

Appreciations of the Sri Lanka Festival of Music, Dance & Speech 2017

Speech & Drama Adjudicator 2017

Timothy McCarthy

MA, HDE, FTCL, LGSMD, FLCM, ALAM, PGCA

The 2017 Sri Lanka Festival of Music, Dance and Speech was again another very successful occasion. It was a great personal delight to be part of the Festival, especially as it celebrated its 20th event. It was wonderful to have the opportunity to visit a number of centres and to be at the Festival at the same time as my fellow adjudicators in Speech, Dance and Music, affording us the rare chance to see other aspects of the Festival. I often feel that as performers and teachers we only experience the parts of the Festival that we are personally involved with and forget that the Festival not only encompasses other aspects of our subject, but also that a wide range of the performing arts are available at all ages and in many parts of the country.

One thing that I became aware of during the Festival this year was the lack of knowledge of the Syllabus and the various requirements for the different subjects on offer in the Speech and Drama section. I would urge teachers to please keep referring to the Syllabus in preparations so that you are sure that your students are meeting the criteria especially in relation to time limits and specific requirements of particular subjects. It is so easy to assume that we know what is required and then find out too late that something was overlooked. It is not fair on the performer, the stewards or the adjudicator to have to handle this on the day of the Festival.

Participation in the Performing Arts is important. The work that performers do in preparation and participation is important. It is not just about the specific piece and the day. It is much more than that. It is the overall training and discipline that the Performing Arts give us that is important and how they contribute to our overall development as confident, engaging and communicate people able to share and express ideas. The Performing Arts help us to become thoughtful and sensitive people, something that is so badly needed in the world today.

A very good friend of mine works in a leading University at home. She often says that when she meets her students she knows immediately those who have taken part in Festivals because of their ability to present themselves, communicate and overall general confidence. These skills takes some time to develop but are fostered best by engaging in the Performing Arts and participating at events such as the Sri Lanka Festival of Music, Dance and Speech.

This was brought home so well when we meet the adult performers at the 20th Celebration of the Festival. These past performers of the earlier events have grown up to be the adults every parent wants. They have become fine young people because of the opportunities the Festival gave them. No doubt it was an evening of great pride for Mrs. Joy Ferdinando and her team at the International Institute. Thanks to them the young people of Sri Lanka are still being afforded these opportunities.

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Patricia Irvine

Cert ED, LGSM, AMSTSD

Since my return from adjudicating at the 20th Sri Lanka Festival of Music, Dance & Speech lines such as 'my beautiful island', 'Sri Lanka, Pearl of the Indian Ocean', 'I love my paradise island' and so on continue to resound in my head. Lines spoken many times with pride and sincerity in the many Public Speaking Classes which I adjudicated while travelling around the diverse and fascinating island that is Sri Lanka. Throughout my visit it was heart-warming to see the pride and belief that the people have in their country.

The resilience of the people who have progressed in spite of war, tsunami and even this year again devastating floods is inspiring. Everywhere there is evidence of a tremendous regrowth in roads, homes, hotels, restaurants etc. The huge improvement in infrastructure enabled us to travel all around Sri Lanka and so listen to young people ranging from Jaffna in the north to Galle in the south. Everywhere we were met with welcomes.

The winners from the various regions then came together in Colombo to compete in the all-island Finals which I was privileged to adjudicate and to experience the many different accents and approaches to the work. I found that the standard of the work at the Finals was tremendously high. Every student was deserving of their place. They all were already winners and they gave every appearance of having enjoyed participating in this huge event from which they, their parents and teachers can continue to broaden their knowledge and experience as they watch each other perform. The commitment and encouragement of parents and teachers who often had to travel considerable distances to attend the Finals resulted in a huge learning experience for us all and a true feeling of a 'Festival'. I feel privileged to have been able to be a part of it.

I was constantly aware of how important participation was to this generation of young people and to the future of Sri Lanka. The ability to communicate with confidence plays such a vital part in the development of any society. The Festival has an important role in this development. The people of Sri Lanka owe a great debt of gratitude to Mrs Joy Ferdinando for her vision in creating this festival encompassing the whole of Sri Lanka and her enthusiasm and energy in sustaining it for twenty years together with her dedicated team of assistants. They have through the Festival and its associated workshops as well as examinations supported established teachers and trained and encouraged new ones so that they can in the knowledge that the Festival will continue to grow celebrate the success of twenty years of the Sri Lanka Festival of Music, Dance & Speech. Without doubt Joy Ferdinando embodies all that is best in the Spirit of the Festival Movement.

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Aideen Crowley-Dynan

FLCM, ATCL, ARIAM, LLCM (TD)

Then summer of 2017 had me looking forward to returning as Adjudicator for the speech and drama at the annual Sri Lanka Festival of Music, Dance and Speech. It was a most interesting and efficiently run festival during my previous six visits. The many unique features included in this festival make it a memorable event each time I come.

Twenty years ago, a lady of tremendous courage and fortitude and dedication started to make her dream to come true by successfully setting up a festival of Music, Dance and Speech in Sri Lanka. This lady was none other than Mrs. Joy Ferdinando, whose vision into the future was as valuable as her knowledge and involvement in the performing arts. She has provided a wonderful cultural future in Sri Lanka.

The launching of public speaking and radio & television news bulletins for competitors as young as three and four years old in something which, in my extensive travels, I don't meet in other festivals. The results of training in these communicative art forms is indeed evident in the performances of the competitors. How prepared these children will be when required to communicate facts and features to an audience in the future. I have seen some of the competitors wear black business suits with white shirts when performing in these public speaking competitions. The continuous rise in standards of dramatic performance as well as in presentation of verse over the years adds to the success of this festival and reveals the spirit and enthusiasm of the competitors as well as the dedication of the teachers who prepare the competitors.

Due to the size and the extent of this festival, the need to travel shows us what a lovely and interesting country Sri Lanka is - along with it's fascinating wild life. I was again very happy to have been invited to adjudicate the 2017 Sri Lankan festival.

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Dance Adjudicator 2017

Patricia Snowden

B Phil (Hons), Dip LCDD, LISTD, Dip (CDE), FBIFF

It was a great pleasure to be invited to adjudicate the dance section of the 20th anniversary of the festival – my seventh time in Sri Lanka.

Since my first visit in 2002, the festival has grown and developed, both in the number of entries number and in the variety of dance styles presented. This has all been due to Joy Ferdinando and her dedicated staff. It was wonderful to see the competitors perform with such confidence and discipline and once again, the costumes were superb. I was pleased to see an increase in the number of entries of Western dance and felt that the standard had increased greatly in this genre.

I would particularly like to thank the teachers for all their hard work and expertise and the parents for their support.

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Music Adjudicator 2017

Richard Deering

FTCL, GTCL, LRAM, ARCM, PGCA

This was my 4th visit as an adjudicator for the Music section and it was an absolute delight to return and meet old friends and see highly successful teachers, who were performers in my first festival in 2004, entering their own students. The standard of performance and musical understanding in most centres was impressively high and many were wonderfully understanding of the overall value of performance skills. One teacher, who told me that she had put all of her students in to perform, as the experience was more valuable to them than the result, particularly impressed me. That level of understanding augurs well for the maturity of the young people in that particular town. In another town the teacher had all of the participating students attend the venue on an earlier date and simply practice their walking onto the platform and acknowledging the audience, and, that too, is very impressive and shows true understanding of the Festival's long-term educative purpose.

The look of joy on the faces of the young performers was a delight and the platform discipline of the very young performers was truly outstanding. The value of participation is only fully grasped if the performer analyses their own performance and learns from the playing and presentation of others, and that was clearly understood in many of the centres. Sadly though, one or two centres have still not seen the progress that was evident elsewhere so there is still work to be done in some areas.

However, all of these opportunities that the Festival affords, having completed 20 years, can only be made available because of the vision and commitment of Joy Ferdinando and her truly wonderful staff who, tirelessly strive for every fine detail and an excellent environment all around the island. Sri Lanka should be proud of them because their efforts, together with the commitment of some inspiring and dedicated teachers, is raising the levels of self-esteem and artistic imagination within the next generation of adult Sri Lankans.

Best wishes to everyone and, I hope that it is not long before I make a 5th visit to your wonderful country.
