

ADJUDICATOR BRIEFING GUIDE

This should be done before any classes begin, if at all possible. Make the adjudicator aware of any rules which pertain to your festival only. Also talk about some of the rules provincially, especially if the adjudicator is from out of province. Hopefully, have your scholarship person and one or two others at the briefing. Have a list written out for you and the adjudicator to follow and be prepared for questions.

- marking system (on the adjudication marking sheets for reference): required marks for provincials is 87; nationals is 88
- how do you feel about ties? nice for encouragement in the younger aged classes but can be a problem in provincial classes
- only put 1st and 2nd place marks on the sheets, all the others have a letter (make sure the letters are consistent with the ones on the adjudication sheets)
- if you decide that you want the adjudicator to give a numerical mark in his/her own book inform him of that and tell him why
- ask him to give written and verbal comments to each child
- ask him/her to give some positive comments in the remarks and try to stay on time
- give a list of scholarships and awards that the adjudicator will need to decide upon
- give accompanying sheets (similar to District Winner Charts) if several classes feed into one award
- make sure the adjudicator knows who to ask for any clarifications he/she may have

HOW CAN THE ADJUDICATOR KEEP TRACK OF ALL OF THE AWARDS?

At the adjudicator briefing it is best if all information is presented to the adjudicator in a concise and easy to follow format. If you have any "RESTRICTED" students participating, inform the adjudicator but do not say who the students are. This is for two reasons. First of all the adjudicator will treat this student just like everyone else in the class and secondly it will not come as a surprise at the scholarship meeting if the adjudicator has chosen the restricted student. You could inform the adjudicator that you have two students entered who are not eligible for your scholarships because they live out of the area but they are eligible to win the class and to be recommended to provincials. All of the cards are on the table. In a large festival several sections of the same class might lead into one scholarship. It is very helpful to have a logical system for choosing the winner.

EXAMPLE:

CLASS 741 - PIANO SOLO BAROQUE, 12 & UNDER

Sect. 1 - Monday, April 21, 9:45 AM	_____	page 34
Sect. 2 - Tuesday, April 22, 9:00 AM	_____	page 57
Sect. 3 - Tuesday, April 22, 3:15 PM	_____	page 61

PLAYOFF Tuesday, April 22, 4:30 PM

WINNER: _____

First place winners are filled in after each class and those winners are invited back for a playoff after all of the classes which feed into the scholarship are completed. In this way the adjudicator is not restricted as to marks as an 88 one day might only be an 87 the next. The playoff is treated as a new competition and judged on the performances at that moment. In a smaller festival, several classes might lead into one award.

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Briefing Adjudicators

Everything you wanted to know and lots you didn't.

Adjudicator briefing begins well BEFORE the festival.

Review difficulties from previous years. Why was there a problem? Was it YOUR problem or was it THEIR problem? Has this same problem arisen before?

Finding solutions:

1. Lack of information for the adjudicator
2. Timing of classes was too tight
3. Too many restrictions
4. Difficulty with personalities

1) Lack of information for the adjudicator

- a) Two categories of adjudicators
 - i) Those who have worked within the Saskatchewan Music Festival system for many years
 - ii) Those from out of province or newcomers to the province
- b) Responsibilities before the festival:
 - i) Assume nothing. Even for adjudicators from within the system, there can be gaps in knowledge or understanding. It is our job as an adjudicator 'briefer' to fill in the gaps.

General Guidelines

- ii) Send your program well ahead of the arrival of the adjudicator. It is not good enough for the adjudicator to receive the program the week of the festival, or to be handed the program as he/she arrives. Adjudicators do not know every single piece that has been composed. This gives time for research if something is unfamiliar, especially important with senior repertoire or for new 20th Century repertoire. It is to your advantage to have your adjudicator as prepared as possible.
- iii) Highlight all provincial and national classes in the program. The letter 'P' in front of the class number can easily be missed so just take a highlighter and the problem is solved.
- iv) Highlight any sight-reading or quick study classes. Attach a note to remind the adjudicator to bring along age or grade specific material for these classes. A reminder that photocopies are unacceptable within the Saskatchewan Music Festival system is not an insult, rather a statement of fact. If the adjudicator is given ample time, he/she can usually provide originals for both performer and him/herself.
- v) Highlight any classes that are specific to your festival, alone. This would include own composition classes, pop music classes, or sacred music classes.
- vi) Be very specific about when you expect your adjudicator to arrive and when the adjudicator is free to leave. If he/she is expected to judge something at the final concert, make this very clear. In most festivals, after the scholarship meeting, the adjudicator is free to leave.
- vii) If you have an afternoon or evening session on the final day of your festival, and then a scholarship meeting following that, do not assume that the adjudicator is going to drive home. Book the hotel for one extra night. It can always be cancelled but cannot always be booked if the weather is iffy or if the adjudicator is tired.

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2) Timing of classes is too tight

Programming your festival:

- i) When deciding how many students to put into a morning, afternoon or evening session, you want to plan for the type of festival that you wish to have. Do you expect your adjudicator to listen, write and speak to the children; or do you expect a more hands on approach or workshop approach in which the adjudicator takes the students up to the piano and works on a specific idea. If the workshop approach is what you have in mind, your scheduling has to reflect that. Also the adjudicator might not function well in that situation. Very often he/she can READ the student and know that this would spell disaster and the child would never come back. Anyway, a rule of thumb, for a listen, write, speak approach for students ages 11 and under, 30 is the maximum numbers for a morning or afternoon, less than that for an evening, perhaps 20. If the competitors are older, you will schedule fewer students per session.
- ii) It somewhat depends on the repertoire as well. If you have sonatinas for instance, allow even more time. If one of your past complaints is that the adjudicator doesn't stay on time, really examine the numbers that you have been putting in to a session. Have your expectations been realistic?
- iii) Programming band classes, musical theatre and such, allow even more time as there is tuning involved for strings, woodwinds, and brass. There is stage set up for percussion, speech arts and musical theatre, so in those cases allow even more time per entry.

3) Too many restrictions

Most restrictions come in the scholarship process. How have you worded your scholarship descriptions? Have you created an impossible situation for your adjudicator to choose the most worthy recipient?

- i) Highest average - Who is more worthy in your view? Sally plays two pieces in the festival. They are not overly difficult but she plays the pieces that she has chosen very well. The marks for Sally are 88 and 89. Joel on the other hand plays five pieces. He is a gifted musician who challenges himself and has marks of 88, 89, 88, 88, 86. Sally's average is higher but does she really deserve the award? I think not. Are we trying to encourage striving for excellence and extending oneself or are we trying to reward the student who plays it safe?
- ii) Highest mark - Same problem for an adjudicator. If the piece is played extremely well, it must be rewarded with a good mark but there are other factors that play in to an adjudicator's decision. What if that highest mark has been given more than once? Who gets the award? The adjudicator should be dealing with listening, giving constructive criticism, and evaluating; not having to keep track of what mark was given in this Baroque piece because he/she wants to make sure the same mark is not given. Remember an 88 on Tuesday might be quite different than an 88 on Thursday. As the week wears on, there is the fatigue factor; the standard of the festival is more evident; No matter what we do or wish for, this is a very subjective activity.
- iii) Test pieces - Some festivals require that a test piece be played in order to receive an award. This is very limiting as well. If your 13 year old had a later start in lessons and is not at that level of the test pieces in that age category, what should he/she do? Try to learn something way beyond the level achieved or just resign him/herself to not being eligible for any awards. What if that 13 year old is a talented musician who the adjudicator would like to encourage?

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- iv) How can the festival simplify this process? Scholarship wordings can be 'deserving', or 'outstanding', rather than 'highest'. If you want to encourage test pieces, what about one award just for test pieces? At the end of the week, the adjudicator can select one performance of a test piece that was worthy of an award, and leave the other awards open to all good students.
 - b) Every small class being given a specific time in the program is also a major restriction for an adjudicator. If you have a class of five 7 year olds scheduled for 9:30 and the next class scheduled to begin at 10:00 a.m. that is an unrealistic amount of time for an adjudicator to spend with five young children. The pieces take about 30 seconds maximum to perform, and now what? Attention spans are limited, you can't take them to the piano usually because they might cry; and what if two are sick that day? A solution is to give the start time as 9:00 am for the first group of classes and 10:30 am for the rest of the morning. Many festivals have coffee breaks scheduled. Rather than giving this a time, just list it as Coffee Break after the last class of the 9:00 am group of classes. Parents can look at the program and do some guesstimates if they wish. If your child is listed as the last competitor for the 9:00 am session, you are pretty safe arriving at 9:30 a.m. for instance. If the adjudicator is running ahead, then he/she can start the next class rather than having to just hang out and wait for the next scheduled time in case Grandma is planning to come to hear Johnny play at 10:10 a.m. 10:45 a.m. is too late to start the second half of the morning. You can bet the session will run into the lunch break. Speaking of lunch break, please allow 1 ½ hours not just one hour for lunch.
- 4) **Difficulty with personalities:**
- a) Good luck with this one. Some adjudicators are a little 'full of themselves'. A bit of that is necessary for people who appear in public. It all ties in to image, confidence and such. You can't change a person's personality; rather we can celebrate the difference, that's why we are sent different adjudicators each year.
 - b) Be sure to check ahead if you plan to billet your adjudicator. Some people may be uncomfortable with this. Be sure to check out where they are staying, either billet or hotel. Would you stay there? Is it clean, quiet, and safe? Are there non-smoking rooms available that are truly non-smoking?
 - c) Provide a per diem for meals rather than having the adjudicator eat at a particular restaurant. He/she may prefer to pick up some things at the local grocery store and eat in the room.
 - d) Has the adjudicator been given a **session off after five sessions**. If you plan to veer from this, it should be discussed ahead of time.
- 5) **Briefing**
- a) Schedule your adjudicator briefing meeting at a neutral place, not in the adjudicator's hotel room. A restaurant or coffee shop attached to the hotel is ideal. Why is this important? The adjudicator's room should be a private home away from home, it is a bedroom after all, and if there is a bottle of scotch on the nightstand that is a personal choice and no one's business.
 - b) Schedule the meeting the evening before the sessions begin, ideally, so that there is time for the adjudicator to process the information or to look over any handouts. If the briefing is done immediately before the first session, you can bet that there will be a few; we hope minor, problems.

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- c) Explain the marking system for the Saskatchewan Music Festival Association. The ranges are at the bottom of the adjudication sheet but clarification needs to be given. A good rule of thumb for piano is as follows: If the student makes it to the piano he will get an 80. The mark then goes from there. If your adjudicator is used to examining for one of the Conservatory systems, the marks will be much lower. You all know that to get first class honours in an exam is a whole different thing from getting an 82 or 83 in a festival class. That doesn't mean there should never be a mark below 80, but marks that are; usually indicate a very low standard.
- d) Ask the adjudicator to stay on time, this is not unreasonable if you have scheduled realistically. However, we all know that people are different and some can manage to stay on time better than others. It is important though, in these days of working parent families to stick with the schedule. Often a parent has left work to be there and it puts a great deal of pressure on parent and child if things are running away behind. If the adjudicator is running behind, and taking every child up to the front, perhaps he/she has to be told that this method cannot be used, your time frame does not allow for it.
- e) Ask the adjudicator to give a written and verbal adjudication for EVERY student. Sometimes adjudicators have been known to do a verbal adjudication only of the winners. It is fine for them to do a general overview, such as characteristics of Baroque that will apply to all pieces in that category, but nevertheless, every child must be addressed individually.
- f) Ask the adjudicator to please include some positive comments in the remarks. A good method is the ABA method, A being positive, B being constructive, ending with A again, something positive. For young students, keep the constructive comments, hopefully never negative, limited to one or two. It is fine to write a few more on the sheet for the benefit of the teacher, but in a public forum, no one should be embarrassed or feel uncomfortable. For the young students, the adjudicator's job is to encourage. Most of the kids will never play that piece again after the class so why would we labour it to death and write 2 full sides of the page when it is irrelevant. Pick out a couple of constructive ideas and stress them, that's good enough. For older students using the piece for an exam, for instance, more detailed comments are helpful.
- g) The adjudicator should not ask whom the student studies with. This has been done and is not acceptable.
- h) Ask the adjudicator not make personal comments to students (i.e.: Are you only 11? You are very tall for 11). Not acceptable.
- i) Adjudicate in the order of performance, not in the order of marks, from worst to best. Believe it or not, this has been done.
- j) You may like the adjudicator to give every student a numerical mark in the office copy of the program, but only the firsts and seconds receive a numerical mark on their adjudication sheets, all others receive a letter grade. (This is where the range of marks is important.) The adjudicator assistant can be helpful here by reminding the adjudicator of the range of marks and by checking that the letter evaluation does not in fact reflect a higher standard than the first and second place marks (i.e.: first place 84, second place 83, all other with an 'A'). This doesn't make sense but has happened if the adjudicator is unfamiliar with the system.
- k) Ask the adjudicator to announce the marks for first and second so that the audience understands the level of the class. This is a regulation of the festival.
- l) Do not tie first place and only tie second place for the younger students or classes that clearly do not lead to provincials.

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- m) Remind the adjudicator that memory-work is ONLY mandatory at the provincial level in the Saskatchewan Music Festival system. Some adjudicators feel strongly about memory and it can subconsciously factor in and is often used to break a tie.
- n) Photocopied music is NOT acceptable. How should the adjudicator handle this? This is usually not the fault of the child. If the adjudicator is told ahead of time, he can look over the score beforehand. **It is important to not upset the room** but the rule must be followed.

Regarding the download of music from the Internet, music from this source can be used in our festivals if the copy has an attached letter from the publisher, indicating that the user has paid a fee or authorization has been granted. Because of the stringency of copyright laws, we encourage competitors to contact their local music store to ensure the music they are considering using for festival performance is clearly identified as being in the public domain or from a credible/legitimate source. The music stores would then research the piece in question and provide verification (letter or research information that is found) of the source and the eligibility of the sheet music in question of which should be attached to the sheet music that was downloaded and performed in festival.

- o) If you have provincial or national classes in your festival your explanation is vital. In order to proceed to provincial level of competition, the following criteria must be met.

i) Provincial level of Nationals

- (1) A mark of 88 must be achieved
- (2) Must have entered a national class, no other way to get there
- (3) Memory work is mandatory at the next level, so the adjudicator will have to decide if the time frame left will allow for solid memory to be achieved.
- (4) No adjudication is given, just give the mark you have decided upon
- (5) Choose an alternate if the next mark is high enough and remind the adjudicator that you have forms to be signed before he/she leaves.

ii) Provincials

- (1) A mark of 87 must be achieved
 - (2) Student must have competed in two classes at the district level to be considered
 - (3) Selection must be at least a grade 9 level for intermediate piano classes
 - (4) Selection must be at least a grade 10 level for senior piano classes
 - (5) No ties in provincial classes, your first place person might already be representing another festival in a particular class and the second place person could be sent if the mark is high enough.
 - (6) Memory work is mandatory at the next level, so the adjudicator will have to decide if the time frame will allow for solid memory to be achieved.
 - (7) Many classes may feed in to one provincial recommend. Have the recommend form handy to give the adjudicator a clear picture of how this happens. For ease of processing, before the festival begins, cross out any class on the provincial forms for which you have no entries. Beside the classes that you do have entries for, pencil in which page of the program that class is found on and the date that the class is being played. As the classes are played, fill in the results at the end of each session or each day. Once all of the classes are complete for that particular provincial recommend, show the results to the adjudicator and give him/her time to think about the outcome.
 - (8) The adjudicator does not have to send the person on, even if the mark is high enough, but it is much easier for the committee and the community to accept, if a mark below 87 is given if he/she has decided that this piece is not going to stand up provincially. Explain this to the adjudicator.
 - (9) Remind the adjudicator that you must have signatures on the provincial forms before he/she leaves.
- p) Ask the adjudicator not to visit with, or go for lunch with teachers, competitors or family members of the competitors even if they are long time friends. If the adjudicator is coming to a familiar area,

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he/she should stay an extra day to catch up on visiting. It is the perception; for we all know that adjudicators are not going to be influenced for the most part.

6) After the Festival

Evaluation forms:

Give these a great deal of thought; remember that the adjudicator is also evaluating your festival. Please do not evaluate on personality alone, but rather on performance. Evaluate how cooperative the adjudicator was, certainly, but also how helpful and how well the adjudicator related to the students. Do we always agree with the choices that have been made? Certainly not! But that does not mean that the adjudicator was not qualified or conscientious.

Suggestions for next year:

It is fair to contact the office with suggestions of whom you might like to have for another year. Visit other festivals and observe not only the adjudicator in action, but what the festival committee does, how they set up their program, how they group their classes. Come to conference and bring a friend. We are all in this together and we can learn from each other.