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Adjudication

Vocal competitions have become an increasingly significant feature in the career development of the aspiring singer. With this significance has come also the need for an increased number of adjudicators qualified to make decisions of considerable consequence, and for the process of adjudication to be conducted with consistent ethical and procedural guidelines. In this pronouncement the American Academy of Teachers of Singing attempts to address some of these issues.

The Academy first advocates that all sponsors of vocal competitions—whether foundations, opera companies, professional or educational organizations—develop clear statements to indicate:

- (1) what the competition specifically seeks to reward—such as vocal potential, finished performance, operatic projection, stage communication, poetic nuance—and what it considers of lesser consequence.
- (2) specific repertory requirements—arias, art songs, oratorio,

languages, style periods, length of program, etc.

(3) specific requirements, if any, regarding citizenship, residency, or age.

(4) specific rules for the actual administration and ethical conduct of the competition itself.

The sponsoring organization should be clear in its objectives and should then seek adjudicators whom it knows to share these objectives. Likewise, adjudicators who are approached by the sponsoring organization will have full knowledge of the objectives of the organization and should refuse to participate if they are not in agreement. Finally, in this way singers themselves may make fully informed decisions as to whether a particular competition is suitable for them. Once the objectives and rules have been stated, adjudicators have the right to insist that they be strictly adhered to throughout the competition.

For the development of a competition-governing statement the

Academy offers the following suggestions:


(1) The American Academy believes that a sponsoring organization has the right to determine the criteria for its competition providing that correct notes and rhythms, i.e., strict adherence to the score, and correct pronunciation of languages is required of all competitors equally. Each sponsoring organization should also develop specific written forms for adjudication to indicate criteria clearly and to foster consistency among the adjudicators.

(2) The American Academy urges the abandonment of age requirements in competitions other than those geared to school-age singers.

(3) In the actual administration of the competition the American Academy suggests that:

- a. adjudication panels comprise an uneven number of adjudicators.
- b. adjudicators be drawn from musical performers reflecting a diversity of ages, experience, and musical background.

- c. each competitor chose his first selection.
- d. adjudicators participate equally and without restriction in the choice of additional selections to be heard. (When circumstances permit, this may be done in advance and the singer so notified.)
- e. competitors be ranked on numerical scores, pre-stated in the competition regulations.
- f. in competitions with five or more judges, the lowest and highest rankings be dropped from consideration.
- g. adjudicators not communicate with each other during the competition performance (with the exception of repertory selection), nor engage in any facial expressions, vocal inflection, or body language which might influence the performer or the outcome of the competition.
- h. adjudicators be urged to make written or preferably verbal constructive criticism available to all competitors at the completion of the competition.
- i. judges not be held to a specific number of winners, nor to any winner if no contestant is deemed worthy.
- j. judges disqualify themselves if any contestant is a current or former student.

In addition, the American Academy believes that voice competition adjudicators should follow all rules of common courtesy throughout the competition process and adhere at all times to the highest ethical standards of the profession. 

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Membership: Membership in the National Association of Teachers of Singing is open to any citizen of any country whose professional training and experience qualify him or her as a teacher of singing.

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