation in design
- If necessary, shows evidence of background research that has informed the design (e.g. in relation to the period, culture or style)
- Effectively uses colour, shape and texture, having regard to contrast and balance
- Demonstrates stylistic consistency and connection
- Considers the practical needs of the actors and/or the production

**SIGNIFICANT defined as integral to the show as a whole and worn/applied to a high percentage of the cast.

Best Stage Design

Eligible:

- Any individuals responsible for conceiving a design for stage settings in a production registered and assessed during the current judging year
- There must be evidence (provided in the form of a concept board, set plans etc.) of an overall concept created for this production and revealing a significant design input
- The majority (if not all) of the design should have been designed/made in Tasmania to be eligible.
- Producers can nominate additional individuals under this category in the areas of props, puppetry (if not part of a costume worn by an actor) and special stage effects if that individual is separate to the Stage (Set) Design nominee and if that element was a SIGNIFICANT part of the overall Stage Design.
- A significant proportion of the overall Stage/Set Design would be designed/created/made in Tasmania to be eligible.

Recommended criteria:

- Effectively suggests the location(s) of scenes
- Employs effective solutions to any special challenges arising from the venue (e.g. small stage, lack of wing space, low ceiling, problems with sight lines)
- Through purposeful design, creatively complements and supports the director's vision for the production
- Reinforces the style, tone, mood, atmosphere or themes of the production
- Demonstrates excellence and innovation in design
- If necessary, shows evidence of background research that has informed the design (e.g. in relation to the period, culture or style)
- Effectively uses colour, shape and texture, having regard to contrast and balance
- Demonstrates stylistic consistency and connection
- Considers the practical needs of the actors and/or the production

**SIGNIFICANT defined as integral to the show as a whole and features either throughout the show or as a critical element.

Youth Achievement

Eligible:

- Any individuals involved in the performance, direction, musical direction, choreography or design of a production registered and assessed during the current judging year; all individuals nominated for this award must have been under 21 years of age at the time of the production's first public performance
OR
- Any production registered and assessed during the current judging year where the primary purpose of the production was to provide a performance opportunity for young performers; all performers must have been under 21 years of age at the time of the production's first public performance

Recommended criteria:

- Demonstrates achievement and excellence against the assessment criteria listed for any other relevant award in the same category

Other Awards

Best New Writing

Eligible:

- Any individuals who have authored a new text-based work produced as a live, staged Professional Theatre or Community Theatre production registered during the current judging year; the work must not have been previously produced as a fully staged theatre production and the text basis of the work must be available in a written format and with a named author or authors
- Adaptations or translations of existing stories may not be eligible unless they involve significant formal reinvention or are in and of themselves noteworthy works of theatre

Recommended criteria:

- Demonstrates theatrical merit encompassing strength of dialogue, fluency of style, appropriateness of form, stagecraft, characterisation, clarity of expression and sustained development of themes or ideas
- Employs form and content cohesively
- Is inherently theatrical (rather than, for example, filmic or literary)
- Engages with and is relevant to the contemporary world

Note: This award will be assessed by a separate panel appointed by Australian Plays Transform. Assessment will be on the basis of the text, not live performance.

Lifetime Achievement Award ■

Awarded to a living person who has contributed significantly to the theatrical performing arts in Tasmania over a long period and in a manner that exhibits generosity of spirit, and whose contribution has had a lasting impact on individuals and the sector.

Note: The recipient of this award will be determined by the Board of the Theatre Council of Tasmania.

Additional Judges' Awards ■■■

JUDGES AWARD (Professional, Community, Musical)

Given at the discretion of the judging panel for an area of excellence not awarded elsewhere within that genre.

JUDGES PERFORMANCE AWARD (Community, Professional)

May be given at the discretion of the judging panel for a performance that was not considered under the gendered categories of Male and Female.