

HENRY AWARDS CONSIDERATIONS FOR SCORING THE BALLOT

Here are some generally agreed upon guidelines and suggestions to help you navigate your way through the process:

First, a tip:

It's natural that the way you score shows might morph a bit over the year. You might find yourself getting tougher, say, as the year goes on and you see more shows. Or the opposite. Are your scores in April consistent with the way you scored back in October? Here's a way to track your tendencies and hopefully keep you consistent:

Keep your own personal list that tracks each of your scores BY CATEGORY as the year goes on. Start a journal – or keep a master word document on your desktop. Make a heading for every award category, and as you fill in a new ballot, add latest scores to your lists.

That way, as you fill out each new ballot, you can refer back to your previous scores from weeks and months ago, helping you to better gauge where a new person really “fits into” your overall paradigm.

For example, in the category of “best actor,” say you think you want to give Joe Blow a 44. First, go to your journal and place Joe Blow on your “best actor” list, which you should keep ordered by score, from high to low. You might find yourself with a list looking like this:

BEST ACTOR

Jon Doe 45
Joe Blow 44
Larry Doe 42
Buddy Doe 42
Tommy Doe 32
Jimmy Doe 25
Freddy Doe 19
Nicky Doe 18
Teddy Doe 12

In effect, a 44 for Joe Blow now would mean you're saying that (in the end) you'd still prefer that Jon Doe (45) get the Henry Award over Joe Blow (44) – though you probably wouldn't mind seeing Joe pull a nomination, too. If that doesn't sit right with you, adjust your score for Joe accordingly. You can't change Jon's earlier score, but if you think Joe was better, you can change his score to, say, 46 before you submit your latest ballot.

By the end of the year, you ought to be able to go down your list of scores in every category and feel comfortable that they go “in order” of how you really felt about them.

HOW TO SCORE

*Start with 25: Go into any show thinking that everyone in every category is right at the center of the scale: 25. You've yet to be impressed or disappointed. As the performance progresses, your “internal meter” should rise or fall based on your objective and visceral response to the performance or play.

So if someone botches lines, doesn't get the depth of his character (whatever your considerations are), he goes DOWN from 25 – or UP if the opposite is true.

***It's a 1-50 scale: So use it. If your rankings never fall below, say, 25, then, in effect, you are using your own personal scale of 25-50, and that's unfair to the other voters and productions who are using 1-50.**

*Be stingy with the high scores: 50 does not just mean excellent. It means, you can't imagine how a performance, a play, a scenic design, etc., could possibly be better. You might go an entire year without giving any candidate a 50 for anything -- And that's OK. Ideally, when the year is up and scores are counted, each

category on your ballot will have five top candidates averaging somewhere in the mid to possibly high 40s. If everyone is employing the same scale, we all ensure that the Colorado Theatre Guild will be honoring five worthy performances in every category.

But if by the end of the year you have submitted 15 best actor candidates, all bunched within the 45-50 range, you have not done anyone any favors – and you're not doing your job – which is to help the Colorado Theatre Guild determine the best five performances in each category, period.

*Don't go soft: If you see a show or performance that you believe has no business being honored with an award or nomination at the end of the season, you owe it to those that do to be honest, be blunt -- and score low. By scoring an undeserving show low, you are creating that necessary gap that will ensure those shows that ARE deserving will rise to the top. If enough people go "nice" on a middling show, that's how we end up a top-five finish and a possibly undeserved nomination.

*Don't try to over-compensate for how you presume other judges might score. If you fear others might be submitting inflated grades, you will become one of those judges submitting inflated grades. You have to take it on faith everyone is employing the same strict standards of excellence.

Guiding principle: While your (noble) instinct may be to throw a given performance a few extra points because maybe they're small and have greatly exceeded your expectations (or if you don't think they'll be fully appreciated by other judges), consider this: Your first priority is to always keep in mind what's in the best interest of the Colorado Theatre Guild and its reputation. If you help inflate a score so just that someone will get a nomination when you know it's not truly among the five best performances of the year, you will A) make some surprised actor or company enormously happy, but B) bring embarrassment upon the Colorado Theatre Guild.

There are hundreds of productions to consider every year. From a pure numbers standpoint, only a small fraction will receive nominations, and of those, only 20 percent will "win." Remember that the Henry Awards are not about the even distribution of wealth. They are about honoring the very best in metro theater, period. Ours is a theater community with great disparities in talent, budgets, experience and overall quality. Not every company should get a Henry Award every year. They must go to the very best. So be cognizant of your expectations and how that can affect your voting. An amateur performance on the cheap might blow you away because you weren't expecting it. A Denver Center show might satisfy you just fine, but you might not be as impressed because we were also expecting that, too. Don't let your naturally varying expectations cloud your judgment when considering what really were the best five performances of the year – and attributing proper points to them.

Here is what 1 – 50 looks like a couple different ways.

1-10 = 1 Star

or

1-4 = F-

5 - 7 = F

8-10 = F+

11-20 = 2 Stars

or

11-14 = D-

15-17 = D

18–20 = D+

21-30 = 3 Stars

or

21-24 = C-

25–27 = C

28–30 = C+

remember – 25 should always be your starting point. Go UP or DOWN from there. A “C” student is an average student. A “C” show is an average show.

31-39 = 4 Stars

or

31-34 = B-

35-37 = B

37-39 = B+

Here is the meat of the matter and where 1 point is going to make a difference. This is some of the best performance, design and direction you’ve seen. This is where you have to be judicious.

40’s should be used for those you think should have a nomination/win opportunity.

40-49 = 5 Stars

or

40-44 = A-

45-47 = A

48–49 = A+

50 is a category all its own – this is score reserved for that oh-so rare occasion when you know you are not going to see anything better in at least another year, or ever.

A few other points of clarification:

WHAT MAKES A GOOD ENSEMBLE?

The ensemble category considers an entire company’s quality of acting. Take all the all the parts of a cast together, and consider how that affects the whole.

The original intent of the category was to find a way to honor actors in plays that don’t have obvious distinctions between leads and support characters. But just because a play or musical does, that should not affect your consideration of its greater ensemble. Think of it this way: An outstanding ensemble means all the parts are working in harmony. You cannot have a weak link, whether your ensemble is 30 or 2. Everything must work. One badly cast support character should knock a production out of this category. For “Les Mis,” that means not a weak link among a cast of 30. If you also believe that the actors in a two-character play work so well off one another that they constitute their own ensemble, so be it. If you think it’s more impressive that 30 people must and do work well together than 2, then adjust your scores accordingly.