

# **THEATRE NOVA SCOTIA**

## **ROBERT MERRITT AWARDS**

### **HANDBOOK**



Eligibility Criteria Rules and Regulations

Effective January 1 - December 31, 2019

# ROBERT MERRITT AWARDS

## ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

## RULES AND REGULATIONS

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## **ELIGIBILITY**

- 1) The Merritt Awards season runs from January 1<sup>st</sup> to December 31<sup>st</sup>.
- 2) Productions and theatre practitioners working for professional theatre companies that are members in good standing of Theatre Nova Scotia are eligible to be nominated for the Merritt Awards. Only productions of theatre companies are eligible.
- 3) Theatre productions must be professional where “professional” is defined by the majority (51%+) of artists. Theatre Nova Scotia adopts the Canada Council definition of professional artist: A professional artist is someone who has specialized training in the field (not necessarily in academic institutions), is recognized as such by peers (artists working in the same artistic tradition), has a history of public presentation or publication, and the intent make a living from their craft.
- 4) **All eligible productions to be juried must apply online at [www.merrittawards.ca](http://www.merrittawards.ca) .** Productions that do not register themselves with Theatre Nova Scotia **six weeks (6) in advance of the show’s opening** run the risk of being omitted from the jury’s viewing schedule. While Theatre Nova Scotia makes every reasonable effort to ensure eligible productions are seen by the jury, *it is solely the responsibility of the producing theatre to make sure that the jury is aware of their production, by applying online.* If for some reason this is not possible, call the Theatre Nova Scotia office and alternate arrangements will be made to ensure that the production is registered.
- 5) **All production details must be inputted in the submission form on the Merritt website by the producing theatre company.** While Theatre Nova Scotia will make every reasonable effort to ensure that eligible productions are listed accurately, **it is the producing theatre’s responsibility to ensure that the details of their productions appear correctly on the ballot.**

- 6) All Productions to be juried will make two (2) complimentary available tickets to their productions for each jury member. A jury list will be maintained on the Theatre Nova Scotia website.
- 7) Nova Scotian Playwrights are eligible to be nominated in the category of Outstanding New Play by a Nova Scotian playwright. New Play is defined as the Nova Scotia premiere of an original script or authorized adaptation/translation from another medium. For the purposes of the Merritt Awards, "Nova Scotian" is defined as a person who was born in Nova Scotia or has resided in Nova Scotia for at least two (2) years.
- 8) Nova Scotian musicians are eligible for the category of Outstanding Original Score. For the purposes of the Merritt Awards, "Nova Scotian" is defined as a person who was born in Nova Scotia or has resided in Nova Scotia for at least two (2) years.
- 9) 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.
- 10) Productions must run within the province of Nova Scotia.

**Theatre Nova Scotia shall rule on any questions regarding the eligibility of a production or person.**

## **Category Definitions for Eligibility**

### **Established Professional Theatre Company Criteria**

To be a member of the Established Professional Theatre Company category, the company must:

- Have a mission statement
- Engage a majority of professional artists (51%+) as described in item 3 above
- Have a history of artistic activity of at least three (3) years in Nova Scotia
- Pay all professional artists required for the running of a performance, including but not limited to actors, stage managers and technicians, no less than \$300\* per week for each performance week or any part thereof.

\*Theatre Nova Scotia does not endorse this amount as an industry standard of any kind, however has accepted this figure for the purposes of Merritt categorization. Such detail will be reviewed each year.

### **Emerging & New Professional Theatre Company Criteria**

To be a member of the Emerging & New Professional Theatre Company category, the company must:

- Have a mission statement
- Engage a majority of professional artists (51%+) as described in item 3 above
- Make an effort to pay all artists required for the running of a performance, including but not limited to actors, stage managers and technicians, no less than \$300\* per week for each performance week or any part thereof.

Companies can be considered in this category for up to 5 years.

\*Theatre Nova Scotia does not endorse profit-sharing as an industry standard of any kind, however has accepted this option for the purposes of Merritt categorization. Such detail will be reviewed each year.

### **Ad hoc Group Criteria**

Ad hoc groups will be eligible to be reviewed by the Established Professional Theatre Productions Jury if a minimum of 75% of the artists in the group are professional artists (as described in item 3 above) and those artists are individual members in good standing of Theatre Nova Scotia. The same ad hoc group may be reviewed as such for two years.

Application to Theatre Nova Scotia must be made by an ad hoc group eight (8) weeks in advance of the first scheduled public performance and must include:

- The dates of the production
- A letter describing the artistic purpose and scope of the ad hoc group (be that the creation of one project or a series of activities)
- Bios of all artists who make up the ad hoc group
- A letter confirming payment of all professional artists required for the running of a performance, including but not limited to actors, stage managers and technicians, no less than \$300\* per week for each performance week or any part thereof.

\*Theatre Nova Scotia does not endorse this amount as an industry standard of any kind, however has accepted this figure for the purposes of Merritt categorization. Such detail will be reviewed each year.

### **Fringe Criteria**

Productions produced as part of the Atlantic Fringe Festival will be subject to the same rules for eligibility as all other productions.

### **Presented non-Nova Scotian Production Criteria**

Any professional, non-Nova Scotian theatre production presented by a Theatre Nova Scotia Established Professional Company member in good standing will be considered for the “Outstanding Presented Production” Award, which began January 1, 2014. Productions are subject to the same rules for eligibility as all other productions.

**Theatre Nova Scotia shall rule on any questions regarding the company category criteria.**

## **NOT ELIGIBLE**

- 1) Productions that are produced by members that are not in good standing or are not members of Theatre Nova Scotia are not eligible for the Merritt Awards.
  
- 2) Workshops, fundraisers, excerpts, training productions, and community theatre productions are not eligible for the Merritt Awards.
  
- 3) No award winner (actor, director, designer, playwright, production) may be nominated again for the same production/part/or design in subsequent years.
  
- 4) No production can be eligible if it has been considered by a jury within a 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 set design and/or costume design, and/or at least 50% percent of the cast are artists who were engaged for the previous production.

**Theatre Nova Scotia shall rule on any questions regarding the eligibility of a production or person.**

## **THE JURY**

- 1) There will be one (1) jury.
- 2) The jury will be comprised of six (6) or seven (7) people. An effort will be made to include theatre practitioners of different fields of practice and levels of experience.
- 3) Jurors are expected to attend all eligible productions and shall be required to retain ticket stubs from each production. Jurors may be asked to submit ticket stubs in order to verify attendance. It is advisable that jurors also keep all programs and take program notes in order to help them reflect on all of the details of productions when they are filling out the ballot. Please note that there is a significant requirement for travel throughout Nova Scotia during the year, particularly in the summer months as productions take place throughout July and August. TNS does offset necessary travel costs. Jurors must arrange their own travel.
- 4) It is accepted that some jurors will not be able to attend all of the eligible productions due to theatre employment either inside or outside of Nova Scotia. The only accepted explanations for missing eligible productions include theatre employment or family emergencies.
- 5) If for whatever reason a juror cannot continue his/her duties throughout the year, that juror's ballot will be filled out jointly by the original juror and his/her replacement.
- 6) Theatre Nova Scotia requires that all jurors are able to see at least (but not limited to) 85% of eligible productions. This minimal expectation has been set based on the abilities of past working juries to see eligible productions. A juror who does not attend 85% of eligible productions may at the discretion of the Theatre Nova Scotia Executive Director be dismissed.

- 7) In order for a production to be considered properly evaluated for the Merritt Awards, it must be seen by a minimum of three jurors.
- 8) In the extremely rare circumstance that an eligible production has not been seen by at least 3 jurors (representing 3 separate ballots), the Producing company will be informed and the Board of Directors and will determine an alternate procedure to ensure that the production is evaluated in a fair and equitable manner.
- 9) Theatre companies agree to provide each juror with two complimentary tickets to each eligible production.
- 10) Theatre Nova Scotia agrees to reimburse jury members for travel and accommodation expenses subject to advance approval by the Executive Director of Theatre Nova Scotia.

## THE BALLOT

- 1) The performance year for the Merritt Awards ballot is from January 1<sup>st</sup> to December 31<sup>st</sup> of any given year. The information for the ballot is assembled from the information submitted on the Merritt website [www.merrittawards.ca](http://www.merrittawards.ca)
- 2) In early January following the performance year, Theatre Nova Scotia will make the ballot details of their productions available to all eligible theatre companies. **The responsibility for the information on the ballot lies completely with the producing theatre company.** The ballot will be distributed to all participating theatre companies for verification and any corrections or adjustments before being sent to the jury. No ballot will be sent to the jury until all eligible theatre companies have an opportunity to verify that the information is correct.
- 3) Upon receiving the ballot, the jury will have the opportunity to verify that all names, productions, and categories are listed as they expect. If there are any anomalies, the producing company will be notified and asked if they would like to make a last minute change to the ballot. The producing company has the authority over how their productions and personnel are listed.
- 4) Each juror will be asked to fill out at least 3 ballots each to determine nominees and winners. Jurors may be asked to continue to vote on a series of ballots to break ties and/or to clearly determine nominees and winners.
- 5) Theatre Nova Scotia will retain all ballots for a period of one month after the awards ceremony. All ballots will then be destroyed.

## **THE VOTE**

- 1) Once the ballot has been approved by all eligible theatre companies, and the jury, voting may begin.
- 2) The first ballot. The Jurors will be asked to cast a secret ballot selecting their personal top five candidates from all eligible candidates in each award category.
- 3) A second ballot will be prepared with all the selected top five candidates from each juror. The second ballot usually contains approximately 12-18 choices in each category.
- 4) The second ballot will then be distributed to the jury. Before voting on the second ballot, jury members may make recommendations to add choices to the ballot, if they feel that there is a production or person that they or their fellow jurors have overlooked. Changes may be made, and a second draft of the second ballot may be made. If no jurors have any additions, no second draft will be drawn up, and voting will take place.
- 5) On the second ballot, Jurors are asked to rank their choices marking 1 for their top choice down in descending order to their bottom choice.
- 6) The votes will be tabulated. The process will continue until a list of nominees is established for each category.
- 7) Once the list of nominees is established. Each juror will be polled as to their opinions on the nominee list.
- 8) The next ballot will include just the nominees and voting and will continue until a winner is established. There are no ties.
- 9) In order to make sure that the results on the ballots clearly reflect the choices of the jury, jurors may be asked to score choices using a percentage system, and/or may be asked to meet in a group to discuss the results, and/or may be interviewed individually. These

methods will only be used in exceptional circumstances, such as ties, or suspicion of manipulative voting. These methods will be used at the discretion of the Executive Director of Theatre Nova Scotia.

10) A juror may not vote on a production with which he/she was directly involved. Jurors are asked to make clear on the ballot the productions with which they were involved.

11) A juror may not vote on a production they did not see.

12) Jurors may not abstain from voting in categories or vote for fewer than the prescribed number of nominees in any one category unless they are abstaining due to a conflict of interest.

13) All voting is confidential.

14) Theatre Nova Scotia shall not disclose the number of votes given to any nominee.

15) The names of the winners shall not be made public until the time of the awards.

## **TABULATING THE RESULTS**

- 1) Ballots are tabulated by the Executive Director of Theatre Nova Scotia.
- 2) Vote tabulation differs from ballot to ballot. To tabulate the first ballot, all names chosen by the jury are transferred onto to ballot #2, which typically includes approximately 12-18 choices in each category.
- 3) On ballot #2 the scores of the jury will be averaged. In some events productions may not have been seen by the full slate of jurors, due to conflict of interest or other sanctioned reasons. In order to even the playing field for all productions, a three vote consensus takes precedence over the average scores when tabulating ballot #2.
- 4) After tabulating ballot #2 choices with the lowest scores will be dropped off and the remaining names will be transferred to ballot #3. Typically ballot #3 includes 8-10 choices in each category.
- 5) On ballot #3 the scores of the jury are averaged with precedence given to a three vote consensus. The list of nominees should be established through the tabulation of ballot #3. The list of nominees is usually comprised of 5 names in each category. There may be situations where in order to establish the nomination list, certain or all categories need to go to ballot #4 or #5.
- 6) The jury is presented with the final nomination list. They are asked again to vote to establish a winner. Votes are tabulated. If necessary in order to establish a winner, certain or all categories may need to go to more ballots.
- 7) A winner is established in each category. The names of the winners are confidential until announced at the Merritt Ceremony.

## AWARD CATEGORIES

### AWARDS DECIDED BY THE JURY

**To be a valid award category for the Merritt Awards, there must be a minimum of 6 possible listings in any given category. This means that in some years categories such as choreography, musical direction or original score may be awarded. Likewise if any of the categories listed below have fewer than 6 possible listings they will be eliminated for that year. In the case of Original Score it will be included under Sound Design.**

**Outstanding Performance by a male actor in a leading role** -awarded for an outstanding performance by a male actor in any eligible production.

**Outstanding Performance by a female actor in a leading role** - awarded for an outstanding performance by a female actor in any eligible production

**Outstanding Performance by a male actor in a supporting role** - awarded for an outstanding performance in a supporting role by a male actor in any eligible production.

**Outstanding Performance by a female actor in a supporting role** - awarded for an outstanding performance in a supporting role by a female actor in any eligible production.

**Outstanding Direction** -awarded for outstanding direction of any eligible production.

**Outstanding Scenic Design** - awarded to a designer for an outstanding set and/or projection design in any eligible production.

**Outstanding Costume Design** - awarded to a costume designer for an outstanding costume design in any eligible production.

**Outstanding Lighting Design** - awarded to a lighting designer for an outstanding lighting design in any eligible production.

**Outstanding Production** -awarded to a theatre company for an outstanding overall production of any eligible play or musical.

**Outstanding New Play (Playwright)** - awarded to a Nova Scotian playwright for outstanding writing of a new play. For the purposes of this award the term "Nova Scotian playwright" refers to a person who either was born in Nova Scotia or who has resided in Nova Scotia for at least two years. New Play is defined as the Nova Scotia premiere of an original script or authorized adaptation/ translation from another medium.

**Outstanding Musical Direction** - awarded to the Musical Director for outstanding musical direction of any eligible production.

**Outstanding Sound Design** - awarded to a sound designer for outstanding sound design of any eligible production. At the discretion of the producer, the eligible company should decide if Sound Design or Original Score/Composition is more appropriate for the ballot.

**Outstanding Original Score or Composition** – awarded to a composer for the creation of an original score or musical composition for any eligible production. At the discretion of the producer, the eligible company should decide if Sound Design or Original Score/Composition is more appropriate for the ballot.

**Outstanding Choreography**- *awarded to a choreographer for outstanding choreography of any eligible production.*

**Outstanding Production by an Emerging or New Theatre Company** -*awarded to a theatre company for an outstanding overall production of an eligible play or musical.* Open to Emerging Professional theatre companies.

**Outstanding Presented Production** -*awarded to a non-Nova Scotian theatre company for an outstanding overall production of an eligible play or musical.*

## **SPECIAL AWARDS**

### **AWARDS DECIDED BY A PANEL**

**Legacy Award (if warranted)** - *The Legacy Award is decided by a panel convened each year by evaluating written nominations submitted by the community. The award is given to an individual who has made a significant contribution to Nova Scotian theatre in the areas of organizational development, community building, mentorship and education. Nominees may include, but are not limited to: actors, directors, producers, playwrights, designers, scenic artists, carpenters, sound and lighting technicians, stage managers, administrators and theatre educators. Recipients are eligible to receive the award one time only. The award is open to all Nova Scotians.*

**The Merritt Volunteer Award (if warranted)** – *The Volunteer Award is decided by a panel convened each year by evaluating written nominations submitted by the community. The award is given to a volunteer of a theatre company who has made a significant contribution to community or professional theatre in Nova Scotia. The nominee will have shown an exceptional commitment to theatre in any area, including, but not limited to, production work, back stage work or administrative work.*

**Stage Management Award (if warranted)** - *This award is decided by a panel convened each year by evaluating written nominations submitted by the community and is awarded to an individual who has made a significant contribution in the area of stage management. The Stage Management Award and the Technician Award may be considered in combination.*

**Technician Award (if warranted)** - *This award is decided by a panel convened each year by evaluating written nominations submitted by the community and is awarded to an individual who has made a significant contribution in the area of technical theatre. The Stage Management Award and the Technician Award may be considered in combination.*

## **POLICY DEVELOPMENT**

**Policies:** Policies for the Merritt Awards are decided by the Board of Directors of Theatre Nova Scotia. It is 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 Board member. The Merritt Awards are often discussed at the Professional Committee and any business arising will be reviewed by the Board.

**Jury:** Individual members of Theatre Nova Scotia are eligible to participate in the annual jury. Interested members can contact the Executive Director of Theatre Nova Scotia at [nmorgan@theatrens.ca](mailto:nmorgan@theatrens.ca) or 902-425-3876. A jury member is responsible for seeing all eligible professional productions from January to December. The number of productions in a year ranges from 35-50. The voting process will take place throughout February/March of the following year and the awards show will take place in late March (exact date to be confirmed). If the number of interested jurors exceeds the number of jury positions, a committee will convene to review and make decisions. If the number of interested jurors is insufficient to fill the jury spots, the Executive Director will solicit targeted members.

**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.

**Committees & Working Groups:** From time to time, ad hoc committees or working groups may be struck to discuss detailed policies or procedures. Such groups will include the Executive Director, at least two (2) Board Directors and members of the theatre community as appropriate to the task at hand.