

MUSIC ADJUDICATION: AN ART IN ITSELF

(Second Edition)

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The art of adjudication is one many of us have to learn through experience alone. For some, that experience will come exclusively from being a participant in competitions and festivals rather than on the other side of the desk. The first time you are hired as an adjudicator can be a daunting experience. This then is in part a "manual" and in part reminders to us all of how to handle the responsibility. There are few individuals in a player's development who can so quickly and with such positive or negative results affect the future of performers. Beginners can be energized or deflated. At some level, young people often make career decisions based on results.

These are ideas and comments most appropriate to working in festivals or local competitions and with young or inexperienced players but they are generally ideas and attitudes that work at any level.

- 1) After you have been introduced to the audience (always make sure this is done) or after the first short class, **give a ***short*** introduction.** This might feature comments on *some* the following:
 - a. The difference of marking levels and musical emphases among adjudicators; we may listen with entirely different points of reference than others who have preceded or will follow us. Because of this, marks from one year to the next may vary a great deal depending upon what was judged for marks (e.g. note clarity, attention to rhythms, dynamics, musicality etc.) The point then should be made to the audience that comparisons can only legitimately be made to marks one has given to other students in the same class in the same year. Comparisons to points awarded by other adjudicators at other times are in that sense irrelevant.
 - b. Emphasize that the comments on the adjudication sheet (or on the tape) are of far greater importance than the mark received. Seldom, unfortunately, will students or parents accept this en bloc but we must try...The emphasis should be on fun in a local festival.
 - c. If the festival for which one is working has assigned a marking grid (viz that each mark above a certain level has a specific meaning or "sends a particular message") bring this occasionally to the attention of students and audience. Often this grid only spans a range of 10 or 15 marks and so it might be confusing unless pointed out and/or fully explained. How can it be that Sally played so obviously better than Jimmy and yet they had marks of 87 and 85 respectively? Look to the marking grid.
 - d. Talk about stage deportment. This is certainly not about stage attire. Remember that students are already here dressed however they are dressed. In most cases it will be the best clothing the family can afford. A golden rule of adjudicating is never to embarrass, always to leave room for self-respect; always to be positive. The deportment one should talk about is that of entrances and exits from the stage, making sure your piano accompanist is ready to play when you start (and vice versa. ..), taking your time. ..Shortly after beginning or even as a festival ends I sometimes do a package called "Entrances and Exits I have Seen". It helps students relax and to laugh at themselves (at um... at least I hope it does). One always generalizes, of course, avoiding the possibility of embarrassing a particular performer. I come on looking nervous, possibly tripping, never look at the audience or the accompanist... I walk off muttering to myself about how badly I played, don't acknowledge applause...
 - e. Talk about where you think the emphasis should be: perhaps on overall performance and musicality rather than on each and every note, although you will of course be listening for them as well.

MUSIC ADJUDICATION: AN ART IN ITSELF (CONT'D)

- f. Talk about nerves, about the fact the audience just want to be entertained... that no-one is here to see you fail... Perhaps suggest to students that they see themselves performing in their own living room for their own family (tough sell...). If there is one emotion that pervades all festivals, it is that of abject fear.
- g. Encourage participants to take a moment to "test the hall" when they get onstage by checking their tuning with the piano. This may get a bit strange with vocalists...

If you were to go methodically through the above list in a monotone to open the festival, the audience would be asleep, the participants very uncomfortable and the festival committee wishing they'd hired someone else. "Short is good" when it comes to this kind of introduction or these kinds of comments. Think about spreading out your comments at intervals OR not making some based on the situation. Judge the kind of festival that it is, the age of the participants, the number of people present (very strange to give a talk to an audience of one) etc. Common sense should rule.

- 2) **ALWAYS BE POSITIVE!** Your greatest challenge will come with a poorly - prepared student. But no matter how poorly prepared or badly played there is always room for a genuinely positive comment. Always encourage. To most readers this will (I hope!) be obvious. Work within a positive framework couching your comments with phrases like "I think this section could use more emphasis in your practice" rather than the more obvious "You played this section rather poorly". This must pervade all of your work as an adjudicator. One of the most important reasons you have been hired is to encourage students and better music education the local area you're in. I recall being in one town where the teacher implored me to at least be positive with four particular students. Apparently these four were singled out for his concern because the year before the adjudicator who heard them play a movement of the Mozart Clarinet Concerto declared them to be "unadjudicable". What a fool! Not only did he discourage those students (who were, of course, playing a difficult work for a high school clarinetist and should have been doubly encouraged) he almost did irreparable damage to the local band program. He also assured that (hopefully) his services would never again be required by that festival association. There is always a way to be positive. Never embarrass a student and leave her/him with no "room to escape". Only twice have I encountered students with whom I could not be positive and allow a graceful "exit". In one case it was a trio of kids who not only played horribly; by their demeanour and attitude they were ridiculing the festival, the adjudicator (cardinal sin..) and by inference any other students who had genuinely worked hard to be there. In that case I embarrassed them. I'm not proud... In the other case a solo trumpet player actually played very well on his first selection: clearly a fine player. On the second he was resting on his laurels and it was a ragged performance. I adjudicated the two works accordingly. He responded to the second by challenging me: what did I know of the piece? Was I a trumpet player? etc. It was abundantly clear a) that he was a very confident kid and b) the audience instinctively did not like his attitude. He would have changed the tone of the festival. Without much mercy, I put him in his place. The festival committee applauded me. Again I'm not proud... but these are VERY unusual cases. Most often when that kind of thing happens it is the fault of the adjudicator. Bad adjudicators do have these things happen and in fact it would not surprise me if they have other difficult relationships in their lives. If everyone with whom you interact is a difficult person look to thine self....That's as much a rule for life as it is for festivals.

There *will* be times, unfortunately, when the performance is so horrendous that you will get to the end of it and be so stunned that either you have written very little or all that you have written are criticisms. First, try to offer ways of fixing the problem if you can. If you sense that you are going to end up with an exclusively critical adjudication, start leaving small gaps on the paper so that you can go back and write in "Nice phrasing at 'T'" or something similar. If you are adjudicating on tape you have to be even more careful. You cannot say "ouch" for example, when the work falls apart or reveal your distaste in your tone of voice... With tape you have to be careful of tone *AND* you have to throw in some positive reinforcement "on the fly".

Try to always add (no matter how short the performance or what its quality) a comment like "Enjoyed your performance, Janie". That is received even more positively if the performer's name is Janie... Vary it a bit with "Keep up the good work" or something like that. It may sound a bit innocuous but it is just one of those small touches that sometimes "count". It's as much a reminder to yourself to include positives as it may be encouraging for the performer.

Finally, do not be *so* positive the performer does not ""hear" any criticisms. That can happen. Suggest prescriptive exercises, approaches etc. Be honest with the student as well. ""To my ears this piece suffered from too little practice". Sometimes you write that down so that the student can read it in private. Sometimes (it is a judgment call) it can be said on site. *NEVER destroy confidence.*

- 3) **NEVER ACT "SUPERIOR":** What right would one have to act this way? Strangely enough many adjudicators appear to have this attitude. You are, after all is said and done, simply **an employee of the festival or competition organizers**. It is a paradox that many festival committees lose sight of that fact and wring their hands in desperation if the adjudicator is in some way not doing his/her job to their satisfaction or in fact of the participants and audience/parents. Remember that you are an employee: nothing more; nothing less. Festivals have been ruined because of the superior or aloof attitude of the adjudicator. Festival committees are almost as indictable as the adjudicator for allowing this to happen. Try to ensure that students feel you are working "with" them to improve their playing. It's not a challenge of wills or experience... Do not pass off to those present the idea that you are a great ""artiste" and by definition are below your rightful station in life by judging 30 ten and under clarinets. That is the job. That is why you were hired. Try to remember what it was like to stand in front of an audience for the first time and utter your first (hopefully) musical sounds. It is a terror few have known. Playing trombone in an orchestra is like flying an airplane: long stretches of boredom interspersed with short stretches of terror. Multiply that fear tenfold for a youngster standing and performing for the first time in front of his peers (the most scary) and an audience. One of your critical roles as an adjudicator must be to reduce some of that tension. If the situation warrants, for example, go up on stage and talk quietly and directly to the student if she just can't get started. On the rare occasion that a student simply cannot start, consider the possibility of having him or her play privately or with just ""Mom or Dad" and the accompanist present at the end of the adjudicating day. Mitigating circumstances would be if there are others in the class awaiting a mark. Never distract the student either intentionally or unintentionally. Adjudicators do that by shuffling papers, delaying... If the festival gives you an impersonal little "his/her highness is ready for the next victim" bell, discard it immediately. Please. On the occasions that one is delayed by, for example, because of comments on a previous competitor, bring the focus back to the student on stage by saying ""sorry to keep you waiting" when you are ready to go. Always defer to the student.
- 4) Remember that it is the largely the adjudicator who sets the tone of the competition or festival. If you are comfortable with absolute silence between competitors or you prefer a more relaxed atmosphere, let that be known.
- 5) Find ""schtick" to explain concepts. You do not necessarily need to find humorous techniques but ones that get to the point quickly. To explain the concept of phrasing, speak with obviously poor phrasing, grouping unrelated words together as you speak. Sing the national anthem "Oh Cana (breath) da!"... To explain articulation, speak without using consonants (easier said than done) or push the air in spurts from the diaphragm just like some young players do to articulate. You must discover your own essential shorthand to explain concepts succinctly and to keep things moving.

- 6) **The spotlight must ALWAYS be on the performer and NOT on the adjudicator.** You are not the star of the show. 10 year old Janie or 12 year old James is the reason all these people are here. The student should be your only focus. That is as good a rule for teaching as it is for adjudicating. Any successful business will tell you that they focus continually on customer needs. The parallel's obvious.

- 7) You will find situations in which it is clear that a performance problem is not the students'; it is the teacher's. Dangerous territory this. The most likely scenario is one in which the teacher as conductor of an ensemble. The first caution is this: ***NEVER criticize a teacher in front of his or her students.*** That would quite simply be unprofessional on your part. Depending on the dynamics between you and the teacher, you might have a discussion after the day is over. If you are 23 and the teacher is 52 this is probably not a good idea. You may know more; who cares? Your criticism of the teacher, no matter how positively couched, would be taken as offensive. Carefully consider whether you say anything at all. You may not in fact choose to do so. That is an option. You cannot legitimately assess a teacher in one day or one week of seeing him/her occasionally. You don't see classes and rehearsals. You don't see... *their life*. It is fair to say that in a lot of such cases (and they are more common than one would like to admit) the students are aware of the incompetence more acutely than you are. The most bizarre such case I have ever encountered was when I was asked to formally assess the teacher by a member of a board of education. That cannot be fairly done in one day. It is also absolutely not the appropriate role of the adjudicator and it is not fair to the teacher no matter how incompetent he or she may be. I declined unequivocally.

- 8) **NEVER interrupt in the middle of a selection.** There are actually adjudicators who will stop performances in the interest of brevity, feeling they can make a judgment based on what they have already heard. This is reprehensible and if repeated, should be a cause for dismissal of the adjudicator. Nothing will destroy a student's nerves (or enthusiasm) more quickly. There is quite simply no situation that will warrant this especially if we are talking about solo performers. If a band has selected too many works there may be an exception. One issue is that if you DO realize you've made a mistake, many students are simply incapable of starting a piece in "midstream". Being in front of an audience compounds the problem.

- 9) **ENTERTAIN!** Remembering you are emphatically NOT the reason "Mom and Dad" came to the hall tonight, part of your role should be to entertain the audience and to keep the "show" going. This does not mean you have to do a standup comedy routine or insist on performing. Explaining the intricacies of a piece or the challenges in playing an instrument can be entertaining and informative. It may well enhance the audience's enjoyment of the session and encourage their support for music education in general. Use short anecdotes from other festival experiences to explain things or keep the "show" going. You may in fact need to "fill" while there is a stage set change or similar.

- 10) If time permits, it can be a very useful thing to do a little work with an ensemble. Often festivals will plan for this anyway. There is nothing like working with a different conductor to heighten concentration in a group. Always have group exercises ready that you can use with an ensemble (for tuning, ensemble etc). I don't advise you to work (during the festival) with individuals a.) because they will only get a limited amount out of it as they will be distracted and b.) because in most cases it will make them very nervous and little will be accomplished. No matter what though, make sure YOU stay on time!!

- 11) **ALWAYS BE HONEST** with your own limits. The "always be honest" admonition could apply as well to your judgment of students. Nevertheless, I am thinking here of the limitations we all have that hopefully do not exceed our abilities. If you do not, for example, play or have a significant amount of experience with a particular instrument, do not bluff. You may find yourself embarrassed. In a situation, for example where you are asked to judge an advanced class of didgeridoos, you might freely admit that you are not familiar with the intricacies of the instrument (assuming that you are not..) but that you are going to talk about the musical approach or rhythmic accuracy or...Needless to say you should always be familiar with the instrument group/voice etc you have been asked to judge. At smaller festivals however you may well be asked to adjudicate more obscure classes (likely not didgeridoo). Accept that with grace and confine your comments to what you know.

One adjudicator made the following comments to a junior high jazz band. This is a demonstration in point as to a) what NOT to say and b) an occasion when he should have recognized his limitations far outweighed his skills:

The jazz band had just finished a performance of a tune that had featured soloists. At this point the adjudicator (who was, interestingly enough, hired ONLY to judge jazz) rose to say "Now I don't know much about jazz (big mistake #1) but I was appalled with you (berating the audience: HUGE mistake #2). Can you imagine how distracting it was for these young players when you applauded right in the middle of their number? (GARGANTUAN mistake #3: admitting you are a fool). If the band director had been able to smite him... This is a little TOO honest and of course completely destroyed the credibility of the adjudicator to both the audience and the students.

The bottom line here is that if you are offered an adjudicating role for which you are stunningly under-qualified, gratefully decline even if you need the money. You will do no favours for anyone (not least yourself) by accepting.

- 12) Most festivals ask you to do a verbal adjudication of each class. It would be senseless to do these after every class, especially those with only one or two entrants. Plan out your timing as soon as you have the programme. Put a checkmark at spots where you'll speak. Do this with an eye to timing. Regardless at some point you will stand in front of the audience and talk directly to the performers. ALWAYS make the musician the focus of your attention. Always speak directly to him or her or them or they will feel like an afterthought. Usually it is best to get as close as you can to the performer when doing this (without invading "fight or flight" space...). I have been known to crawl over church pews and jump on tables to this but that's my own peculiar style... Make sure the audience can hear what you are saying. There's no faster way to "lose them" than by offering them your back and virtual silence.
- 13) Bring your instrument (or your voice) and perform a bit for the audience IF asked to do so and IF it won't disrupt the flow Of the festival. That gives you some credibility and allows kids to see that you can *do it* as well as talk about it. I have actually been adjudicated at festivals by kids. Great fun! Remember you likely will not be able to warm up so you have to find something that sounds good without that advantage.
- 14) Tape vs. writing: Those who wait to begin comment whether on paper or tape are lost. Both are a little like calling a hockey game, tape being the most obvious parallel. Usually a festival will dictate which to use. On rare occasions they will request both. It is, of course, impossible to give equal time or emphasis so in such cases, do the tape and make brief general comment in writing. Be prepared to adjudicate in either way.

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- 15) STAY ON TIME. There is almost never an excuse for running late other than the adjudicator getting carried away with the wonder of his or her own knowledge. There is nothing that will kill the spirit and momentum of a festival more obviously than a slow and/or verbose adjudicator. Unless it is the first time a festival is being offered (highly unlikely) the committee usually schedules appropriately (e.g. longer times for more advanced selections). There are, of course exceptions. Generally stay on time, There are bus schedules to keep in order, accompanists that may have to be in different halls, Moms and Dads that need to get back to work... No-one will appreciate the extra time you may want to give to one student or another if it throws the whole schedule off.
- 16) Never adjudicate an accompanist (unless of course, that is part of the class you are judging). As a rule, festivals and musicians have a very difficult time finding accompanists and the last thing they want you to do is destroy any possibility of that accompanist working the next festival. There are admittedly some AWFUL accompanists: wrong notes and tempos, "stepping on" rubatos, playing as a soloist, no sense of balance at all... but most often accompanists are the unsung heroes of the festival, spending endless hours working with students. In the rare case in which you have a good student who is stumbling because of a poor accompanist, it might be possible to point this out BUT you need to know the dynamics: is this the kid's Mom? Is she a local icon? Very often the festival secretary can be your greatest ally giving you information like this. Never criticize an accompanist in writing: ever!
- 17) The care and feeding of your adjudicator secretary is very important. S/he will know local conditions (in things like who won what trophy last year, how to pronounce "Siobhan" (it's "Shovan" by the way...)). Festival secretaries (good ones) help keep you on track, handing you the right forms and music at the right time and generally seeing that the festival is running smoothly. This is another group of unsung heroes of festivals as are the organizers. **Make absolutely sure that at some point near the end of the festival you thank all of these people.** There is a very considerable amount of volunteer labour that goes into such events. It's part of , "paying the bills". Another part is thanking the sponsors. Make sure you do it.
- 18) Most festivals will ask you to identify winners of scholarships, awards and trophies. In many festivals the committee will want to go over all of the available awards before the event. They will send you information. They will want to meet with you. Frankly there is little point in this. One cannot adjudicate a festival effectively if you have to constantly be looking for an award winner. Such discussions are by far best left until the conclusion of the event if you can diplomatically make it happen that way. "Call 'em as you sees 'em" and THEN consider scholarships, awards etc. If they insist you meet before the festival about this, so be it. Then forget about it. You read it here. BUT make sure someone is keeping good track of potential recipients in each class. That saves hours at the end of the day or festival.
- 19) In the case of an ensemble, never single out an individual performer unless it is to make a positive comment. Usually if/s/he has made a mistake, they know it (and so does the rest of the ensemble). So as to not completely ignore the gaff, you might say "a little problem in clarinet at E" and move on to more positive reinforcement. If the player is the only one on a part you might say "some problems in low brass at letter D" even if you know and *they* know the euphonium player dropped his mouthpiece at this point. You might try "Some people will do anything for a solo" if there was a wrong entrance and you sense the student can take some kidding.
- 20) Most of us who are hired for the first time to judge a competition or festival could benefit from having some interim step between being the judged and the judge. I would recommend at some point between these two extremes ***finding an opportunity to observe a really good adjudicator.*** Your hometown or city can always use volunteers at festivals and that is unquestionably a good interim view. Make use of that opportunity. It is easy to arrange.

- 21) Unless you are working with a very large class and so might have to change a few marks in retrospect to come up with a winner (and this is done confidentially of course) **NEVER change a mark**. Most often first impressions are the most accurate gauge. I remember a situation from years ago in which a flautist and horn player from the same school played for me. The flautist had an unusually good day (I found in retrospect) and the hornist um... did not. I gave marks accordingly: 90 to the flute and 79 to the horn, which reflected the way I heard their performances. The teacher was incensed! How could I do this when clearly the horn player was far better than the flute? I explained that I had only heard them once and that this was the order in which I heard them. In order to appease the teacher I offered a compromise: I'd give them each 85. She said "You can't do that!" and she was right (although the prerogative was mine). I never change marks. No exceptions to this rule: too many pitfalls.
- 22) Further on marks, make a habit, when judging large classes, of keeping track of marks on a separate sheet until everyone in the class has played. Sometimes you think you have heard the best (or worst...) performance but you are proven wrong. You do not want to have to go back to the forms and scratch out marks. At the same time sometimes you find you really do need to tie entries and keeping separate track allows for that. It is interesting to note that to most adjudicators (and the reader is, I hope in this camp) the comments on the sheet far outweigh the importance of the grade. More often than not you will find that the grade is the "thing" to students and parents. Oh that it were not so... Anyway, one can use a system for keeping track of "directions in which you are leaning". First put entry numbers in a list. As players finish their performances put something like 83- beside the number. That means that at a stretch they'll receive 83 but if you hear something better they could be bumped down to 82. If you need something more specific put "S6, T2, D0" or something like that. That means that on a 1 to 10 scale the sound was a 6, technique was quite bad and the dynamics and contrasts were non-existent. This person, by the way should NOT have received an 83 or even an 83-. This simple marking system is for your eyes only. The student does not see this.
- 23) Keeping track of your place while speaking into the tape recorder or writing in melodic performances whether solo or choir or band or...is quite straightforward. If it is not straightforward to you, I would suggest you reconsider accepting adjudicating assignments. It is a much more difficult issue though with judging non-melodic percussion and so you need a specific method. Particularly with some complex rudimentary snare solos, for example, It IS not possible to write (or even to some extent to speak into a recorder) AS the player is performing. You need a trick. Use two simple symbols: a circle around a measure or section or rhythm means there was a problem (it dragged, it rushed, the rhythm was incorrect...) and a check mark means there was something particularly good (effective crescendo, ruff, paradiddle, difficult rhythm played perfectly etc.). You should then only comment on the performance after it is over rather than during it as with a melodic performance. The only challenge is remembering what was wrong or right when you go back over the circles and checks. Tell the audience and performers this before the performances.

This always works for me except for one infamous time. I had literally 346 varied entries in a six-day festival. At about #300 my mind was almost jelly. The first snare drummer played and the rhythms were erratic and uneven. I remember that the second player played the first line impeccably and then I lost it. Style and "time" were great but no circles and no checks could I find when it was all over. I could NOT figure out where he was in the piece as it went on but he had great facility. Had it not been entry #300 I would have (with some embarrassment and much apology on my part) asked him to begin again. My wits were not with me. The audience applauded loudly. The last three contestants were like the first one: not quite right. I awarded the first place to the second player. In the summer following that I worked with their teacher, a good friend of mine at a band camp. He asked me if I remembered the competition. Vaguely I did. He told me the other snare drummers were not impressed with me because the winner had made it all up except for the first line. "He does that all the time!" he said "I keep on telling him he has to learn to read." Sigh...

On a related subject, if you are reading this and have anything to do with organizing festivals, please ensure that every piece of music put in front of an adjudicator has measures numbered. Nothing is more frustrating than counting back to 7 measure before D to identify a wrong note only to discover you've now missed more important issues. Measure numbers really help.

- 24) Some festival associations offer very specific forms with clear indications of the kinds of things on which they'd like you to comment. Believe it or not (unless they are insistent: remember they are the employer) it is not absolutely necessary to comment specifically on all of these. That is a little like commenting only on the amount of right notes. Generally speaking if your comments are meaningful, participants and committees will appreciate that regardless of what it says on the form. With some students, for example, you may find yourself commenting most on their intonation. So be it. It does need to be specific to the student to have real meaning. Another factor is that some festivals will give you the same form for 10 and under clarinet as they do for a three-movement concerto in the senior open class. Since the 10 and under is likely a piece lasting 33 seconds give or take, you will not have the time to comment on ALL those categories. In these cases it's much better to make a few cogent comments. Some are over so quickly you barely begin to write. Keep that in mind. A fatal flaw (with very young players) is delaying your writing (or speaking into tape). The tune is over before you know it. Oops...
- 25) Many new adjudicators, with specific form or not, struggle to define the types of thing on which they should comment. It will vary a LOT of course depending on the level of the performer (comments on intonation mean little to an absolute beginner for example especially if you call it "intonation" and not "tuning"). Regardless you should consider commenting to some extent on the following. Remember to include advice on how to FIX something that's wrong. "Intonation?" as a remark, for example, is alright but it is even better if you make an educated guess (and that is all it can be on one listening) as to why the intonation is off and how one might improve it:

- Breathing (the most common word I write or say)
- Sound (in all ranges: it may differ)
- Technique/facility
- Right notes
- Intonation
- Phrasing
- Length of notes
- Style
- Tempos and "time" feel
- Rhythms
- "Ensemble"
- Dynamics and contrast
- Blend/balance
- Attention to conductor
- Deportment (as commented above)

Your remarks might conclude with one on overall impression and musicality.

W.H.Y. M.E.?

Inevitably there will be situations that arise when you are adjudicating from which there seems no "safe escape" (for you OR the student). It is your job to provide the escape route. This section is titled "With Help You Might Escape" or "WHY ME?" for short.

- 1) **Performer breaks down crying:** This, of course, largely a nervous reaction and requires a great deal of tact. Have a private, quiet conversation with the student. Consider rearranging the order of performances to allow them to have a break or in fact allow them to withdraw gracefully. Festivals are not life itself... If they wish to continue but need a moment, consider a break in proceedings. Perhaps look at the possibility of allowing them to play later with no audience. Do what you can to relieve the tension. It is impossible to offer a "formula" for addressing this but one caution is not to allow complete silence which will draw attention to the upset student. Move on with the festival, say something like "Gee I thought it sounded great" or whatever seems diplomatically appropriate at the time. Do not wait for someone else to address the situation unless of course Mom/Dad or a friend have dealt with it. Everyone will expect that to be your role. This will happen. Think about how you might deal with it.
- 2) **Student is unable to finish the solo (nerves):** You need to offer the options of graceful exit or the chance to continue. Suggest starting at " A" ("Would you like to start at "A"?) or starting again as appropriate. Kids are usually just not able to make that decision. The situation will always dictate whether you go right up and talk quietly to the student or from your adjudicating table. How many people are present? Do they seem to be family and friends? It is a judgment call of the time. Again though *you* must deal with it.
- 3) **Student argues with decision:** This is very unusual. Resist wrapping the young person's clarinet around their neck... Do not allow a public argument. Relegate it to a later time in the day. Generally festivals will not allow students to argue directly with the adjudicator and you can invoke that rule: "I am sorry we cannot have this conversation according to festival rules but I would be willing to discuss it with you later. You are again admonished not to adjust marks. You are dealing with emotions, pride, ego, grudge matches. ..."
- 4) **The performance is so awful that everyone knows it most of all the performer:** In cases where the player seems unconcerned obviously you shouldn't be either. There will, however, be times when the student clearly worked on the piece but for whatever reason it goes awry. It is pride-saving time. "I would very much like to hear this again another time, XXXX. I think this is definitely a piece you can play. There's no question of that. Because I am so convinced of that I am not going to give you a mark because I don't think it would be meaningful. I've made a lot of comments that I hope you will find helpful but I've offered no mark. I think the main thing you need to concentrate on in your playing is... Thanks for playing for us today." Allow pride and grace.
- 5) **You award the first place to someone who missed more notes than another:** That of course, is your judgment call and you will have reasons for doing that. There will be surprise in the audience (and perhaps from the performers). Expect It. Consider a comment on your feelings on musicality and presentation before announcing the results. Without embarrassing anyone (as always) you might try a comparison of a great paint by number work with a Van Gogh. Tact, subtlety and a fast car are your friends.

So adjudicating really requires five basic roles

- Constructive assessment
- Timely comment (stay on time!)
- Teaching (in every sense)
- Entertainment
- Creating a relaxed and encouraging atmosphere and a positive experience for everyone involved in the process.

A favourite adjudicator "war story" to finish:

A piano adjudicator and friend was at a small festival and a little guy about 5 years old came on stage to play. "Mom" had made him a wonderful tuxedo and the cute factor was huge. The audience all applauded and he bowed. He sat down to play. Now this young man was at the stage where he only played on the white keys. The piece began on "C". He began on "B" and because his finger pattern was fixed, the entire tune was wrong. The audience, one has to assume, thought it was a much more avant-garde piece than it was and applauded appreciatively when he finished. He took a well-rehearsed bow. When he walked by the adjudicator's table he looked up at my friend and whispered "What the HELL was the matter with that piano?!?"

