ROBERT MERRITT AWARDS HANDBOOK



ROBERT MERRITT
AWARDS

In Effect January 1st, 2027 onwards

ROBERT MERRITT AWARDS
RULES AND REGULATIONS

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REGISTRATION

Please be sure to read the criteria within this handbook or online prior to registering a production.

To be sure a production can be considered by the jury, please complete the online Production Registration form at
www.theatrens.ca/robert-merritt-awards/production-submissions

Theatre Nova Scotia members are encouraged to register their productions as soon as they announce them or as early as possible.

Submissions for productions **MUST be sent at least 6 WEEKS IN ADVANCE of your opening night** in order to be considered. If helpful, we only need your production's Title, Dates, and Ticket Booking Method by this 6-week deadline. But in order for jurors to sufficiently arrange for scheduling and travel, we must receive notice of this production at least 6 Weeks in Advance of your Opening Night.

Roles and Performer names can be amended through this form link up until **2 WEEKS** in advance of your Opening Night. Please save your submission's form link to edit later, if this is the case.

It is solely the responsibility of the producing theatre to make sure they request the jury at their production, by applying online by the deadline through the link above.

Submission of the production does not automatically guarantee a production for consideration. While TNS staff will make every reasonable effort to send jurors to all shows, factors such as short runs, juror conflict of interest, or juror availability may prevent some

shows from having sufficient juror attendance.

Productions Productions are encouraged -where possible- to offer at least 5 days of available show dates that Jurors can attend. This minimum number is based on TNS' efforts and data from the last 10 years of Merritt Jury process, showing that it is incredibly difficult and expensive to ensure sufficient juror attendance to a show with a window of less than 5 days. Rather than distance to travel, Theatre NS has found that the much more limiting factor to juror attendance is the number of show days available to attend.

Productions that have less than 5 days of shows available for jurors to attend, will still be able to submit their productions for consideration to the Merritts and have the info distributed and have jurors attend.

Theatre NS will do their best to try and help get jurors out to the show, and entice them to attend; in communications through our Juror platform to arrange carpools, and offering additional microgrants and subsidies for mileage and accommodation coverage.
However TNS cannot guarantee that a sufficient minimum number of jurors will be able to attend a run with a very small window of dates. It is understood that some of this responsibility to solicit jurors may need to be shared with the show's Producer, by offering ticket incentives, extra communication with Peer Jurors earlier on, and as much notice of the production's dates as possible beyond the 6-week minimum.

The information provided by the Producer in the production submission form will appear exactly as submitted on Merritt Ballots unless otherwise updated by the Producer.
In January of the following year, Theatre Nova Scotia staff will distribute a confirmation Producer Ballot to the producer for each production submitted. Producers may review this Ballot and flag any errors or amendments.

Upon receipt of this final ballot, (or beyond the deadline to review and amend them) Theatre Nova Scotia is not responsible for inaccuracies or errors in production information. Names and roles will be taken directly from the Ballot, as reviewed by the Producer.

REGULATIONS

Producers must be Theatre Nova Scotia company or ad hoc group members in good standing prior to submitting a production registration.

Only productions of professional theatre companies or ad hoc groups/artist collectives are eligible.

In the case of a co-production with a non-TNS member, the Theatre Nova Scotia member company must be intrinsically and continuously involved in order for the production to be considered for nomination. Cast and Crew contracts for the production must bear the name of the Theatre Nova Scotia member company.

Producers must register their productions a minimum of 6 weeks in advance of Opening

Night. Provide accurate and detailed information on the registration form for jurors. Changes to the information provided must be sent to Theatre Nova Scotia. Ballots are created directly from information provided on the registration form.

Productions must take place in Nova Scotia, between January 1st to December 31st.

All productions to be juried will make a total of sixteen (16) complimentary tickets available to Theatre Nova Scotia to distribute to Peer Jurors.

Producers are NOT to contact jurors directly.

Theatre Nova Scotia shall rule on any questions regarding the Merritt regulations.

ELIGIBILITY

Only productions of Theatre Nova Scotia current professional theatre member companies or ad hoc groups/artist collectives are eligible.

Production registration must be submitted six (6) weeks in advance of Opening Night. Late submissions will still be shared with the jurors, but there is no guarantee to the Producer that sufficient juror attendance can be arranged. Producers are NOT to contact jurors directly.

Professional Productions
Eligible theatre productions must be "Professional". Meaning your production meets two major criteria:

1. Professional Productions engage a majority (60%+) of professional theatre artists.
Theatre Nova Scotia adopts the Canada Council definition of "professional" artists.
A professional artist is defined as someone who:

- Has specialized training in the theatre field (not necessarily in academic institutions).
- Is recognized as 'professional' by peers (artists working in the same artistic tradition).
- Has a history of public presentation or publication.
- Has the intent to make a living from their theatre craft.

2. Professional Productions must pay all artists on their productions. No less than $500 per week for each performance week.
*(*TNS does not endorse this amount as an industry standard of any kind, however has accepted this figure for the purposes of categorization. This amount will be reviewed each year.)*

Ad hoc Group/Artist Collective
Ad hoc groups/artist collective will be eligible to be reviewed by the jury if a minimum of

75% of the artists in the group are professional artists and those artists are individual members in good standing of Theatre Nova Scotia. The same ad hoc group/artist collective may be reviewed as such for two years.
Application to Theatre Nova Scotia must be made by an ad hoc group/artist collective eight (8) weeks in advance of the first scheduled public performance and must include:

- A letter describing the artistic scope of the ad hoc group/artist collective
- Bios of all [principle] artists who make up the ad hoc group/artist collective
- The title and dates of the production

Nova Scotian Playwrights
Nova Scotian Playwrights are eligible to be nominated in the categories of Outstanding New Play by a Nova Scotian Playwright, and Outstanding New Adaptation by a Nova Scotian Playwright.
For the purposes of the Merritt Awards, "Nova Scotian" is defined as a person who was born in Nova Scotia, or has had permanent residence in Nova Scotia for at least two (2) years.

Producers determine to which categories they are submitting. Producers determine who is considered for any and all award categories.

Producers will be responsible for collecting and submitting artist information as required by the Merritt Awards for the purpose of award eligibility.

A production may only be eligible for one (1) of the Outstanding Production Awards:

- Outstanding Production,
- Outstanding Independent Production

Producers may initially submit to any/all three of these categories that they may qualify for.
The following year when Jurors tabulate their scores, if after the first round of voting a production is found to have advanced into more than one of these categories, the producer will be contacted and asked to choose which category they wish to move forward in.
The Producer may only choose one category to advance in, and choosing a category does not guarantee the production will advance further beyond the initial round of voting and be successfully nominated.

A production may be considered for both 'Outstanding Theatre for Young Audiences Production', along with another Outstanding Production tier category.

Productions produced as part of the Halifax Fringe Festival will be considered, but are subject to the same rules and timelines for eligibility as all other productions.

Community Theatre productions, Educational programs and productions, Workshops, fundraisers, excerpts, and training productions are not eligible for the Merritt Awards.

No remount production can be eligible if it has been considered by a jury within the past five

(5) year period. This includes remounts and continuous runs.
A “remount” is defined as a production which, once closed, is remounted using the stage manager’s copy of the prompt script, and any of the following elements;

- the original production's set designs
- the original production's costume designs
- 50% or more of the original cast
- 50% or more of the original creative team

No award winner in any category, may be nominated again for the same production, part, or design in subsequent years.

Theatre Nova Scotia shall rule on any questions regarding the eligibility of a production or person. Producers are encouraged to contact the Staff or Board of Theatre Nova Scotia with questions or if unsure.

AWARD CATEGORIES

Juried Awards (Awards scored and decided by the Merritt Jury)

Each category for the Juried Merritt Awards requires a minimum of 6 annual candidates to move on to Nominations

In the event of few candidates in a Category, jurors will only score productions that they considered Outstanding (and do not need to score 5 productions if they only considered 4 or fewer to be ‘Outstanding’).

1. Outstanding New Play by a Nova Scotian Playwright*
2. Outstanding New Adaptation by a Nova Scotian Playwright*
3. Outstanding Direction
4. Outstanding Musical Direction
5. Outstanding Choreography
6. Outstanding Costume Design
7. Outstanding Scenic Design
8. Outstanding Lighting Design
9. Outstanding Sound Design
10. Outstanding Original Score or Composition*
11. Outstanding Projection Design
12. Outstanding Fight Direction
13. Outstanding Performance in a Leading Role (2 winners)
15. Outstanding Performance in a Supporting Role (2 winners)
17. Outstanding Performance by an Ensemble*
18. Outstanding Theatre for Young Audiences Production*
19. Outstanding Production*

20. Outstanding Independent Production*

**See Category Criteria and Information below*

Nomination Awards (Nominations reviewed by a panel of Merritt Ad Hoc committee members)

The following awards are categories deserving of recognition but not able to be scrutinized by a Jury. Instead a panel is assembled by the Theatre Nova Scotia board, consisting of members of the Professional and Merritt Ad Hoc committees. Details on the award applications and annual deadlines for submissions can be found on Theatre Nova Scotia's website.

These awards may not be presented every year, if TNS receives no submissions for them.
All Nomination Awards & Scholarship Prize submissions are reviewed and winners chosen by a selection panel made up of Theatre Nova Scotia board members. Except for the April Hubbard Creative Access award, which is chosen by a panel of members of the Disabled and Mad community.

21. April Hubbard Creative Access Award
22. Theatre Nova Scotia Legacy Award
23. Outstanding Emerging Artist or Group
24. Outstanding Stage Manager
25. Outstanding Technician
26. Outstanding Volunteer
27. Outstanding Media Outlet/Media Coverage

More information on the criteria and application process for these awards can be found online.

CATEGORY CRITERIA AND INFORMATION

Outstanding New Play by a Nova Scotian Playwright
"Outstanding New Play" is a playwriting award, defined as the Nova Scotian premiere of an original script written by a Nova Scotian playwright.
For the purposes of the Merritt Awards, "Nova Scotian" is defined as a person who was born in Nova Scotia, or has had permanent residence in Nova Scotia for at least two (2) years.

Outstanding New Adaptation by a Nova Scotian Playwright
"Outstanding Adaptation" is a playwriting award, not a production award. It is defined as extensive changes to the original material to explore new meaning. This of course includes adapting a play from a novel or another non-theatrical source.
The award is meant to celebrate script adaptation and playwriting (is this a new script, or is the script exploring something new?) Rather than for Directorial choices where largely the same text is used (such as taking the same script and setting it in a new location, or a new concept).

For the purposes of the Merritt Awards, “Nova Scotian” is defined as a person who was born in Nova Scotia, or has had permanent residence in Nova Scotia for at least two (2) years.

Outstanding Original Score or Composition

“Outstanding Original Score or Composition” is defined as newly created music, lyrics, and/or sounds conceived of and recorded by a composer, specifically for a particular production.
If submitting for both Original Composition as well as Sound Design, Producers are encouraged to list their Composer and their Sound Designer, as well as detail what elements of the production will be score/composed, versus the sound design (so the jurors may listen for it and discern the two).

“Outstanding Sound Design” is defined as creating, acquiring, editing, and implementing the complete audio elements of a theatre production.

Outstanding Performance by an Ensemble

“Outstanding Ensemble" is defined as a production with a cast that has relatively equal shares of performance presence, and the production is Outstanding due to their work collectively. Rather than a casting model where a few lead characters drive the story, with the rest of the cast serving in supporting roles.

Productions may submit for both Outstanding Lead and Supporting performance as well as the Ensemble award if so desired.

Producers are encouraged to list who they mean when they say ‘Ensemble’, for Juror’s clarity.

Outstanding Productions

A production may only be eligible for one (1) of the Outstanding Production Awards:

- Outstanding Production,
- Outstanding Independent Production

Producers may initially submit to any/all three of these categories that they may qualify for.

The following year when Jurors tabulate their scores, if after the first round of voting a production is found to have advanced into more than one of these categories, the producer will be contacted and asked to choose which category they wish to move forward in.

The Producer may only choose one category to advance in, and choosing a category does not guarantee the production will advance further beyond the initial round of voting and be successfully nominated.

A production may be considered for both ‘Outstanding Theatre for Young Audiences Production’, along with another Outstanding Production tier category.

Outstanding Independent Production

Payment of all personnel is required for Outstanding Independent Production.

This award is open to groups that use any theatre working agreement beneath the CTA (Canadian Theatre Agreement).

Outstanding Production
Payment of all personnel is required for Outstanding Production.

This award is open to any interested parties.

THE MERRITT PEER JURY

All individual Professional Theatre Artists across the province may apply to be a part of Theatre NS' annual Peer Jury for the Merritt Awards.

Artists must be a current member of Theatre NS (Individual or covered by an Organization as one of their key producing company members).

Artists must submit a separate application to be a Peer Juror for the Merritt Awards. Theatre Nova Scotia will then review each artist's application to ensure they meet the definition of a Professional Artist in the Nova Scotian professional theatre community.

A "professional theatre artist" is defined as someone who has **ANY** of the following four criteria:

- Someone who has at least 2 credits in the last 5 years, or over 10 credits from any time, working on a show by a Theatre NS professional organization member.
- Is a member of a theatrical professional association (CAEA, ACTRA, PGC, ADC, IATSE, UDA, UBAS).
- Works for a Theatre Nova Scotia professional member
- Has completed professional training in theatre (Post-Secondary or Certification program)

These same criteria may be applied to any institution, company or organization outside of Nova Scotia as well (such as certification from another province or country, or work with a professional company outside of Nova Scotia). Please contact Theatre NS if you would like to confirm.

Artists who are approved to be a part of the 2027 Merritt Awards Peer Jury must:

- Jury **a minimum of 8** professional theatre productions in the year
- Jury at least 2 shows in the year **outside of their home region**
- Provide **proof of their attendance** to the show, and submit their Peer Juror vote ballot within two weeks of seeing the production.

A production must be juried by a minimum of 6 Peer Jurors for it to qualify for the awards. In the circumstance that an eligible production submitted with sufficient notice has not been seen by at least 6 jurors (representing 6 separate ballots), the Producing company will be informed and

the Board of Directors and will determine if there can be an alternate procedure to ensure that the production is able to be evaluated in a fair and equitable manner.

MERRITT JURY BALLOTS

The information for the ballot is drawn directly from the information submitted through the initial production submission form.

Each production will have its own specialized Voting Ballot form, which producers will encourage attending professional peer jurors to score their production with.

This form will contain a series of descriptive rubrics, asking Peer Jurors to score the production in all the applicable categories they asked to be considered for, from 1-10.

- Criteria for each of the category rubrics will have been developed with input from working professional artists in each field.
- This Voting Ballot Form can be shared by producers as a QR Code, Link, and on TNS' Merritts website, to be used by attending Peer Jurors. Theatre Nova Scotia will verify each submission after the show has closed.

Following the end of each show's run (two weeks later) Theatre NS staff will close down the show's Voting Ballot form, and verify each voter (ensuring they are an approved Peer Jury member, have no Conflicts of Interest, and confirm their proof of attendance), to make sure their vote counts.

Total scores for each category are given as a **weighted average**.

Importantly - this means that productions are <u>not</u> penalized or given an advantage by having more or less attending Peer Jurors.

For example; A show that receives 10 total Peer Juror voters will have all of its category score points added up, and then divided by 10, to make a total weighted average score. And a show that receives 25 Peer Juror voters will have its total category score points added together, and then divided by 25. Whichever production with the highest weighted average score, will win the category.

At the end of the year, Theatre Nova Scotia will be able to confirm with each Peer Jury voter that they met the minimum threshold/commitment of 8 shows for the year, and 2 outside of their home region. If these criteria are not met, the Juror's ballot and scores will not be counted, and will be struck from the production's total average.

At the end of each performance year, Theatre Nova Scotia will distribute to each producer a Production Ballot for each of their eligible productions in the year, including all roles, names, and information submitted.
The responsibility for verifying the information (including proper titles and spelling of

Names) on the ballot lies completely with the producer, and any amendments must be received back by the deadline provided by Theatre Nova Scotia.

Theatre Nova Scotia will retain all score forms for a period of three months after the awards ceremony. All ballots will then be destroyed. No part of any ballot will be made public.

Once voting has begun, any candidate or producer wishing to remove themselves from any category, will be done so without substitution. In the event that nominations have already been announced, the candidate will not be replaced.

VOTING

All juror voting is confidential, and will be completed individually by attending Peer Jurors during a production's run.

Producers will facilitate displaying the QR code score card for Peer Jurors to use. This QR Code and Link will also be embedded on the Merritt Awards website during the run of the show.

Peer Jurors must submit their scores electronically within two weeks of the production's closing date. And must submit proof of their attendance through the form as well.

Theatre Nova Scotia shall not disclose the votes given to any candidate. A juror may not vote on a production with which they have a conflict of interest. A juror may not vote on a production they did not see.

Theatre Nova Scotia will therefore receive final scores for each production shortly following its closing date. Final scores for all productions will be received and finalized two weeks after the final show of the calendar year.

The top 5 scored candidates in each category shall be the Nominees, with the #1 scored candidate being the winner.

There can be no ties. In cases where a tie exists and cannot be broken by the jury, Theatre Nova Scotia staff and board will appoint appropriate (and unbiased) representation to break the tie.

In the case of 2 categories only, Outstanding Performance in a Leading Role and Supporting Role, there will be two (2) winners. No more than 50% of the nominees or winners of each of these two categories can be cisgendered men.

Theatre Nova Scotia has the right to determine if they would like to name an award recipient in a category that did not meet the 6-candidate minimum.

The names of the winners shall not be made public until the time of the awards. Theatre Nova Scotia will keep these names confidential until that time.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Policies

Policies for the Merritt Awards are decided on by the Merritt Awards Ad Hoc Committee. This committee is composed of members of the 'Professional Committee' of Theatre Nova Scotia, which includes Professional producing members of Theatre Nova Scotia from across the province.

This committee is convened on an as-needed basis, and the Staff and Board of Directors for Theatre Nova Scotia are responsible for reviewing policy and procedure to ensure that the processes of the Merritt Awards are carried out as responsibly and as fairly as possible.

The theatre community is welcome to submit requests and input regarding the Merritt Awards by contacting the Executive Director or a TNS Board member. The Merritt Awards are often discussed at the Professional Committee and any business arising will be reviewed by the Board and brought forward to the Professional Committee.

Regular scrutinizing and refreshing of the Merritt Awards criteria and regulations is expected every 3-4 years.

Panels

Upon receipt of the nominations for the special awards, a panel will be convened to review and decide upon the recipients. The panel will include the Executive Director, at least one (1) Board Director and at least two (2) members of the theatre community.

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