

# **Sacramento Area Regional Theatre Alliance**

## **2009-10 Elly Awards Program**

### **Guidelines for Theaters**

The annual Elly Awards honor outstanding achievements of community theaters and artists in the Sacramento area. Elly Awards are named for the late Eleanor McClatchy, who was a devoted patron of the local arts.

#### **Program Overview**

The Elly Awards program is administered in as objective and confidential a fashion as possible. It operates as follows:

The theater submits an application to have its show judged. SARTA processes the application and notifies the judges.

Typically five judges attend each production. Judges make their reservations, attend the show, and submit a judging form to SARTA. Judges use a standardized point scale to evaluate an array of production elements delineated on the judging form. The process is confidential; judges are instructed not to discuss their opinions with others.

Judges' scores are tabulated in a computerized database maintained by a certified public accountant who is not affiliated with any theater. At the end of the season, when the tabulating is complete, SARTA sends each judge a ballot listing the ten top-ranking production elements for each award that will be given. Judges take this opportunity to privately reflect on their scores, contrast and compare the shows and performances, assign rankings, and return the ballots to SARTA. This is a silent balloting process. Judges are instructed not to discuss it with others.

SARTA then re-tabulates the final ballots. The resulting top five receive Elly nominations, and the top one receives the Elly Award. The entire process is confidential.

The commitment required of Elly judges is substantial. Judges are volunteers who commit to attending every show submitted in their category. During the year-long judging commitment, judges may not be artistically involved in any production within the category they judge. Judges have a variety of backgrounds; many are active in theater or have theatrical backgrounds. All have a love of the performing arts and all have a commitment to be objective. SARTA provides orientation, materials and training.

Statistically, SARTA might judge 200 shows in a season. While the number of shows in each category varies from year to year, a typical judge attends 20 to 40 shows during the year.

#### **Season**

The Elly season begins July 1 and ends June 30.

#### **Elly Awards Ceremony**

Elly Award nominations are announced at a Nominees' Reception in August. The Elly Awards Ceremony is held in September.

### **Eligibility for Judging**

All SARTA member theaters' productions, traditionally within a 70-mile radius of Sacramento, are eligible for Elly Award consideration. Individual producers or companies renting SARTA Member Theater facilities are eligible if the SARTA Member Theater co-produces the production. The theater's membership must be current during the entire production.

### **Minimum Number of Performances**

Productions must have at least six performances over at least two weekends to be accepted for judging. For this purpose, "weekend" is defined as Friday evening, Saturday, and Sunday. Only evening performances, plus daytime performances on Saturday and Sunday, count toward the minimum six. Daytime performances on weekdays do not count toward the minimum six.

Performances that judges may not attend, such as previews or benefit galas, do not count toward the minimum six. Please exclude from the application any performances that judges may not attend.

Productions that have performances in both June and July, with fewer than the minimum six performances in June, will be judged in the season that begins in July.

### **Tickets for Judges**

Theaters provide two complimentary tickets for each Elly judge who attends. Please do your best to accommodate judges' requests to attend on specific dates, as often they must schedule multiple productions among limited dates.

### **Categories**

Elly Awards are given in seven categories:

- Comedy
- Drama
- Musical
- Young People's Musicals
- Young People's Plays
- Education
- Original Works

Within the Education category, there are separate subcategories for musicals and nonmusical plays.

Education is a special category created to accommodate the growing number of high schools and middle schools who have become member theaters. All productions submitted by high schools and middle schools are judged in this category. Productions submitted by community college theaters may be submitted in either the Education category, or one of the other categories, at the theater's discretion based on its conceived mission.

The Original Works category is for original scripts that have never been produced before. By "never been produced before," SARTA means that the script has never been performed for a paying audience. "Performed for a paying audience" includes any previous performance of the script, even once, if a ticket was sold or if donations were solicited from the audience in order to attend the performance. Staged readings or performances in a classroom setting while the script was being developed, and such, and for which tickets were not sold, are not considered "performed for a paying audience." Previously-produced scripts that undergo later revisions are not eligible as Original Works. Original Scripts are judged separately from Adaptations.

Theaters are responsible for choosing the category in which their production belongs. Theaters may submit an Original Works production in its natural category, such as Comedy or Drama, in addition to the Original Works category if they choose. This is the only circumstance under which a theater may submit a production in more than one category.

### **Aspects Judged**

In the Comedy, Drama, Musical, Young Peoples', and Education categories, Elly Awards are given for the following:

- Male and female leads
- Male and female support
- Direction
- Set Design
- Lighting Design
- Costume Design
- Overall Production

In the Young People's categories, separate awards are given for youth (actors under 18) and adults (actors 18 and over). SARTA goes by the actor's age on the opening day of the show.

In the Musicals and Young People's Musicals category and in the Education - Musicals subcategory, Elly Awards are also given for:

- Musical Direction
- Choreography

In the Original Works category, the Elly Award is a dual award given to the playwright, for Best Original Script, and to the theater that produced it, for Production of Best Original Script. Theaters must provide a copy of the script to each Original Works judge.

Theaters are responsible for designating on the application form which roles they consider the leads. Generally, leading roles are those the theater considers "whose story is being told." Roles with the most lines, or roles with the most time on stage, are not necessarily leading roles and may not benefit from being submitted for consideration as leading roles.

All roles not designated as leads are automatically considered as support. Judges will use their discretion in judging at least three supporting roles. The theater may designate no leads, or indicate "all ensemble," if the theater conceives of all roles as ensemble or support.

Double-cast roles will not be judged because it cannot be assured that all judges would see the same actor. Please indicate on the judging application any roles that are double-cast.

Judges will automatically judge the direction and technical aspects of each production (set, lighting, and costume and choreography designs if applicable) whether credit is specifically given in the program or not.

### **Application Process and Fees**

Please submit the completed Elly Judging application with applicable fees at least four weeks prior to opening night. If actors have not been determined at the time of the four-week deadline, please indicate the lead roles, rather than the actors' names, and submit the application on time.

There is a \$30 application fee for each production submitted. Please make checks payable to SARTA. If you submit an Original Work in its additional natural category, please check both categories on the application and submit both fees.

There is an additional \$30 late fee per category in which a production is submitted for any application submitted less than four weeks before opening night. If you submit the application after the four-week deadline, please include the additional \$30 late fee. SARTA will see whether the judges can schedule the production. If SARTA cannot accept the production, SARTA will refund or credit the application fee but not the late fee.

No production will be accepted for judging until the fee is received. No production will be accepted for judging after the production has opened.

Theaters may prepay fees for future productions if they wish. Unless fees have been prepaid, applications received without payment will not be processed until payment is received.

### **Other Responsibilities and Reminders**

Your accepted application becomes the judges' notification form. Please write legibly, spell names correctly, and give clear directions to your theater. Where applicable, please indicate the approximate driving time from Sacramento.

Please notify SARTA immediately if you cancel a performance or change a leading actor.

Please have your box office keep track of Elly Judges' reservations. You can help us by notifying SARTA ten days before closing night if judges have not reserved tickets for your production by then.

Please contact the SARTA office at (916) 443-8229 or by e-mail at [sarta@sarta.com](mailto:sarta@sarta.com) if you have questions or suggestions regarding the Elly Awards program.