

**THEATRE NOVA SCOTIA
ROBERT MERRITT AWARDS
HANDBOOK**



Effective January 1, 2020 – December 31, 2021

ROBERT MERRITT AWARDS

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

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 <https://www.theatrens.ca/robert-merritt-awards/submissions>

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

The information provided by the Producer in the production registration form will appear exactly as submitted on Merritt ballots unless otherwise updated by the Producer. Theatre Nova Scotia is not responsible for inaccuracies or errors in registration. Changes or updates to registration details must be submitted by the Producer prior to the 31st of December.

Production registration must be completed and received by Theatre Nova Scotia six weeks (6) in advance of the show's OPENING night. *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 at www.merrittawards.ca.* The deadline is non-negotiable. Submission of the production registration does not automatically qualify a production for consideration. While TNS staff will make every reasonable effort to send jurors to all shows, factors such as short runs, juror availability and conflict of interest may prevent some shows from being juried.

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. The deadline is not negotiable. 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 two (2) complimentary available tickets to their productions for each jury member.

A jury list will be maintained on the Theatre Nova Scotia website.

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 not be accepted.

Professional Productions

Theatre productions must be professional where “professional” is defined by the majority (60%+) 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.

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 Playwright

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. 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.

Nova Scotian Playwrights are eligible to be nominated in the category of Outstanding New Adaptation by a Nova Scotian playwright. New Adaptation is defined as the Nova Scotia premiere of an adaptation of an existing work of any 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.

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 will only be eligible for one (1) of the Outstanding Production Awards: Outstanding Production, Outstanding Independent Production, Outstanding Emerging Production. Producers will indicate the category in which they wish to be considered and must submit their company and artist payment paperwork within two (2) weeks of close of production. Late or missing paperwork may result in the production becoming ineligible for an Outstanding Production award.

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

No award winner (actor, director, designer, playwright, production) 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.

AWARD CATEGORIES

AWARDS DECIDED BY THE JURY

Each category for the Merritt Awards requires there be a minimum of 6 candidates to be considered for nominations

Outstanding Choreography

Outstanding Costume Design

Outstanding Direction

Outstanding Fight Direction

Outstanding Lighting Design

Outstanding New Nova Scotia Adaptation (Playwright)

Please see definitions on page 5.

Outstanding New Nova Scotia Play (Playwright)

Please see definitions on page 5.

Outstanding Musical Direction

Outstanding Original Score or Composition

Outstanding Performance by an Ensemble

Outstanding Performance in a Leading Role

Outstanding Performance in a Supporting Role

If producers qualify for more than one Outstanding Production category, they must select the category in which they want to be considered. Details regarding payment minimums will be finalized by the Theatre Nova Scotia Board of Directors in February 2020. Please check the website, forms and notices for updates.

Outstanding Production

**Payment of all personnel required. **Proof of payment forms must be submitted.*

Outstanding Independent Production

Open to companies/groups that do not receive operating funding.

**Payment of all personnel required. **Proof of payment forms must be submitted.*

Outstanding Emerging Production

Open to companies/groups in which 75% of artists involved in the production have 5 years or fewer of professional theatre experience.

Outstanding Projection Design

Outstanding Scenic Design.

Outstanding Sound Design

Outstanding Stage Manager

**See below*

Outstanding Technician

**See below*

AWARDS DECIDED BY A PANEL

The jury is not asked to assess the work of Stage Managers and Technicians throughout the year. Therefore, in order to decide the winners of these awards each year, a panel reviews written nominations regarding the contributions of stage managers and technicians working on any eligible production. Nominations can be submitted by producers, performers, designers, stage managers, technicians. The deadline is Feb 28th each year. Forms are online at <https://www.theatrens.ca/robert-merritt-awards/stage-manager-technician-awards>

JURY

There will be one (1) jury.

The jury will be comprised of six (6) people. An effort will be made to include theatre practitioners of different fields of practice and levels of experience.

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.

It is accepted that some jurors will not be able to attend all of the eligible productions due to employment either inside or outside of Nova Scotia. The only accepted explanations for missing eligible productions include employment, illness, trips or family emergencies.

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 their replacement.

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.

Jury members must declare if they have a conflict of interest with any production.

Jury members may not vote for a production they have not attended.

Jury members may not abstain from voting.

Jury attendance records are kept by Theatre Nova Scotia.

In order for a production to be considered properly evaluated for the Merritt Awards, it must be seen by a minimum of three jurors.

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 if there can be an alternate procedure to ensure that the production is evaluated in a fair and equitable manner.

Theatre companies agree to provide each juror with two complimentary tickets to each eligible production.

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. Jurors must arrange their own travel.

THE BALLOT

The information for the ballot is drawn directly from the information submitted on the Merritt website www.merrittawards.ca

In early January following the performance year, Theatre Nova Scotia will make the ballot details of their productions registration information available to each eligible theatre company or ad hoc group/artist collective. The responsibility for verifying the accuracy information on the ballot lies completely with the producing theatre company or ad hoc group/artist collective by the deadline provided by Theatre Nova Scotia.

Upon receiving the first ballots, 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 producer(s) will be notified and asked to clarify. The producer has the authority over how their productions and personnel are listed.

Categories that do not have at least 6 candidates will not proceed to a ballot or voting process.

Each juror will be asked to complete all ballots presented to them to determine nominees and winners in each category. Jurors will be asked to continue to vote on a series of ballots, including ballots to break ties and/or to determine nominees and winners.

Theatre Nova Scotia will retain all ballots for a period of one month 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 voting is confidential.

Theatre Nova Scotia shall not disclose the votes given to any candidate.

A juror may not vote on a production with which he/she has a conflict of interest.

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

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 or were unable to attend the production.

First Ballot

The jurors will receive a ballot by email/online containing the full list of eligible candidates within each category. Each juror will complete the ballot privately. Each juror will select up to five (5) or ten (10) candidates as per the instructions of the category.

The Theatre Nova Scotia Executive or Merritt Scrutineer will tabulate the votes of the jury in every category. Every candidate named by every juror will be included on the second ballot.

Jury Meeting

A jury meeting will be held to review the second ballot prior to voting. At that time, the voting process will be reviewed. Jurors will have the opportunity to discuss each category and determine collectively if any candidates are to be added to the ballot.

Second Ballot

A second ballot will be prepared with all the selected candidates from each juror as well as any additional candidates as decided at the jury meeting. The jurors will receive the second ballot by email/online.

On the second ballot, jurors will rank their choices, marking 1 for their top choice down in descending order to their bottom choice. Jurors must rank all candidates. Jurors may not assign the same ranking to more than one candidate. Conflict of interest and productions not seen by a juror must be indicated where appropriate.

The votes will be tabulated to determine average rankings for each candidate, including appropriate adjustments for conflict of interest and productions not seen by a juror. The top two-thirds of the candidates will advance to the next ballot.

Subsequent Ballots

The process will continue until a list of nominees is established for each category.

The jury will meet in person and be presented with the final nomination list of 5 candidates in each category. Jurors will be given a chance to discuss and decide as a group if each category's nominations are appropriate or requires amendments. The jury has the right to release no fewer than three (3) or no more than five (5). In the case of 2 categories only, Outstanding Performance in a Leading Role and Outstanding Performance in a Supporting Role, the jury has the right to name up to ten (10) nominations. No more than 50% of the nominations of each of these two categories can be cisgendered men.

The jury has the right to decide if any category should receive nominations or an award in a given year.

The jurors will maintain the confidentiality of the nominees.

Final Ballot

The final ballot will include only the nominees and jurors will rank each nominee as per the prior ballots. There are no ties. In the case of 2 categories only, Outstanding Performance in a Leading Role and Outstanding Performance in a Supporting Role, the jury will determine two (2) winners. No more than 50% of the winners of each of these two categories can be cisgendered men.

The jury 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.

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 Board may decide to strike a Committee or Working Group.

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 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. 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.

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