

BRITISH  
DRAMA  
LEAGUE



COMMUNITY  
THEATRE  
FESTIVAL

1987



# FOREWORD

THE British Drama League Community Theatre Festival takes place annually in response to an invitation by the League to Amateur Dramatic Societies throughout the country that they should each prepare a short play, or plays, with very special care and submit the result to expert criticism. By so doing, amateurs assert their faith in Drama as being something more than a "passing show," and proclaim their desire to improve themselves in one of the most difficult of the Arts.

At each stage of the Festival, which is open to teams of every kind both in cities, towns and villages, an Adjudicator is provided from Headquarters whose duty it is to view the performances in reference to a standard laid down beforehand and, at the conclusion of the performance, to criticise the work presented in the presence of the audience. The standard of marking is printed on the third page of this cover, and provides a general indication both of the aims of the Festival and of the qualities of play-production and choice, which are regarded as of prime importance.

As a result of the adjudication, and without detriment to the Festival spirit, a process of elimination takes place at each stage of the Festival whereby five teams are chosen to appear in the Final Festival in London, in May, 1937, in competition for the Howard de Walden Cup. Each of these teams will represent one of the five Areas into which the country is divided, and these Areas are again sub-divided into divisional and preliminary festivals. The atmosphere of the Festival throughout is thus an atmosphere of friendly emulation, but its fundamental aim is similar to the League itself: to assist the development of the art of the Theatre and to promote a right relation between Drama and the life of the community.

It will be seen that the amateurs who take advantage of this test join up with fellow-amateurs in a common effort, and each learns from the others as well as from the critic. The audiences find their attitude towards the Drama to be quickened, and their interest and—most important of all—their own critical faculty to be strengthened. Thus the whole community takes part in an event rightly termed a "Festival of Drama."



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# FESTIVAL

**A**DJUDICATION is carried out by Judges appointed by the Central Festival Committee, and is based on a maximum of one hundred marks allocated under the following headings:

(1) **CHOICE OF PLAY, 10**

The marks under this heading will be allocated for the dramatic merit of the play and the originality shown by the Society in its choice.

Entrants who contemplate the presentation of an extract from a longer play are reminded that an extract which is complete in itself as regards plot and characterisation is desirable.

While entrants should guard against allowing their ambition to outrun their capabilities, they should realise that credit will be freely given to experimental work, whether in the choice of new plays, translations or examples of new forms of technique and stage craft.

It should be remembered that one of the aims of the Festival is "*To encourage the progressive element in the Amateur Theatre.*"

(2) **STAGE PRESENTATION, 10**

Includes such factors as stage setting, properties, lighting, costume and make-up.

While the adjudicators will appreciate the fact that the effect of plays must often suffer as a result of being presented under strange conditions, the stage setting and lighting should contain sufficient indication of what the producer would achieve under ideal conditions. Within these limitations, adjudicators will be on the look out for touches of detail such as give atmosphere to a production. They will also look for indications of an appreciation of the value of lighting, other than simply as a means of illumination.

*Costumes and Make-up.* The difficult conditions obtaining in the case of settings and lighting do not apply in the case of costumes and make-up, and therefore a high standard in this respect will be expected. Credit will be given for the appropriateness of the costumes to the characters and to the play, and the manner in which they have been designed and made.

(3) **PRODUCTION, 30**

Includes attention to such essentials as—Interpretations of the spirit and meaning of the play. Team work. General pace and variation in tempo. Grouping and movement. Making of points and sense of climax. Adjudicators will take account of the greater difficulty of a play with a large cast.

(4) **ACTING, 40**

Includes characterization—naturally a very important factor. Audibility of speech, variation in tone, emphasis, gesture and movement will also be closely watched. The acting will be adjudicated on the general level, *e.g.*, two entrants may present plays with six characters in each: in one case two of the six parts may be played to perfection and four badly, and in the other case all six parts may be played with average ability; adjudicators will favour the average, smoother performance. For this reason adjudicators will expect a very high level indeed from societies who present a play with a minimum cast allowed by Rule B2.

(5) **DRAMATIC ACHIEVEMENT, 10**

A good standard in the above sections is possible and yet the performance may lack that unity and effectiveness which turn a satisfactory production into one of outstanding dramatic achievement. This section covers the general impression made upon the judge by the performance as a whole.



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SIMILARLY, any organised society or group of not less than ten persons may become affiliated to the Drama League, and as an affiliated body shall acquire and exercise all the privileges afforded by the League. These include free receipt of "Drama" monthly, the use of the League's Library, Costume Department, Information Bureau, etc. The minimum affiliation fee is £1 1s.

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