

Judging Criteria for New Plays / Musicals

SCORING A NEW PLAY

It is absolutely acceptable to rate a new play, say, 35 in the category of “outstanding play,” and 45 in the category of “outstanding new play.” In the former, you are considering the play against all others that were performed this year. In the latter, you are considering it only against the other new plays, a much smaller pool.

- Theme/Clarity – Is there a clear use of the theme and purpose clearly stated? Is the use original and interesting?
- Content – Is the subject matter or situation of the play relevant, creative, and/or controversial?
- Style– Has the playwright established a definitive method or style? Has the playwright shown strength of writing style & clear viewpoint?
- Characterization – Are the characters credible, compelling? Is there a protagonist of some type? Is there an antagonist? Are the characters in the play developed? Are the roles defined?
- Plot – Does something happen? Does the plot seem fresh? Is there conflict and tension enough to sustain the duration of the play? Has the storyline been clearly defined? Has the action of the play been chronologically developed? Is there evidence of:
 - Exposition
 - Complication
 - Climax
 - Conclusion
- Dialogue – Does it sound natural and right for the plot and locale? – Is the word usage or phrasing consistent with the character? Does the dialogue advance the plotline or develop the character’s background?

Additional Consideration for Musicals

- Structure - Structure includes form, rhythm, tune, lyrics and texture and appropriateness for the genre or style of the piece.
 - Is the structure is clear overall?
 - The key elements of form, rhythm, tune, lyrics and texture are generally appropriate for the genre or style of the music. Does the structure support the intention of the piece?
 - Is the relationship between the key elements balanced and well considered?
 - Does it successfully explore the genre and style of the music?
- Instrumentation/vocalization -
 - How effectively has the composer or songwriter has explored the characteristics of the instruments and/or voice; their range, melodic and rhythmic capabilities?
 - Has the composer explored the instruments and/or voices in relation to the chosen genre and style?
 - Are there effective combinations of instruments and/or voices to give an interesting texture?
- Creativity - This is about new musical ideas in terms of structure and the use of instruments or vocals. The composer/songwriter may take a fresh or original approach to genre or style. There may be novelty in some aspects of the composition such as melody or lyrics or a riff.
 - Is there intention to produce emotional and intellectual meaning?
 - Does the piece show some creative aspects?
 - Is there some originality in either the structure or the use of instruments and voices?
 - Does the piece either strive too hard for originality or loose meaning, or offer no fresh ideas?
 - Does the composition hold the attention, have fresh ideas and is it convincing?
 - Does the originality enhance the intended genre or style or even create something completely new and meaningful?