

Dora Review Division: General Theatre Hall

Monday, September 11, 2017 10:00am-12:30pm at Buddies in Bad Times Theatre

Moderator: Jenny Ginder

Full transcript is available upon request, what follows is a brief outline detailing important conclusions and points of contention during the meeting.

Introductions:

Jennifer Brewin, Regine Caudet, Shawn Daudlin, Peter Hart, Jonathan Heppner, Kat Horzempa, Annie MacKay, Adam Matheson, Susan Moffat, Evalyn Parry, Luke Reece, Klaus Schuller, Joe Borowiec, Ghislain Caron, Brett Randall, Margo Charlton, Brad Lepp, Annemieke Wade, Gein Wong, Alexis Da Silva-Powell, Scott Dermody, Jacoba Knaapen.

Overview of Working Group process by Scott, Jacoba, and Margo.

JG: Review of documents and agenda.

Agenda topics:

- Outstanding Touring Production Award
- Ensemble Category
- Design Awards
- Male/Female Outstanding Performance Awards

Topics not on the agenda, brought up for discussion

- Dora Award Statue
- Comedy going unrecognized
- Number of Awards (48)
- Registration process

Outstanding Touring Production

- Why is it in the musical theatre division? Why can't there be a touring award in each division?
 - The amount of touring productions put forward varies widely each year
 - Dance productions are not eligible.
 - Would increase amount of awards/length of ceremony
 - Add a touring award in each division, but exclude them from the awards ceremony.
 - One award for artists who are not Toronto-based is enough.
- Why are we giving an award to artists not from Toronto?
 - They often do not attend the awards ceremony
 - Is it even necessary to announce the nominees if they are not attending?
- Bringing great touring productions through Toronto deserves recognition and celebration.
- Who receives the award? The company or the TAPA member who presents the tour?
 - TAPA member company is able to say they've received "x" number of awards, and they can choose to gift statue to the touring production.

Outstanding Performance- Ensemble

This award was introduced after the Dora Awards Review six years ago.

- Should we have a minimum number of performers to be considered an ensemble? Two people should not be considered an ensemble.
- Two-handed productions often feel like more of an ensemble because the performers rely so heavily on each other, they are dependent. Not independent performances.
- Not aware of any artists that puts, "winner of best ensemble" in their biographies
- Get rid of ensemble category
 - Create instead, Outstanding Performance- Supporting Role award
 - Ensemble is only category some performers will ever be nominated in.
 - There's a gap in recognizing performers since we lost the Featured Role category
 - Four clear performance categories: Solo, Ensemble, Lead, and Supporting.
- Producers have option to nominate a featured performer, they are then not considered as part of the ensemble.
 - Cannot be eligible for two awards for the same performance.

Design Awards

- No recognition of designers in TYA or Dance.
- Designers want design awards in each division.
 - Design awards don't sell tickets.
 - Why have four design awards when there are only three performance awards?
- Confusion as to where to recognize projection design. Designers want a separate Projection Design Award.
 - Currently projection is under Lighting Design, would be co-nominated
 - Companies hire scenic designer to do their projections
 - Lighting and projection are not the same thing
 - The word projection is wrong, use a huge LED screen. Replacing a backdrop with an LED version of painted scenery.
- How prevalent is Projection Design?
 - It is beginning to replace scenic backdrops
 - Some shows only use projection

Dora Award Statue

- The Commedia Del Arte figure does not reflect artists now.
- Dora Mavor Moore was a woman, why is the figure male?
 - Problem with a gendered statue
- Consensus that the statue is ugly
- Approximately ten years ago there was a move to change the statue, but the committee could not agree.

Comedy Going Unrecognized

- It's been 25 years since Second City won a Dora Award. They are an equity theatre with 58 years of business. They produce original work several times a year and employ many equity actors.
 - Similar problem for Bad Dog Theatre
 - Review Award was removed
 - Why remain TAPA members if not recognized

Number of Awards

- Ceremony is too long (three hours) and dry.
 - Length unimportant if it means one more artist will get that recognition.
 - Add performances, make the show more fun.
 - Compare to other awards shows
 - The show goes by faster now that the acceptance speeches are kept down to a minute.
- Move some awards out of ceremony or to a different night.
 - Creates hierarchy
 - TAPA would have to produce three separate events.
- Too many awards reduces the value of the awards.
- Making the awards gender neutral will remove quite a few awards.
- Give opera less awards, the same companies win again and again, too many awards for such a small division.

Registration Process

- 28 days is not enough time to process everything.
 - You do not have to submit at the deadline, can register as early as you like.
 - Hard for the jury members in that timeframe.
 - Too difficult for Independent Theatre companies to register earlier.
- The TAPA website is confusing.

Male/Female Outstanding Performance Awards

In April 2017, there was a panel discussion with Beyond Representation Modern Times Stage Company at Daniels Spectrum. Brenden Healey moderated. The discussion was very emotional. TAPA Live Facebook streamed it. You can watch it now on TAPAs Facebook page. There was no conclusion that came from it.

- TAPA was prompted because of a suggestion from individual dancer who felt they couldn't choose a gender box.
- As time goes on the conversation will continue to change, children growing up now do not see the binary the way that those growing up thirty years ago did.
- Dance only recently added gendered performance awards.
- TYA is the only division without gendered performance awards.
- We can try something and if it does not work it will be reviewed in another five years and can be changed again.
- People are being blocked from being able to even register.
- Remove gender entirely.
 - Female performers worried about gender-neutral awards
 - The separate awards came to exist because of gender biases
 - Naively optimistic that bias would not reveal itself.
 - There are more male characters. Cannot change the history of what has been written and produced.
- Give instructions to jury members
 - Would hope jury that is put together wouldn't need to be reminded.
 - Make sure jury is gender-balanced.
 - They decide as a group who the winner is, we shouldn't get in their way.
- Consensus: remove gender based awards.
 - We want to be at the forefront of change. This is our opportunity to lead.
 - This will be on the agenda at the TAPA AGM.
- In the place of two gendered performance awards we can add solo award.
 - Solo shows are very different types of work.
 - Are there enough shows to populate that category?
 - In Independent Theatre there are, but not in General Theatre
 - Solo shows have shown and competed quite well within existing categories.
 - How do you judge a solo show against a lead performance in a larger show?