

THE RULES
OF
THEATRESPORTS™
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The Challenge Match

Rules:

(Rules One To Seventeen are common to all current games).

1. The length of each game is decided in advance.

2. The Commentator introduces the Judges (or the 'ombudsman' if it's a Danish Game) and they cross the stage to take their places. He says: "And now the traditional 'boo' for the Judges" (except in the case of the Ombudsman).

3. The Commentator introduces the teams who cross the stage to get to their benches at the opposite sides of the stage. Keep the benches out of direct light except when there's a particular reason to light them - a dispute with the Judges perhaps. A lit team is very likely to be distracting.

4. If a team has a coach, this coach enters with them and sits on the bench. He is allowed to compete as a team member if necessary, but it's considered 'bad form' for a very experienced coach to 'star' in a game with new players - he should come in when an extra body is needed, or a waiter, or to end a scene. He's there to assist, not to 'shine'.

5. The Commentator asks for a Judge (or the Ombudsman in the Danish Game) and the two Team Captains to go to the centre. The winner of a coin-toss decides which team will accept the first challenge - it's quite normal for the winners of the toss to say 'You Challenge Us!'. From then on the off-stage team make the next challenge.

6. A team can 'balk' at a challenge at the discretion of the Judges (or the Ombudsman). But unless a team offers very good reasons (e.g. 'We've all seen this challenge so often recently that we're

fed up to the teeth with it') this tends to be considered unsporting. If the Judges uphold the rejection of a challenge (or reject a challenge themselves), then the team must issue a fresh challenge. If they keep on offering unacceptable challenges, then the Judges can take over and issue the next challenge themselves - although we hope this doesn't become necessary.

7. If time is being wasted setting up the scenes, the commentator or the Judges, or the entire audience can start counting down from five to zero. A team that is counted out loses the stage - This hardly ever happens, and we don't want it to happen. Starting the count galvanizes the players into getting on with the game and offers yet another way of getting the audience involved.

8. If a Judge honks his bicyclic horn, this gives the dreaded 'Warning For Boring', and the team that is honked must end their scene immediately, and yield the stage. This also applies to one-on-one scenes.

9. The Judges can wave the lights down as an alternative way of ending a scene, or they can say 'Twenty seconds to end it' (or whatever) or they can use the Warning For Boring. In general, they should not wave the lights down unless they can see a natural place to end the scene. The players can wave the lights up again if they wish to continue but this is considered unwise. The Lighting Improvisor and members of the on-stage team can also wave the lights down. So can the 'director' of the evening - if you have one.

10. The Judges are responsible for the discipline of the game and should not be afraid to exercise their authority. Penalties are taken by sitting beside the commentator for two minutes (with the head in a wicker 'penalty' basket) and are awarded for obstruction, for undue obscenity, for delaying, for harassment of the other team, for interrupting the other teams work, and so on.

11. A scorekeeper keeps score (this task can be given to the commentator if no one else is available but I don't recommend this).

12. If very little time is left, then the Commentator (or the Judges) can request a 'short challenge' - i.e. a one-on-one

challenge, or a 'one minute' challenge etc.. However, as the Judges are the ones in charge of the game, they can countermand such a request.

If a challenge is in progress when the agreed time for the ending of a game is reached, the challenge should be completed, and scored.

3. Each team is entitled to one thirty-second time-out' during each game - this request is rare though .

14. The Scorekeeper, or Commentator should record the length of any time-outs, or time lost if the game is interrupted for whatever reason, and should add this 'extra time' to the end of the game.

15. After the previously agreed time has passed, the team with the most points is declared the winner. (In friendly games, where the score is of no consequence, the Commentator can choose his own moment for ending the game - perhaps a few minutes early or late - trying to get the game to end at a really high point).

16. Challengers always go first, so that if a challenge is new to a team they at least get a chance to see it performed before they attempt it themselves (except in one-on-one challenges). If a challenge is obscure, a team may ask for an explanation. If a challenge can't be explained clearly and succinctly, then it can be rejected - at the discretion of the Judges.

17. If the refusal of a challenge is upheld, then the challengers must issue a new challenge. If the Judges will not uphold a refusal, then the team can accept a zero instead of answering the challenge, but this would not be a good strategy.

The following rules may not apply to all other Theatresports games.

18. The Judges can say things like "We'd like to see a non-verbal challenge please, or: "We've seen too many group scenes - can we have a solo scene please" - always in the interest of making the game more interesting. If the game is going well they should leave well alone.

19. The Judges can - in extremity - refuse a challenge on behalf of the other team, and request the challengers to issue a rechallenge. If in the opinion of the Judges the game is falling apart due to the

inexperience of the improvisors, or the continuing stupidity of the challenges, or whatever, then the Judges themselves have the right to issue challenges - although we hope this doesn't have to happen.

20. *The teams challenge each other in turn, until the agreed time for the end of the game is reached. Each challenge is scored.*

21. *Recommended length of game - Challenge Matches usually last from thirty to forty minutes., but when we use them for the opening 'rookie' games they usually last between ten and fifteen minutes.*

The Judges' Challenge Match

In *The Judges Challenge Match* the challenges are made by the Judges. A Judge announces the first challenge, perhaps to: "To the best scene using Three-Word-sentences", or whatever. Each team then presents a 'Three-word-sentence scene', which is awarded points. The Judges then present a new 'challenge' - "To the best love scene", or whatever.

I've heard Judges say "We challenge you to..." as if the Judges were playing against the players. I think it's better to say "The first challenge is.." and "The next challenge is..." and so on. This is less confusing than "We challenge you....."

The '*Judges' Challenge*' puts the least stress on inexperienced players and I recommended it for beginners. This may seem strange, since the players have absolutely no control over what they'll be asked to do, but it's an advantage not to have to worry about strategy.

Competent Judges can ensure variety, i.e. by following a 'pecking-order' scene with a solo mime, or a clown-scene by a serious scene, and so on. They can use their selection of 'challenges' to impose some control on the pace and shape of the game, and they can tailor them to the abilities of the players.

Judges' Challenge Match: Rules:

(See Challenge Match for rules One to Seventeen).

18. The Judges set each challenge - choosing them with regard to the abilities of the players and the needs of the spectators.

19 The Judges score each challenge, and then issue a new challenge.- this process continues until the agreed time that the game is to last.

20. Recommended length of game. We usually play the Judges' Challenge Match for twenty minutes (or for ten minutes when the players are beginners). Judges' Challenge Matches have never lasted for longer than half an hour, because if the players are that competent why not let them issue their own challenges?

I regard the Judges' Challenge Match as a stepping stone to the Challenge Match - even so a Judges Challenge match may sometimes be played by experienced players to add variety, and because it's fun.

The Regular Game: Rules

(Rules One to seventeen are the same as for the Challenge Match)

18. The Judges can say things like "We'd like to see a non-verbal" challenge please, or: "We've seen too many group scenes - can we have a solo scene please" - always in the interest of making the game more interesting.

19. The Judges can - in extremity - refuse a challenge on behalf of the other team, and request the challengers to issue a re-challenge. If in the opinion of the Judges the game is falling apart due to the inexperience of the improvisors, or the continuing stupidity of the challenges, or whatever, then the Judges have the right to issue the challenges themselves - although we hope this doesn't have to happen.

20. Teams challenge alternately, the winners of each challenge getting time on stage ('free-time') during which they can accumulate points. The challenges themselves are not scored, the Judges merely indicate the winners of each challenge

who then take the stage and begin earning points. If a team gets a Warning For Boring during the free-time, then they are replaced by the off-stage team.

21. The points awarded by the Judges are multiplied by the 'time-points'. A minute on stage earns one time point. A six minute scene which received ten Judges' points would earn sixty points, whereas a thirty second scene that earned ten Judges points would be multiplied by half a time-point and would receive a total of only five points (See 'Time-Points': P. 6).

22. If the agreed amount of free-time is exceeded, the commentator (warned by the score-keeper) says 'End of Free-time' and the Judges decide their score at that point (although the scene taking place may be allowed to continue for the general delectation.) If the scene is really interesting, the best strategy is to return to it later in the game, i.e. 'to be continued'.

23. Length of game - we began by playing the Regular Game for two hours, but we gradually reduced the time to forty minutes or three quarters of an hour. The teams originally struggled for ten minutes of 'freetime' but as we reduced the length of the game so we reduced the 'free-time' which in shorter games lasts for five or six minutes. A reasonable duration of the game and of the free-time must be agreed beforehand.

In recent years the Regular Game has been replaced by the Revised Game, but we'll try again soon, and see if we can cope better with the aggression and the paranoia now that we (hopefully) have more understanding, greater maturity, less sensitivity, etc.! It was the game that was most like a sport and that most excited our spectators to scream and shout and really care about the score.

The 'Revised' Regular Game

This game eliminates the six minutes (or whatever time is agreed) for the free-scenes, and instead allows the winners of a challenge to play just one 'free-scene'. I suggest a maximum time of ten minutes for the Free Scene but The-

atresports scenes rarely last for so long, because both the audience and the Judges get impatient to see the other team at work. In theory, a team could win the free scene and then continue it for the rest of the game, but in practise this is almost unimaginable.

Teams can no longer cram as many scenes into the Free-Time as possible because only *one* scene is allowed. There is therefore no longer any need for 'Time-Points' (see P.6.).

Rules

(For Rules One to Seventeen - see Rules For The Challenge Match).

18. The Judges can say things like "We'd like to see a non-verbal challenge please, or: "We've seen too many group scenes - can we have a solo scene please" - always in the interest of making the game more interesting. If the game is going well they should leave well alone.

19. The Judges can - in extremity - refuse a challenge on behalf of the other team, and request the challengers to issue a re-challenge. If in the opinion of the Judges the game is falling apart due to the inexperience of the improvisors, or the continuing stupidity of the challenges, or whatever, then the Judges themselves have the right to issue challenges - although we hope this doesn't have to happen.

20. One team challenges the other and the winners play one free scene, after which the off-stage team makes a fresh challenge. This process continues until a previously agreed time for the end of the game is reached.

21. The challenges are scored, and the free scene is scored.

22. Recommended length of game - half hour to forty five minutes.

The 'Danish' Game

Warning: the Danish game is not suitable for tournament use because the audience will almost always cheer for the home team. I saw the first game between Sweden and Denmark spoiled because the Danes, who were the hosts, insisted on playing

the Danish game, and inevitably the audience began cheering for the home team against the Swedes.

Think of the Danish Game as a Challenge Match with the Audience making the decisions as to value, and with the 'Ombudsman' fulfilling the other functions of Judges.

A Danish game begins with the 'Ombudsman' explaining that the audience are to cheer for the team that does the best work:

"Let's suppose that the 'Dead Beats' do a scene you like, and 'Easy Riders' have done a scene you didn't like - on the count of three, you should shout out the name 'Dead Beats'. Let's try it - 'one...two... three...'"

"Dead Beats!" shout the audience. If they sound feeble, the Ombudsman coaxes more noise out of them. Then he holds up the penalty basket, and explains that if anyone is unsporting, or blasphemous, or obscene (or whatever) 'out of context', that we'll have a vote, and that, if found guilty, the miscreant will sit beside the Commentator with his head in a basket for two minutes.

Teams names must be adapted so that they contain the same number of syllables - or it becomes very difficult to judge. If the 'Police' were playing a team called 'The Fall Of The Roman Empire', then you'd just hear a mass of confused shouting followed by: '.....Of The Roman Empire', even though the 'Police' fans had actually been shouting louder. The Ombudsman should say:

"Did you prefer the *The Police's* 'escape' scene where they were trapped in the atomic submarine, or *The Roman's* scene in which the twins were rescued by caesarian section?"

If the Ombudsman is uncertain, even after a reshout, he may get the supporters of each team to yell separately:

"Let's hear it for the Police!"

Roar! Roar!

"And now let's hear it for the for the Romans!"

He declares either a winner or a draw. The winner get five points. In a draw, both teams get five points.

It's necessary to remind the audience of the content of each scene, or they'll forget what they're voting for (especially if

they've been laughing hysterically). The Ombudsman may also forget, so he must always note down a terse description of each scene so to jog his/her own memory.

The Ombudsman is responsible for 'horning' scenes, or waving the lights down, or for saying: 'twenty seconds to finish', or whatever. It's his responsibility to see that the scenes don't limp on, searching for a 'laugh to end on'. He has to exercise some authority, he can't just be a passenger.

Note: It's arguable that the Danish game is the most damaging to the improviser if he's not playing other games, and if he's out of contact with good teaching. In other Theatresports games the Judges can keep pressing for scenes that have some sort of 'point', that tell an interesting story, but in the Danish game where the audience are the Judges, all kinds of stupidities are immediately rewarded with laughter - which is strongly conditioning. And there are no Judges to work against this.

You might think that it's reasonable to give the audience what they want - but the audience do not tell you what they want. They laugh when something stupid or aggressive, or cruel happens but they may want other things as well - like wonderful characters and amazing adventures - and their laughter may be very misleading.

I evolved this game with *Tournus* (in Denmark), and I called it The *Danish Game* because I wanted to stress the international appeal of Theatresports. *Tournus* didn't have enough company members to provide three Judges, so we chose an Ombudsman to conduct a challenge match, and said that the team who's name was yelled loudest would win the challenge. The advantage of this is that in addition to the usual comments, and cheers, and boos, the entire audience gets to yell in unison every few minutes. (When theatre began to inhibit this sort of whole-hearted response, it inflicted a deep wound on itself).

Rules

(Rules One to seventeen are the same as for the Challenge Match)

18. *The Ombudsman can say things like "I'd like to see a non-verbal challenge please, or: "We've seen too many group scenes - can I have a solo scene please" - always in the interest of making the game more interesting. If the game is going well he (or she) should leave well alone.*

19. *The Ombudsman can - in extremity - refuse a challenge on behalf of the other team, and request the challengers to issue a re-challenge. If he believes that the game is falling apart due to the inexperience of the improvisors, or the continuing stupidity of the challenges, or whatever, then the Ombudsman has the right to issue a challenge of his own - although we hope this doesn't have to happen.*

20. *The Ombudsman introduces the game from centre stage, demonstrating the Penalty Basket. and getting the audience to practise yelling the names of the teams, and so on.*

21. *The Ombudsman takes over the function normally exercised by the panel of Judges in other games - he/she honks boring scenes off, waves the lights down, etc. etc.*

22. *After each challenge is completed, the Ombudsman reminds the audience of the two scenes that they've just watched, and gets them to shout the name of the team who's work they preferred..*

23. *The winners of the 'shout' (as determined by the Ombudsman) get five points, except in hat-games where each hat taken earns three points. Hats-Games, and similar games are not recommended for Danish Games because the audience does not get a chance to vote on them.*

24. *Duration - Danish Games usually last from twenty five to forty minutes.*

Scoring

We began by scoring Theatresports scenes from ZERO to FIVE.

ZERO meant 'Boring'.

ONE meant 'Poor'.

TWO meant 'Average'.

THREE meant 'Good'.

FOUR meant 'Very good'.

FIVE meant 'Superlative'.

Now that we've replaced the ZERO with a 'Honk' from a Bicycle horn), we tend to regard average as being between TWO and THREE.

Each Judge now makes his/her own decision and the scores are added together by the score-keeper. The top score for a scene is therefore fifteen (except in Danish Games where the winner of any challenge gets a FIVE).

In 'one-on-one' challenges (in which members from each team work together), the winning team gets a score of FIVE, and the Judges award this by pointing towards the team that they think did the best. To indicate a draw they point straight upwards. (An exception to this rule are the 'best-out-of-three hat-games', in which each hat taken or successfully defended earns THREE points).

If a team is losing drastically (fifty points down, perhaps) in a friendly game, they could request that the winner of the next challenge get fifty-one points. This can be rejected of course but is a reasonable tactic to use if you're trailing far behind.

The score-cards should be held high, and held up immediately. They should be rotated from side to side so that everyone has good view - We all need to see them, not just the commentator and the score-keeper.

Scoreboards

Make a cloth score board and 'velcro' the numbers and team names onto it. It'll be very light, and you can roll it up like a blind.

Time Points

When the Regular Game was introduced, with its unscored challenges, and its scored Free-Time, the players soon discovered that they could pile-up vast numbers of points by including as many scenes as possible during the free-time - even if each got a low score, twenty tiny scenes would accumulate far more points than would just one scene of high quality, so Theatresports began to degenerate into a succession of 'one-liners'.

I decided that scenes should earn more points if they were extended, so I said that we should multiply the 'Judges' points' by 'Time-Points', every minute on stage earning one time-point. A scene that was awarded ten Judges' points and that lasted for three minutes would earn a total of thirty points. A scene that was earned twelve Judges' points, but which lasted only thirty seconds, would be multiplied by half a time-point and receive a 'grand total' of only six points.

This put an end to the 'one liners', but when we created the *Revised Game* time points became irrelevant - the winners of a Challenge can present only one scene, so there's no advantage in compressing it into fifteen seconds.

Scoring At The Olympics

At the Olympics we decided first, second, and third place by adding up the score from all the 'official' games played. Each team's scores were totaled, and then divided by the number of challenges they had played. This was necessary or teams that played the most challenges would on average have earned the most points; i.e. a team that played ten challenges in a twenty-minute game might have averaged four points for each challenge - giving them forty points - whereas had they played only two long challenges which had earned the maximum possible score of fifteen points per challenge they'd have earned only thirty points.

We decided that we should have finished the tournament with exhibition matches - as happens in skating.

'Counting Out'

Some teams dither about, while they look for props, or struggle into costume, or they may spend spend minutes getting suggestions, or volunteers from the audience. If the Judges or the commentator become conscious of a delay, they can 'count the team out' - starting at five and counting down to zero. If the situation hasn't become acceptable by the time the zero is reached then the miscreants lose the stage. Sometimes the entire audience

joins in with the counting-out - which gets them more involved.

Having only five seconds to respond to a challenge in may seem severe, but challengers go first, so no one is really being thrown on to the stage at five seconds notice. And the counting down isn't applied unless a team is visibly wasting time. Ten, twenty, perhaps even thirty or more seconds may have passed before anyone remembers to begin 'counting you out'.

There is always the danger that the trappings of theatresports may start to take up more time than the actual improvisation. 'Counting out' helps to avoid this.

Judges

Function

The Judges adjudicate the game and settle disputes - for example, if a team objects to a challenge on the grounds that it was made earlier in the evening, then the Judges must uphold or deny this objection. (In the *Judges' Challenge Match* they also set the challenges).

A Judge is not an entertainer - his task is to be efficient, and to keep the 'the ball in play' so to speak. Judges should try not to get into huddles in order to argue abstruse points. They should make decisions quickly, even if these decisions are later determined to be 'wrong'. The Judges are there to stop the game from degenerating into argument. We'd like them to be objective and fair, but that's not actually why we need them.

Who Should Judge?

Try other Theatresports players. Sometimes non-players can be excellent, but in general, members of the public and 'celebrities' are too indulgent - giving almost every scene a high score.

It's a good idea to use one celebrity, because the two other Judges can exert a moderating effect, but it's a disaster (and very 'wasteful') to use three. Invite media 'celebrities' - talk-show hosts, news-readers, and so on - they may talk about Theatresports on their programmes and

they usually have a very good time. Give them flowers, free-drinks, Theatresports pins, T-shirts, etc. if appropriate. Always treat them with consideration and respect - this means appointing a warm friendly person to be their host, and send them a letter of appreciation afterwards.

Not everyone makes a good Judge - try people out. Give them advice. Encourage them to express their genuine opinion, rather than be subservient to the audience, but beware - a weak Judge can be so determined not to be weak that he'll make eccentric decisions just to show that he isn't weak. If a Judge is too eccentric, too bizarre, don't use him.

How Many Judges?

We use three Judges, so that there will be always be a third Judge to break a tie between the other two.

No Judge can be perfect, but with three Judges, the biases are likely to cancel out.

In emergency, the number of Judges can be altered (by agreement between the teams).

How Should They Look?

Judges should not look stupid, but some sort of costume may be helpful - ours wear blue robes although I'd prefer black. They should enter together, and should stay close to each other so that we see them as a group (they should not enter one at a time). They can be good-natured, and friendly, but when it comes to Judging they should be firm and decisive.

How To Introduce Them

I've seen Judges introduced with sentences like: "And here they come, these scum, these sleaze bags...". But what's the point of trying to make every moment utterly facetious? The Judges are in charge of the game and they need to be given some respect before they can be a satisfying 'enemy'. We want to 'give permission' for the audience to boo the Judges, but not to despise them or to treat them as cuddly friends. I would suggest some more formal phrase like:

"And now the traditional boo for the Judges please", as the Judges enter.

I've seen teams pretend to bribe the Judges. I once saw a team 'spin' a Judge to see who should make the first challenge. I've seen Judges dragged out of their seats and kidnapped as a 'joke'. I've seen Judges dress up as blind men and tap their way across the stage to their seats. I've seen a Judge hold up the 'five' card and then sit on it as a way of saying that he won't give high scores - which is lunatic because the audience want high scores (so long as they're fully deserved). Always remember that Judges are in charge, and that it's easier to 'hate' them if they're authority figures.

Judges can be enthusiastic when a really wonderful scene occurs - but they shouldn't join in the cheering and the jumping about.

Where To Sit Them.

Some groups have suggested placing the Judges where they can be seen, and lighting them. This may be O.K. when they're holding up the cards, or in a dispute, but at other times the emphasis should be on the players and we should be able to forget about the Judges.

I place the Judges at the front of the audience, and in the centre (if the architecture of the theatre allows it). Judges placed at the front have an excellent view, and the audience can easily see the score cards. Unless the Judges stand up, most of the audience can't see them, which is fine by me since I want the attention focused on the players.

Vancouver Theatresports at City Stage theatre had a central gangway so I placed their Judges at the rear, but this was not a perfect position. Sometimes a Judge needs to dominate an audience and for that he should be able to stand up and face them - e.g. when defending a controversial decision - the audience are twice as loud when screaming abuse at a Judge who has the courage to confront them.

In Vancouver the Judges seem to have very little authority, and the game is dominated by the M.C. who has become the 'star' of the game - the weak placing of the Judges may have encouraged this.

Judges As Parents etc.

It's depressing to see a Judge compete with the players to see who can get the most laughs. A Judge should be a 'straight man', a parental figure, who is slightly resented by the audience

Judges should not be seen as taking their responsibilities lightly - and they should not make gags. They are there to make decisions, and to be hated, and just occasionally to be admired. They're not there to be thought witty, or charming.

Judges can be enthusiastic if a really wonderful scene occurs - but they should not join in the cheering and stand up and jump about.

Judges Are Not Perfect

Improvisors likely to be fiercely competitive - especially the inexperienced players - and they can get really angry with what they consider a bad Judgement ("we was robbed!").

I defend the Judges by saying that everyone is supposed to screw-up at least twice in every game, and that this includes the Judges. I remind everyone that the Judges are a necessary evil, and no more likely to be perfect than anyone else.

Not only are Judges doomed to be imperfect, but their errors can be very valuable. I've heard people argue against the Warning For Boring because the audience howled abuse when it was given:

"Look," they say: "This proves that the Actors were right and that the Judges were wrong!"

Yet such indignation welds the actors and the audience into one team. I'm happy when the audience becomes enraged - their lungs get a good work out and they discharge a lot of pent-up aggression that they might otherwise vent on their families. If the Judges were always perceived to be right then the game would be that much more boring. Theatresports is not a school, it's not a place where everyone's value depends on their being 'marked correctly'.

But Judges should be honest - the game becomes a farce when Judges given wrong decisions deliberately.

Think of the audience and the players as being on one team, and the Judges on the other; unpopular decisions by the Judges help to consolidate this. The more 'hate' that the audience project onto the Judges, the greater their love for the players"

The Need For 'Strong' Judges

Weak Judges want to be popular, and they are easily swayed by the audience. A scene may be dreadful beyond belief, and yet weak Judges won't throw it off so long as there's still some laughter being extracted. They'll look visibly bored, and toy longingly with their bicycle horns, and yet allow it die a lingering death. Perhaps they're afraid to annoy the performers, or too 'chicken' to risk the audience howling with rage at them. But it may be only friends of the cast who are laughing, or a group of teen-agers, or a bunch of drunks.

Conversely, some Judges will end a scene which is fascinating to the audience simply because there isn't any laughter. Serious scenes are wonderful in giving the audience a rest from laughter, but weak Judges will always 'honk' them off.

Judges need to be 'strong' enough to resist sustained abuse. If the audience has just been enraged because the Judges threw off a popular scene, then weak Judges are very likely to let the next scene run on and on, no matter how ghastly it may be. Judges should not be quelled by the audience's antagonism.

A strong Judge does not look to see what score cards his fellow Judges are about to raise, and he does not see himself as just the representative of the audience (unless he or she is a 'celebrity' Judge). He is an expert, someone who has his own opinions and who does not just follow the crowd. A Judge should be always fighting to raise standards.

Strong Judges can encourage improvisors to be more daring. They can say:

"We're bored with these challenges. We want challenges no one has ever heard of before!"

Or:

"We'll give extra points for any scene that actually has a story!"

Experienced Judges should do more than just wave the score cards up and down. But if they are treated as figures of fun they can't exercise this sort of authority.

Try To Score High

If a scene is awarded a ONE, then it should probably have been honked. Judges are reluctant to throw teams off, but they'll express their resentment by giving the lowest possible score, yet should we have to put up with inferior work? If a low score seem warranted then the Judges should consider waving down the lights or awarding a 'Warning For Boring'.

Many Judges are also reluctant to mark high, even though audiences like high scores. This is yet another attempt to avoid criticism (they're afraid that the audience will say: "So he liked that scene did he? Yuk!"). If a Judge really likes a scene he ought to give it a high score. It's not only the improvisors who should take risks.

'Hell-Judges'

The Problem: A Judge may be thinking so hard about the scene that he doesn't notice that he's bored (I swear this is true). Or he may be itching to give a 'Warning For Boring', and yet still trying to give the improvisors 'one more chance'. Or he may fear the hostility of the players or the rage of the on-lookers.

The solution: put a red light in the Judges' view, and have it operated by a button at the rear of the audience. Put another red light in front of the Lighting Improvisor.

The people who control the buttons are the 'Hell-Judges' (not my terminology). A Hell-Judge has so little responsibility that he or she is almost exactly like a member of the audience - all they have to do is press the buttons when they feel bored. The lights do not have to be obeyed, so the decision to press the buttons doesn't feel 'serious'. Hell Judges are not wondering what points to award, or thinking: 'Should this go on a fraction longer? Or: 'Does this player deserve a penalty?', Or 'is this becoming too obscene?'. Hell Judges just register that they've seen

enough - then the officials can take action or not. The audience may be insulting and booing the acknowledged Judges but they don't know that the Hell Judges exist.

Hell-Judges work in twos, or threes, or in even larger groups, so that no one knows who's really making the decisions (maybe the Regular Judges are obeying every red light, but maybe they aren't). In this situation improvisors can't take 'Warnings For Boring' so personally.

We have separate buttons for the lighting Improvisor, and for the Judges. If a Hell-Judge can see a great place to fade the lights he can signal his opinion, but the lighting improvisor doesn't have to obey, although he often will.

When an inexperienced Judge gives too many 'Warnings', the absence of red lights is a restraint.

'Lawyers'

At international tournaments players from some neutral country may be conscripted as Judges, even though they may never have judged before. Sit some knowledgeable person beside them as a 'lawyer' who can be consulted if necessary. Such a 'lawyer' acts as an adviser - he or/she has no actual power.

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