

APPRECIATIONS - 2024

Speech & Drama Adjudicator 2024

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

As always, it was a great joy to be back in Sri Lanka in the summer of 2024 to adjudicate the Lanka Festival of Music, Dance and Speech. This year I had the opportunity to visit many centers I have not been to for a few years. It was lovely to meet old colleagues and friends and to have the chance to meet new teachers and performers.

As I sat at my desk enjoying the different performances, what struck me in particular was the very good standard of work; how many performers were receiving Gold Medals and how the marks keep rising in all centers. It was wonderful to feel that what we set out to do all those years ago has been achieved. That teachers and performers know what is expected and required and are working steadily to achieve that.

Speech and Drama offers students many opportunities. It is the only performing discipline that is open to everyone. It offers all students important life skills that will help and support them as they grow into their teenage years and adulthood. No matter how long or short you study the subject, you will learn skills that you will always call upon.

I just have two points to raise. First of all, teachers it is wonderful to see how creative you are becoming and I am always delighted to see new innovations and developments within Speech and Drama. However, be careful not to merge disciplines in exams or Festival performance. Please do not mix Story Telling with Prose Speaking; Story Telling with Public Speaking; and Public Speaking with Drama. Each of these subjects have specific demands and it is confusing for students when there are merged and may cause issues for adjudicators/examiners.

Parents you should be so proud of your children and the wonderful teachers you have. Our world needs creative people in Education, Management, Medicine, Science and all other areas of industry. Creativity must be encouraged and supported. Please do not stop Speech and Drama training when students come into their creative stage. They need the chance for education in many areas in order to be a fully rounded adult. Academic achievements are not their only requirement. They need knowledge, background and experience in other areas as well. Training in the Performing Arts (and Sports) will enable students to apply creativity in all other areas of their life.

I wish to say a special thank you to Mrs. Shyama Perera and all her team at IIMSD for the kindness and hospitality afforded to me as I travelled around Sri Lanka. This Festival has a special place in my heart. It is always like going home. Sri Lanka has played a major part in my career and everywhere in my home there are so many souvenirs from past visits. I enjoy each and every trip. I enjoy each and every performance and I hope that I have helped and supported all involved. Mrs. Perera is continuing a very import tradition and it is wonderful that future generations of Sri Lankan students will have the opportunity to take part in this great event.

Sincere thanks to everyone.

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Speech & Drama Adjudicator 2024

Susan Mackay ALAM,LLAM,LLAM(TD)

Having had such a wonderful experience in 2023, I was delighted and honoured to be invited to Adjudicate once again at Lanka Festival of Music, Dance and Speech in 2024.

This year I was lucky enough to travel the length and breadth of this beautiful island and see the exciting work the teachers are doing with the youth of Sri Lanka. I was thrilled to see students not only attempt Shakespeare but to perform their pieces with insight and understanding of the language and meaning. A truly inspiring experience.

I would like to thank all the Centres I visited for their warm welcome and for the smooth running of each busy day. More importantly I would like to say a huge well done to all the young people who took part in the Festival whether they were medal winners or not. Each child gave of their best and I know that for some it is a daunting experience. However, all experiences whether good or not so good culminate in a well- rounded and confident future performer.

Once again the IIMSD, Shyama Perera, Ramona Francisco and the whole team, did a fantastic job organising an event of this magnitude and I thank them too for all the support and kindness they showed me throughout my stay in Sri Lanka.

May I wish you all a productive and insightful time as you work towards your new performances and a happy and successful Lanka Festival in 2025.

Music Adjudicator 2024

Richard Deering FTCL, GTCL, LRAM, ARCM, PGCA

It is incredible to reflect upon the stamina and durability of the festival that, throughout all the political, economic and environmental challenges of the past 27 years, the integrity and importance has been maintained and, indeed, grown. Joy Ferdinando's valuable legacy is being organically developed and modernised for an even stronger contribution to Sri Lankan life but the basic principles of artistic integrity and the development of self-confidence for young performers will still be at the core of the work.

I first adjudicated at the festival in 2004, and it was particularly rewarding to meet so many who were then young performers but were now successful teachers in their respective localities. Alongside that it was very heartening and rewarding to hear some young pianists and singers that could have easily matched the standards of similar youngsters in Europe and that is a testament to the work and value of the festival over these almost three decades.

Aside from musical values, the festival is an irreplaceable vehicle for the development of the important life skills of self-esteem and self-confidence.

The dedication, determination and vision of the staff involved in maintaining this valuable work needs applauding and the standards of teaching are also testament to the value of the work done by bringing adjudicators from around the world into contact with talented young people of all regions of Sri Lanka.

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Dance Adjudicator 2024

Laura Symonds PGCA

I was truly delighted to be asked back to Sri Lanka this May, to adjudicate the 2024 Dance Festival, especially as I had also judged the 2023 Competition in September. It is always a joy to return to a country where I now feel very much at home, having adjudicated the Dance Festival five times over past years, since 2008. As always everything ran very smoothly on all the competing days, with plenty of eager young performers, all well rehearsed and beautifully costumed.

Apart from traditional dance styles, I saw some encouraging work in the more contemporary and modern entries, with some energetic Street Dance performances,

The World of dance brings all cultures, and nationalities together, as we connect without speech, expressing the rhythms and music in an artistic format. There were confident young performers, some as young as three or four, and some truly memorable talent from the senior dancers, up to professional standard.

Each time I return to adjudicate the Sri Lanka Dance Festival, I am reminded how hard the teachers work, training their pupils to a high level of technique and style. And every year the standard gets better and better. Learning some of these very intricate steps and expressions is, of course, a way of sustaining the historic heritage of Sri Lankan and Indian dance. I sincerely hope that it will be possible for the organisers to continue to offer all aspiring young dancers the chance to compete each year. Such a joyful and colourful Festival needs to be nurtured for future generations.

My congratulations to the Organisers for their hard work, and their skills, and I would like also to thank them for always looking after me so well. You are a great team!
