

Dora Review Division: Indie Town Hall

Monday, September 11, 2017 7:00pm – 9:30pm at The Theatre Centre

Moderator: Andrea Vagianos

Introductions:

Yolanda Ferrato, Allegra Fulton, Steven Jackson, Aaron Jan, Helen Juvonen, Diana Kolpak, Annie MacKay, Madryn McCabe, Shannon Murphy, Luke Reece, Joe Borowiec, Chris Goddard, Margo Charlton, Brad Lepp, Annemieke Wade, Andrea Vagianos, Alexis Da Silva-Powell, Scott Dermody, Jacoba Knappen.

JK & SD: Introduction to process

AV: Review of documents, process, and agenda.

Topics not on the agenda, brought up for discussion:

- Dora Eligibility (re: number of performances, TAPA membership)
- Indie versus General (eligibility to be considered General)
- Indie Theatre Category does not have enough awards

Agenda topics:

- Male/Female outstanding performance awards
- Ensemble category
- Design Awards
- Touring
- Dora statue design

Male/Female Outstanding Performance Awards

The World is Changing:

- Young people today are growing up without the same sense of binaries.
 - Need to be at the forefront. Be leaders in change.
 - There will be other organizations that look towards what TAPA does.
- The male/female award binary only exists within performance categories.
- Changing the award to be non-binary will spark new works featuring more non-binary performers.

Equity for Women:

- Not identifying as a specific gender is a separate topic from that of gender inequality. We fought very hard to get gendered performance awards in the Indie Theatre category. There are not enough roles for women and there are not enough women writers or even male writers writing for them and so once again, they'll be lots of men getting the Outstanding Performance Award and that's why we fought so hard to have gendered awards in the first place- women were missing out.
 - More women than those who don't identify as a specific gender, therefore women are more important.
- If we're just working towards female parity we're leaving behind a whole other unrepresented group.
- Keep the gendered awards, but have the performers judged based on the gender of the character they are playing.
 - Unfair to judge women against men because men get better parts.
- Moving in the direction of inclusivity is good for women too.
- Give the jury guidelines to protect against straight, white men winning the Outstanding Performance Award every year.
 - We can establish that by having a diverse jury selection.
 - The current Jury Selection Committee already does look at that, and that was instituted from the last Town Hall six years ago. It is mandated that we have as diverse a group in every division as possible.
- Need to trust the jury to make fair choices.
 - Need to be proactive and intentional around who we put forward as a juror.
- During the next Dora Review, we can see what has happened and make changes if necessary.

Losing an Award:

- Indie Theatre only had one award for a very long time, it is unfair to lose it now.
- Add an award for Outstanding Supporting Performance.
- Add an award for Outstanding Performance in a new work.
- Still give two awards, no new category, two awards for Outstanding Performance.
 - Allow for more than five nominees.

The Ensemble Category

Ensemble as Collective Creation:

- The ensemble award would be quite beneficial to groups who have created their own work just by working together, with no playwright or director.
 - This is especially true within the clown community.
- Ensemble doesn't always mean collective creation though, it could be an Ibsen play, for example.
- Should add a collective creation award.
 - The Dora's aren't awarding the process; they are awarding the product.
 - It is not for the jury to have insight into the process.

Nomination as Individual vs Ensemble:

- The registration process is confusing.
- Problem with the fact that you cannot register an individual as a lead and as part of an ensemble, can only choose one or the other.
 - Some actors hold down a solid character while also being part of the ensemble performance.
 - It's strange if a show wins the Ensemble Award and the two lead performers are not included in that win.
 - In the SAG Awards, you can be nominated for both.
- In the past a performer could be nominated for both Individual and Ensemble Awards. It changed about three years ago. There was feedback from the community that this was diminishing the importance of the Ensemble Award.
- This award used to be called Outstanding Performance in a Featured Role/Ensemble.

- A show should only be nominated for Outstanding Ensemble because you cannot pick an individual performance out, it's all one piece.
- Let the jury decide if they feel it was an ensemble-based performance or not.
 - The jury has no purview; it is up to the producers (who are the TAPA members) to register their shows.
 - What happens when a jury member wants to nominate someone as an individual performer, but they haven't been registered by their producers?
 - It is a very hard decision to make as a producer.
 - It is up to the producers to speak with the Director and the Artistic Team to make sure everyone feels that they have been properly registered.

Design Awards

JK: We had a community convening for the designers and one thing that they seemed to have shared agreement on was the desire to have a design award that recognized video projection and multimedia instillation and whether that gets wrapped up into scenic, scene design, or lighting design. They are not TAPA members to be clear, and there seems to be a disconnect with some of the designers and the producers, they've shared that theory.

AV: So, we have right now the categories: Scenic Design, Costume Design, Lighting Design, and Sound Design/Composition. Currently any video or projection falls under Lighting Design.

- Add a Projection Design Award.
 - Projection and Lighting are married but completely different. It's two different designers.
 - Often, because you have to choose who to put forward in the Lighting Design category, the Lighting Designer is chosen and the Projection Designer is overlooked.
 - Do not want to add more awards to the Dora Program.
- Put Projection Design under scenic design because you can nominate a team.
 - Currently you can do that in the Lighting Design category. The Lighting Designer and the Projection Designer would be co-nominated.
 - They would have to share the Dora Statue.
 - Designers believe projection designs function as part of the scenic design because they take the place of scenic backdrops.
 - Use projection designs as a way to build budget friendly sets.

- It's not all projected work, it is often LED screens and other multimedia technologies.
- If it has to be married to an existing world, scenic is more appropriate than lighting.
 - How do you compare lighting and projection, it's apples and oranges.
- The producer should be able to choose, show by show, if the projection design falls under Lighting Design or Scenic Design.

The Touring Production Award

SD: The Touring Production Category is a stand-alone, it's currently adjudicated by the Musical Theatre and Opera jurors. Currently the shows in this category are musicals brought in by, let's say, Mirvish or, quote-unquote straight plays brought in by companies from outside of the city, but presented by a TAPA member company. So, it's a bit of a mixed bag, and all kinds of shows end up in that category. It is pertinent to the Indie Division, because often a TAPA member company will be presenting a touring Indie Theatre company that is not a TAPA member. Dance and TYA are ineligible for this award and are eligible for Best Production in their own divisions.

- It's strange that this category is adjudicated by the Musical Theatre/Opera jurors.
 - Are the shows nominated in touring largely Musicals and Operas?
- Why are we giving an award to a company from outside of Toronto?
 - Do not want the arts scene in Toronto to become too insular.
 - There are many other ways that Toronto stops from becoming too insular, the Dora's do not need to worry about that.
- This feels like an award given as a pat on the back to companies just for having money.
 - Because the award is given to the TAPA member company and not the touring company.
 - Many producers will give the physical statue to the touring company.

Dora Eligibility (re: number of performances, TAPA membership)

To be eligible a show must have nine performances. This was raised from five performances as a result of the last review process because the attendance of shows by jurors was very low.

- Too many shows for a juror to see when you only need five performances.
- Now that it has changed jury attendance has sky-rocketed.
- Recruitment of jury members is also much easier now.
- Previews are ineligible as one of the nine performances.
 - Producers did not want jurors to attend previews. They can allow jurors to attend the preview, but they still need nine more performances.

Indie Versus General (eligibility to be considered General)

If a production that has a budget of less than \$100,000 is performed in a venue that has less than 150 seats it must be registered in the Indie Theatre Division, if neither of those statements are true it must be registered in the General Theatre Division, if only one of those two statements is true, it is the choice of the producers. If you are a venue company you must register in the General Theatre Division regardless.

- There should not be a choice option because companies could strategically register their productions as Indie in order to win.
 - It is unfair to pit a show with a budget of over \$100,000 that just happened to be in a smaller venue against an incredibly small production with an almost non-existent budget.
 - You shouldn't penalize companies for succeeding/having a larger budget.
 - There is no mid-sized category.
 - There is a difference between "emerging artist" and "independent artist"
- The definition of Indie needs to be more clear.
- The producing history of the company should be taken into consideration.
- Companies used to not have the flexibility to move back and forth between Indie and General Theatre Divisions.
- In-kind donations are not tracked by TAPA. It is an honour-system.
- New division for emerging independent companies/emerging artists.
 - What is the definition of emerging? If a company is not successful after ten years is it not still emerging?
 - Call it micro-indie instead, make it defined by budget.
 - 26 years ago, it was not Indie and General, it was Small, Medium, and Large.
 - It shouldn't be about budget, it should be about performance.

Indie Theatre Category Does Not Have Enough Awards

Statistics:

Indie Theatre has 10 out of 48 awards (20%) and has 85 TAPA members out of 157 (54%).

General Theatre has 11 out of 48 awards (23%) and has 31 TAPA members out of 157 (20%).

TYA has 5 out of 48 awards (10%) and has 7 TAPA members out of 157 (4%).

Musical/Opera has 16 out of 48 awards (33%) and has 12 TAPA members out of 157 (8%).

Dance has 7 out of 48 awards (14%) and has 22 TAPA members out of 157 (14%).

- The ratio of the active professional TAPA members in the Indie Theatre Division to how many awards they are eligible for, versus the General Theatre Division and the other Divisions.
- Why does Musical Theatre and Opera have so many awards when there are so few companies?
- Many Indie Companies choose not to join TAPA because they can use that money to pay their performers and staff. Not a lot of wiggle-room in their budgets.

The Dora Awards Statue

The Dora statue originally designed by John Romano in 1979. It is a Commedia del Arte figure. This figure was on Dora Mavor Moore's letterhead and he was inspired. 10 years ago, Philip Aiken tried to get rid of it. Doesn't reflect the different disciplines or creators. There was a working group but they came to no agreement.

- Represents a history of theatre that is not representative of the current theatre-makers in Toronto
 - Not relevant to us now.
- People find it ugly.
- Rebrand next year for TAPAs 40-year-anniversary.
- The Harlequino figure is a rascal-ly figure, represents Dora Mavor Moore.
- Changing the award can lead to other, bigger, changes.
- Looks like a lawn-jockey.