



# Performance and Judging Manual

## Chapter 13

# **"Coaches Guide to Judging"**

## **2006**



**PART 1 - JUDGE TRAINING**

**1.1 INTERNSHIP AND CERTIFICATION PROCESS**

- A. Requirements: The following is required to be an interning/certified judge for local events:
1. At least 21 years of age, or have graduated from high school at least four years earlier.
  2. Active member status in the Judges' Affiliation.
  3. Necessary paperwork and registration fee completed and submitted.
  4. Attendance at the Fall Education Workshop.
  5. New Judges: Successful completion of internship process. The intern process is finalized when you receive your certificate.
  6. Established Judges: Those judges cross-training toward certification in a 2nd or 3rd traditional caption, must still successfully complete the same internship, evaluation and certification process.
- B. Internship
1. Opportunities to 'intern' or practice the judging process are available at all local competitions. Most interns will begin the process working at Category events.
  2. The intern may be required to trial at more than one Category event to give more experience and confidence in critiquing on tapes and assigning scores. After successful completion of a trial at a Category event, the intern will move on to trial a minimum of two Traditional events in their assigned caption.
  3. New interns will be asked to concentrate their efforts on learning the Execution caption for their first certification. This caption is an area of general understanding for nearly everyone and the most 'direct' to evaluate. Execution is also assigned to help interns get visual experience and support building a dance terminology that is used in all captions. Occasionally, experienced coaches and choreographers coming through the process will be directed towards interning in Content or Overall Effect, where they may already have more experience.
  4. Interning judges will be evaluated by their mentor, the Internship Director and/or Evaluation Committee and receive feedback on their trial tapes and scores. Notification will be given after each trial on areas for improvement and areas of success, depth of caption knowledge, comprehension of scoring, and ability to effectively communicate.
  5. The intern process is ongoing and takes as long as necessary based on individual performance and evaluations. A minimum of three "trial" experiences is required before certification may be considered. Certification may take more than one season.
- C. Evaluation/Certification Process
1. Once tapes and scores are received, the Internship Director and/or Evaluation Committee will evaluate how the intern performed.
  2. Within a week, interns will receive an evaluation via email.
  3. The evaluation will note recommendations for areas of improvement, strengths and if further interning is needed or if a successful trial was accomplished. Again,



this is an ongoing process and will continue as long as necessary based on individual performance and assessment.

4. After three successful trials, the Internship Director or Evaluation Director will notify the intern of certification.
  - a. Each intern must have one successful trial at a category competition. These evaluations will be completed by the Internship Team.
  - b. Each intern must have one successful trial at a traditional event. This evaluation will be done by the Internship Team.
  - c. Once these successful trials have been completed, the intern will complete a "Certification Event" as their final evaluation. The Evaluation Director will complete this evaluation for certification.
5. After interns are certified, they will have active judging status. The Scheduling and Personnel Director will then be able to schedule the new judge into judging panels for the remaining competitions of the season.

## **1.2 ACTIVE STATUS**

- A. Each year, certified Judges are put onto active status pending submission of the Affiliation fee, completion of Affiliation requirements and still in good standing from the prior season.
- B. For those who cannot attend the Fall Workshop, or have other issues that might prevent them from an active status, the JA Leadership Team may look at those cases on an individual basis whether to activate them for the season.

## **1.3 EVALUATION PROCESS**

- A. Each judge will be evaluated by the Evaluation Director/Team at least once during the season on a category selected by the Judge Director. They will receive the evaluation back within two weeks of competition.
- B. Each judge will be evaluated by the Evaluation Director/Team at least once during the season for EACH caption they are certified in. They will receive the evaluation back within two weeks of competition.
- C. Each time a judge is evaluated by the Evaluation Director/Team, they must fill out a self-evaluation of their performance. Judge Directors also complete a simplified evaluation on each judge at the competitions they work.
- D. All completed evaluations by the Evaluation Team on a judge or JD are sent to the education director to be used for educational purposes.

## **PART 2 - JUDGE COMMENTS**

### **2.1 GENERAL**

- A. The primary purpose of recording a judge's evaluation comments is to be educational. Comments offer more comprehensive information about the performance to support the growth and quality of that performance. While scores may communicate a ranking or level of quality, comments explain, clarify, and enlighten.
- B. Comments are a way of communicating with coaches when personal dialogues between judges and coaches are limited. The best conversations are face to face and it is unfortunate that much of the dialogue is one way, from the judge.



1. To help this situation, Critiques have been set up for coaches to get further explanation about a judge's recorded comments and provide the opportunity for sharing information from the coach.
  - C. Comments are a way to justify scores and rationalize the evaluation process. Not only is the specific evaluation important, but also hearing how the judge arrived at that judgment. (This relates to the "Who-What-Why" format below.)
  - D. Verbalizing comments is also a judging process to assimilate the visual into scores. It is an active verbal and mental process for the judge to determine scores and often much easier than just watching a performance and writing down a score.

## 2.2 WHAT TO EXPECT FROM RECORDED COMMENTS

- A. Comments should be balanced between all three sub-captions.
- B. Comments should offer a balance of positive and negative observations.
- C. Comments should be presented in a professional manner.
- D. Comments should be complete and make sense.
- E. There should be some comments that offer suggestions for improvement in each sub-caption, not just what is being done right or wrong. Suggestions should be relevant to the **intent** of the program and should not "re-choreograph."
- F. No "I" Comments. For example: "I think the leaps are..." or "I would like to see..." I like, I dislike, I don't think, I think, etc are not appropriate. Comments such as: "I appreciate..." or "I am seeing..." are OK because they are giving credit for a task, skill or concept. Judges should not refer to themselves or personal desires when giving verbal critique.
- G. **Who-What-Why:** Judges should be making comments about **who** they are watching, **what** they are seeing, **how** well it is being achieved, and **why** it is being achieved. Comments are to use reasoning, not a judge's personal preferences, when considering the achievement of the team and the performance.
- H. The 2<sup>nd</sup> round taped evaluation should offer new information.
- I. Judges should give a summary of strengths and weaknesses at or near the end of the tape.
- J. Judges should ask on their tapes for Coaches to evaluate them using the specific JA Evaluation forms available online or upon request from the JA Evaluation Director.

## 2.3 EXECUTION COMMENTS

- A. **Technique** – comments about training, conditioning, process and method of movement, with an understanding of the technique of the chosen style. The Judge should use appropriate technique terminology – basics should include: plié, point toes, pirouette, fouette, chaîné, pique turn, leap, center, switch leap, toe touch/Russian, axel, develop, kick/battement, turn out, center, spotting, etc. The Judge should offer a team how to fix technique and conditioning problems.
- B. **Alignment/Spacing** – comments about intervals/interval spacing, peripheral vision, guiding, lines, window formations, spatial awareness, maintaining static and moving forms.



- C. **Precision** – comments about body/arm placement, facial and body focus, timing, ensemble uniformity, variations, differences. Also includes manipulation of a prop.

#### 2.4 CONTENT COMMENTS

- A. **Choreography** – comments about range of skills and vocabulary, such as balance, centering, weight change, extension, flexibility, breath, turns, leaps, jumps, use of floor and the layering of skills together, multiple demand such as up and down off the floor, use of legs and arms at the same time; creating line, levels, space, texture, creativity/uniqueness, variety, gesture; musical interpretation and use of a variety of beats within the music.
- B. **Forms/Staging** – comments about the variety of forms used (linear, curvilinear, abstract, symmetrical, non-symmetrical); manipulation of focus; staging as placement of performers within a form and placement of the form on the floor; ensemble choreography such as the use of multiple focus, layering, patterns, ripples, groups; the relationship of form to choreography, the purpose to the forms; and musical interpretation of forms with them or music.
- C. **Maneuvering** – comments about how the maneuvering fits with musical phrasing; does it have logical flow, direction, pattern, or focus; the variety of transitions and locomotor choreography used, such as traveling dance combinations or stylized pedestrian movements.

#### 2.5 OVERALL EFFECT COMMENTS

- A. **Projection** – comments about facial and body expression, carriage and lift; consistency and understanding of responsibilities; commitment to performance and ability to recover; ability of performers to communicate without words, clarity of message.
- B. **Visual Repertoire** – comments about development and significance of theme, forms/staging and choreography contribution to visual and musical effect, costumes appealing/flattering on performer; choice of color palate to enhance theme; involvement of props/sets fit with theme and choreography.
- C. **Audio Repertoire** – comments about the pacing and sequencing of selections to provide flow and interest, contribution of music to mood, theme, and dynamics; the compliment of choreography with the music.

#### 2.6 COMMENTS WITH SCORING

- A. Judges are encouraged to make decisions between teams and not give the same score to a different team within the same sub-caption, when possible.
- B. Verbiage/words used should match scores. For example, if the Judge continually says "excellent," then scores should not be in the 60-70 range.
- C. Comments should match whether scores go up/down/or stay the same from round to round.
- D. Scoring for Maneuvering is a derived achievement between the quality and variety of the maneuvers and the contribution of the transitional choreography. An example in basic terms: a great maneuver (80 pts) with poor transitional choreography (50 pts) would average out to be a middle of the road Maneuvering score (65 pts.)



- E. Scoring for Forms/Staging is a blended achievement of the quality and variety of the forms and the integration of ensemble choreography to the form. Shape and design is one component, the other is how relevant the form is to the choreography.
  - 1. Great choreography staged inappropriately within a poor form will hinder scores for Forms/Staging. Great individual choreography that has no relevance to ensemble choreography, such as ripples, leveling, group focus, creating lines, etc., will hinder scores for Forms/Staging.

### **PART 3 - MAKING THE MOST OUT OF JUDGES' TAPES**

(Adapted from an article by Shirlee Whitcomb)

#### **3.1 INFORMATION GATHERING**

- A. Whether or not instructors have the opportunity to talk to judges about taped comments at a Critique, it is important for the instructor to be able to gain the most information possible from the judges' taped commentary. Instructors have the choice of listening to the tapes whenever you wish and can do so when rested and most focused.
- B. The following is an approach to getting the most out of tapes. This exercise could apply to each of the three captions, but especially to Overall Effect. Instructors should know each effect in their show and how they hope the audience will respond to it. The judge is a member of the audience, and his/her response should be measured in the same way.
  - 1. Make a chronological list of your effects (or in the case of Content, list design events or choreographic events) in a vertical column, leaving space either next to or following each effect for you to note comments
  - 2. Review each judge's response to your show and make whatever notes you hear next to the particular effect or event. You're going to measure not only what the judge says, but also any change in their tone of voice or even if there was silence. Here's what you will learn.
    - a. The ideal "read" will provide you with an ongoing commentary of response that includes both positive and negative issues and is well balanced between what the students are doing and how they are doing it. From this kind of commentary, coupled with your own areas of awareness, you will begin to make a "list of things to do" that will start to improve the show design and the performance quality.
    - b. **No response from the judge** at a key time means that the event either didn't make a strong impression, or the judge didn't see it because they were looking at something else. They may have been processing it in the context of what you did earlier or later. This tells you that you might want to look at the staging as well as what was going on around the particular effect or event. It is also an area to highlight for conversation with the judge should that opportunity exist.
    - c. **The judge's tone of voice changes** and there is a gap in the dialog. This suggests that something bothered the judge, that they are watching the process to determine what the problem is, or they may not have enough information to make a comment. Pinpoint this area, look at it to see if you realize it is a "weak spot" and do what you can to improve it. It's also an area for dialog with the judge.



- d. **The judge who gives you a "roadmap"** of what you're doing, at least can assure you that he/she is processing everything. The fact that they can read your work as you hope they will, tells you that much, even though it might not give you the information that lets you know if it was successful or not.
  - e. **The judge pinpoints problems** within the show and seems to focus only on weakness. Recognize this and understand that sometimes judges are trying very hard to help you see points that you might have overlooked or which are hampering the success of the show. They may feel that their greatest contribution is through that approach. This is frustrating to you because you want to know if you did ANYTHING right and all you're getting is the negative. Nonetheless, accept the information, note it and try to determine what, if anything, you can do to make it better, or that you can offer the judge to clarify his/her concerns. Should you have the opportunity to have a dialog with this judge, encourage the judge to let you know when something was successful and when it was not and if it was not, what specifically was the problem? Even if you don't get the problem identified, highlight that moment and re-examine it yourself.
  - f. **The (Overall Effect) judge is primarily focused on achievement** and occasionally talks about the design/effect of the show. Performance is the single most commonly understood aspect of judging. Everyone from the best judge out there to the newest audience member, shares an awareness of excellence (or its absence). It's a secure area from which a person can respond. Sometimes, if the performance is so weak that you can't really appreciate or even process "the show" then the excellence approach to commentary is understandable. Even if this is not what you hope to hear, still, note the presentation issues and let them be a basis for consideration during "refining" of the show. Never negate this information just because you are disappointed that it lacked balance relative to program.
- C. There is ALWAYS something of value to get from a judge's commentary. Avoid the pitfall of getting so emotionally caught up in where they ranked you or the score they gave you, that you don't allow them the opportunity to talk through the show and account for what guided them to that score. It is far too easy to let emotional tension of the moment color what should be a useful tool.

#### **PART 4 - CRITIQUE**

(Adapted from articles by Shirlee Whitcomb)

##### **4.1 PURPOSE OF CRITIQUE**

- A. To clarify judge's comments which are confusing or unclear.
- B. To discuss places in the show that were unclear or to which the judge did not respond favorably.
- C. To offer insights to the judge relative to the intents of the program. Where you're heading in the program / vocabulary development, when you plan to implement changes, and when you are scheduled to address concern expressed by the judge.



- D. In the comparison progress, measuring your team against your competitive neighbors, what were the shortcomings in your program that prevented scoring higher?
- E. Every instructor wants to be as competitive as possible, and this means that he/she is looking to the "score" to provide the information as to where the team is in this regard. Typically the questions an instructor has are:
  - 1. Where do I stand relative to my competitors both in this contest and across the state?
  - 2. What was the issue that prevented my getting a higher score?
  - 3. What do I have to do to get into Box 5?
  - 4. What issues in my show need the greatest focus or attention for growth?
- F. You can ask these questions, and judges will do their best to provide you with the answers. How you communicate your questions, is pivotal in establishing a dialog of value.

#### **4.2 COACH PREPARATION**

- A. Study the caption thoroughly.
- B. Be prepared, be focused and know specifically what you want to address in the very short 3 to 5 minutes you have.
- C. Try to watch as many of your competitors as possible.
- D. Take notes from the judges' tapes to identify any areas you want to focus on and be specific in how you identify the concern.

#### **4.3 CONVERSATIONS WITH JUDGES**

- A. Introduce yourself and the identity of your team, such as theme, music, visual, and/or costume.
- B. General
  - 1. Be relaxed and "in control" of your fatigue, emotions and frustrations when you engage in this dialog.
  - 2. Speak in a calm tone of voice, use the judge's name, look him/her in the eye and be direct in your questions. A smile and a cordial greeting will gain you more than you know, especially if it's sincere.
  - 3. Never start a dialog with the question: "So, what did you think?" The judge just spent close to 10 minutes telling you what they thought on the tape.
  - 4. LISTEN to the answers. Take notes, if need be.
  - 5. If you disagree with a comment, say to the judge: "There's an issue that we seem to be in disagreement on and I'd like to discuss it further". Then be specific as to the area.
  - 6. Don't be surprised if the judge's recall is hesitant. Give the judge as much information as possible to get you both targeted on the same topic.
  - 7. Never bash or criticize your competitive neighbors. While you might compare your team to other teams, emphasize your critique time on your own performance issues.
  - 8. Never be rude or abrasive. This gets you nowhere and completely shuts down any effective communication.



**4.4 SUMMARY**

- A. Judges must retain, compare, and process upwards to 60 shows in a day while each instructor is focused on just one show. This is a huge responsibility.
- B. First viewings and contest dynamics can sometimes yield lower scores in a first round. (This is often corrected in a second round when the seeding of appearance order sets teams up with competitive neighbors for a more accurate scoring situation.)
- C. Judges want your trust and respect and work very hard to earn it. This is not an adversarial situation. Everyone is on the same team.
- D. If you put the judges in a situation where you involve them in a calm exchange of ideas, information and concerns, you will not only enrich their knowledge base, but yours as well, and will put you both on a page that focuses on providing more quality and information for your students, your staff and you. And everybody feels like a winner.

**PART 5 - COACHES' EVALUATIONS OF JUDGES**

**5.1 OPPORTUNITY TO COMMUNICATE**

- A. The Judges Affiliation welcomes input from all involved regarding their experience with judging personnel or the judging process. All input, comments, or evaluations must be submitted in writing and signed to be considered. Word of mouth comments are not valid. All submissions should be directed to the Evaluation Director, or Commissioner.
- B. All completed evaluations from coaches are held as confidential information between the coach and Evaluation Director. At the end of the season, judges may receive a summarized evaluation based on coach evaluations in an anonymous format.
- C. All completed evaluations from coaches are directed specifically to the Evaluation director to interpret, record, and use for recommendations for further education, internship, or certification. If an issue is presented in the evaluation that requires attention, it will be dealt with by the Commissioner, Evaluation Director, and/or Education Director.
- D. Coaches may find the form "Coaches Evaluation of a Judge" in their event check-out packets, on the DDCA website, or by email by contacting the Evaluation Director.

**PART 6 - CATEGORY SCORE SHEETS**

**6.1 JAZZ**

- A. Movement technique often using a parallel leg rotation and a lower center of gravity. Movement style may show extension, balance isolation, weight change, turns, jumps, leaps, and floor work. Choreography will demonstrate musicality, variety of movement qualities, and structured technique. Adherence to style is judged within the choreography sub-caption.
  - 1. Technique 100 pts. Proper achievement of body alignment, centering, balance, and gesture.
  - 2. Choreography 100 pts. Creative use the individual body and/or props (if used) using rhythm, line, and space in conjunction with variety, complexity, and style.



3. Projection 100 pts. Effective communication that evokes emotional response.

**6.2 HIP HOP**

A. Funk or street dance style based on isolations and rhythms generally to contemporary music. Timing and articulation of the body are major elements of the technique with movements and gestures being mostly percussive. Adherence to style is judged within the choreography sub-caption.

1. Precision 100 pts. Uniform achievement of all aspects of body movement; alignment, placement, spacing, timing, and props/sets (if used).
2. Choreograph 100 pts. Creative use the individual body and/or props (if used) using rhythm, line, and space in conjunction with variety, complexity, and style.
3. Projection 100 pts. Effective communication that evokes emotional response.

**6.3 MODERN & LYRICAL**

A. Modern style includes abstract movement technique, timing, and theme. Lyrical style includes fluid and expressive movement derived from Ballet or Jazz technique. Each style may show extension, balance isolation, weight change, turns, jumps, leaps, floor work & inward or outward rotation. Adherence to style is judged within the choreography sub-caption.

1. Technique 100 pts. Proper achievement of body alignment, centering, balance, and gesture.
2. Choreography 100 pts. Creative use the individual body and/or props (if used) using rhythm, line, and space in conjunction with variety, complexity, and style.
3. Projection 100 pts. Effective communication that evokes emotional response.

**6.4 KICK**

A. Movement performed as an extension of the leg from the hip or knee. Choreography is judged for its variety within the ensemble and individual. Adherence to style is judged within the choreography sub-caption.

1. Technique 100 pts. Proper achievement of body alignment, centering, balance, and gesture.
2. Choreography 100 pts. Creative use the individual body and/or props (if used) using rhythm, line, and space in conjunction with variety, complexity, and style.
3. Precision 100 pts. Uniform achievement of all aspects of body movement; alignment, placement, spacing, timing, and props/sets (if used).

**6.5 NOVELTY**

A. Presentation of creative entertainment produced by communication with audience, performer staging, program development, contribution of costumes and prop/sets, and



value/use of the music selection to offer an effective show. Creative entertainment, ensemble effects, and thematic development are valued.

1. Projection 100 pts. Effective communication that evokes emotional response.
2. Visual Rep 100 pts. Effective use of design through the use of visual effect elements.
3. Audio Rep 100 pts. Effective use of design through the use of audio effect elements.

## **PART 7 - TRADITIONAL SCORE SHEETS**

### **7.1 EXECUTION**

- A. Credits the achievement of excellence by the individual and ensemble.
1. Technique 100 points
  2. Alignment 100 points
  3. Precision 100 points

### **7.2 CONTENT**

- A. Credits the designer and arrangement of movement and form.
1. Choreography 100 points
  2. Forms/Staging 100 points
  3. Maneuvering 100 points

### **7.3 OVERALL EFFECT**

- A. Credits the performer and choreographer in their effectiveness to communicate their intent.
1. Projection 100 points
  2. Visual Repertoire 100 points
  3. Audio Repertoire 100 points

### **7.4 SUB-CAPTIONS**

#### **A. Technique**

1. Technique is the muscular control AND the process of movement. It refers to not only the physical skills needed to perform but also the style in which it is directed. Muscular control is a physical conditioning that deals with the skills of body's alignment, awareness of center, control of balance, and manipulation of gesture. Style is the characteristic that determines how those skills are used.

#### **B. Precision**

1. Precision is the accuracy of body alignment and placement of body/body parts, and props (if used.), control of spacing, and exactness of timing. Placement deals with individual and ensemble body directions and positions of body parts as it relates to one or many performers. Props are considered an extension of the body and are evaluated by the same timing and placement precision criteria. Precision in timing is seen by the exactness of stops and starts, and clarity of rhythm. Precision in spacing is shown by an understanding/demonstration of spatial awareness. Unison achievement is a major factor of precision.



**C. Choreography**

1. Choreography, in its basic form, is the use of the body to create motion, line, and form. The body may be an individual or an ensemble, and it is evaluated for its creative use, visual effect, and depth of skill and range of vocabulary. Choreography also addresses the identity of style, movement quality, and relationship to the music. Choreography of props are also evaluated under the same criteria

**D. Projection**

1. The *performers'* ability to communicate a wide range of emotions, expressions, and characters is evaluated in the Projection sub-caption. These qualities are communicated through posture, body and facial language, and effort changes, as well as through choreography. The performer's level of concentration, commitment and believability are also a part of the ability to project those expressions.

**E. Visual Repertoire**

1. Visual repertoire evaluates the *choreographer's* contribution of choreographic and design vocabulary, staging, pacing, coordination, theme, mood, color, and prop/sets. It is the planned presentation of all the visual opportunities to capture the eye, showcase the choreography, and communicate with the audience.

**F. Audio Repertoire**

1. Audio repertoire evaluates the *choreographer's* selection of music and sound design, pacing, theme, mood, dynamics, and value to entire program. It is the contribution of energy and mood, and choreographic interpretation that provides a sensual aspect to the audience.

**PART 8 - PLACEMATS FOR COACHES**

**8.1 QUICK REFERENCE GUIDES**

- A. The attached reference guides for Coaches are to support their training and creative process, and better understand how they will be judged. On one side there are questions that can be asked of coaches, the team, and about competitors that will hopefully provide ideas for improvement and help focus on performance elements when evaluating strengths and weaknesses. On the other side is the Linear Scale showing levels of quality with numerical reference. These numbers are equated to the scores given by the judges, per caption and total point averages.