

Recommended Playbill Guidelines for WATCH Member Theaters

(Revised August 2024)

TO: Playbill Editors
FROM: The WATCH Board

Dear Playbill Editors:

Over the past five years, it has become very clear that quality adjudication is directly linked to quality playbill editing. We will continue to train our judges to adjudicate all elements of the production, however any errors or omissions in the playbill inevitably lead to some incomplete or incorrect ballots and possible errors at nominations (announcing the wrong names, too few or too many names).

To alleviate this problem, we wanted to provide you a “recommendation” for your production team and cast list information. This is not a requirement, but we can assure you that following this guideline will be helpful to all judges in accurately and completely adjudicating your production. And may also make your playbill better for your audience as well.

Recommended Production Staff Categories and Order

Bold elements are adjudicated by WATCH

* - indicates a non-adjudicated element

This list is intended to be inclusive of all possible elements in most productions. Obviously, there may be some elements that may not be integral to each production (music direction, choreography, etc.) and may be omitted. However, we recommend using this list to remind the production team to include **all of the possible elements** in the show (i.e. stage combat, special effects, etc.)

Producer: * (not scored separately, but receives nomination/award for Overall Production)

Assisted by: *

Director:

Assisted by: *

Music Director:

Vocal Coach: *

Conductor: *

Choreographer:

Dance Captain: *

Assisted by: *

Stage Manager: * (not scored separately, but receives nomination/award for Overall Production)

Assisted by: *

Running Crew: *

Technical Director: *

Stage Combat Choreographer:

Fight Captain: *

Assisted by: *

Set Design: (this element should be attributed in almost every playbill)

Assisted by: *

Set Construction (this element should be attributed in almost every playbill, and should not be attributed to an entire crew but to the construction “team lead”, i.e. Master Carpenter or Technical Director)

Master Carpenter:

Assisted by: *

Set Painting Design: (this element should be attributed in almost every playbill, remember this line is for the designer(s), not the crew)

List Special Painting Credits (by breaking out the special/larger painted elements, the judges are provided with the scope of the painting design; these designers should be included by judges in the set painting score)

Drops/Scenic:

Floors:

Assisted by: *

Set Decoration/Dressing Design: (this element should be attributed in almost every playbill to the “lead designer(s)”)

Assisted by: *

Properties Design: (this element should be attributed in almost every playbill to the “lead designer(s)”)

Special Props Created by: * (by breaking out the special properties that were actually built for the show, the judges are provided with a better understanding of the level of difficulty)

Assisted by: *

Light Design: (this element should be attributed in almost every playbill to the “lead designer(s)”)

Master Electrician: *

Assisted by: *

Board Operator(s): *
Spot Operator(s): *

Sound Design: (this element should be attributed in almost every playbill to the “lead designer(s)”)

Music Written/Performed by: * (by breaking out any original sound elements designed for the show, the judges are provided with a better understanding of the level of difficulty)

Board Operator(s): *
Assisted by: *

Special Effects Design: (this is the most frequently overlooked area in playbills and by judges)

List Specific Effects (by breaking out the special effects, the judges are reminded of what the production team considers special effects)

Video/Multimedia: *
Pyrotechnics: *
Rigging: *
Water/Fog/Smoke: *
Robotic/Automated Scenic Elements: *

Costume Design or Coordination: (this element should be attributed in every playbill to the “lead designer(s)”; try to differentiate between “Costume Design” and “Costume Coordination” as follows: if some or all of the costumes are being designed and created by a crew member, this is “Design”; if the costumes are being gathered from other sources, consider using “Coordinator”)

Assisted by: *

Makeup Design: (this element should be attributed in every playbill to the “lead designer(s)”)

Assisted by: *

Hair Design: (this element should be attributed in every playbill to the “lead designer(s)”)

Assisted by: *

Publicity: *
Graphic Design: *
Assisted by: *

Playbill: *

House Management: *
Assisted by/Ushers: *

Box Office Management: *
Assisted by: *

The order above is in the order of the adjudicator's ballot and does not constitute a required order. The order was established to group the "set elements", then "atmospheric elements" (light, sound, fx), then the "performer enhancements" (costume, makeup, hair).

Recommended Cast List

When it comes to the cast list, obviously the biggest problem is an "omission". The judges are asked to write down the cast list and score each named character in the same order as provided in the cast list of the playbill (not the bios). Please **thoroughly proofread** the cast list before printing.

Other considerations with the cast list:

1. If a single actor is playing "multiple roles" in the production and if all of the characters are listed together in the playbill with the actor's name listed once, it allows the judges to score that actor once and adjust their score accordingly for a higher level of difficulty (for playing multiple roles) and possible designation as a "lead" for the show. However, if each character is listed separately with the same actor's name listed several times in the cast list, the judges are required to give each character a separate score. This has the benefit of allowing particularly poignant small appearances to be considered for a "cameo designation." In other words there are benefits to listing either way and should not be taken lightly, but make sure you take this into consideration when deciding how to list actors in the cast list.
2. Discourage directors and producers from giving every member of the chorus (munchkins, dancers, guards, orphans, etc) a separate character name. Inevitably these character names (which are never mentioned in the play) are scored as "N/I" (not identifiable) by the judges since they are not able to pick them out from the crowd. The cameo award should not be an impetus to create character names which were not specified by the playwright or referred to in the script. Having to list a cast of thousands when they are not all being scored only leads to cranky judges. Ideally, any group of characters or the Ensemble/Chorus will be listed together. However, we understand that sometimes theaters want to recognize individual actors. In that case, we highly recommend creating a heading for the Ensemble/Chorus or other groups at the bottom of the cast list and then listing the characters beneath that. This way each actor can have their own identity, and the judges still know they do not have to include anyone below this heading on the ballot.
3. If an actor has named roles and is also a member of the Ensemble, please list them separately – within the named character list and again with the Ensemble. Since the judges are not giving a score to Ensemble, this creates confusion for judges when filling out their ballot when Ensemble and named characters are listed together for one actor.