



**A RESEARCH-BASED FRAMEWORK ON FORMS, TYPES, GENRES, AND PRACTITIONER
METHODOLOGIES IN THEATRE**

A Reference Guide for Adjudication, Practice, and Artistic Classification in Kenya

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1. INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

Theatre in Kenya occupies a distinctive cultural, social, and political position. It is at once an artistic expression, a communal ritual, a tool for education, a vehicle for resistance, and a repository of collective memory. Long before the formalisation of theatre buildings and written dramatic texts, Kenyan and African societies practised performance through storytelling, music, dance, ritual, and communal enactment. Contemporary Kenyan theatre continues to draw from these foundations while engaging with global theatrical traditions, resulting in a dynamic, hybrid, and continually evolving practice.

The **Kenya Theatre Awards (KTA)** exist not only to celebrate excellence in theatre but to uphold fairness, artistic integrity, and cultural consciousness in the evaluation of theatrical work. As the Kenyan theatre landscape expands in scope, embracing diverse languages, performance styles, production scales, and experimental forms, the challenge of consistent and informed adjudication has become increasingly pronounced.

In the absence of a shared conceptual framework, theatrical productions risk being misunderstood, misclassified, or assessed using inappropriate criteria. This is particularly evident in works rooted in African performance traditions or in contemporary hybrid forms that deliberately resist Western realist conventions. Without clarity, adjudication processes may inadvertently privilege dominant aesthetics, conflate form with genre, or penalise culturally grounded performance logics.

This document has therefore been developed as a **research-based, nationally relevant reference framework** on the **forms, types, genres, and practitioner methodologies of theatre**. Its primary purpose is to guide adjudication within the Kenya Theatre Awards by providing jurors, artists, educators, and producers with a shared vocabulary, clear distinctions, and culturally responsive analytical tools.

The framework does not seek to impose rigid categorisation or artistic hierarchy. Instead, it recognises theatre as a living practice, one that evolves through overlap, hybridisation, and innovation. Emphasis is placed on identifying **dominant characteristics and artistic intention**, rather than enforcing notions of formal purity. By doing so, the document enables productions to be assessed on their own artistic terms, within their chosen traditions and performance logics.

Ultimately, this framework positions the Kenya Theatre Awards not merely as a celebratory platform but as a **custodian of theatrical knowledge and practice in Kenya**. It affirms the value of African performance systems, promotes globally literate yet locally rooted adjudication, and contributes to the long-term development of Kenyan theatre as both an art form and a cultural heritage.

2. SCOPE, METHODOLOGY, AND RESEARCH FOUNDATIONS

2.1. Scope of the Document

This framework applies to all theatrical works considered for adjudication under the **Kenya Theatre Awards (KTA)**. It is designed to accommodate the full breadth of theatre practice in Kenya, recognising diversity in scale, language, intention, and performance context.



The scope of this document includes, but is not limited to:

- Professional theatre productions presented in formal venues
- Community-based and applied theatre projects
- Educational, youth, and training-based theatre
- Experimental, interdisciplinary, and hybrid performance forms
- Touring, site-specific, and non-traditional performance contexts

The framework is intentionally inclusive, ensuring that theatre created outside conventional institutional structures is assessed with the same rigour, respect, and contextual awareness as work presented within established theatre spaces.

2.2. Methodological Approach

This document adopts a **qualitative, interpretive, and contextual methodology**, grounded in the understanding that theatre is a culturally embedded practice rather than a purely technical or aesthetic product.

The methodological approach is informed by the following principles:

- **Contextual Evaluation:**
Theatre is assessed within its cultural, historical, and social context. Adjudication prioritises understanding *why* a particular form or method has been chosen, rather than judging work against a single dominant aesthetic standard.
- **Intention-Led Analysis:**
Jurors are encouraged to identify artistic intention before evaluating execution. This distinction allows for fair assessment of both traditional and innovative work, and prevents stylistic choices from being misinterpreted as technical shortcomings.
- **Dominant Characteristics over Purity:**
The framework recognises that contemporary theatre frequently blends multiple forms, types, and genres. Adjudication, therefore, focuses on identifying dominant characteristics rather than enforcing rigid or exclusive categorisation.
- **Comparative and Reflective Practice:**
The methodology supports calibration among jurors by establishing shared terminology and reference points, enabling consistent decision-making across diverse productions.

This approach ensures that adjudication remains flexible, informed, and responsive to the realities of Kenyan theatre practice.

2.3. Research Foundations

The framework is grounded in a broad base of theatre scholarship, performance theory, and African cultural studies. It draws from both global and African intellectual traditions to ensure a perspective that is **globally literate and locally rooted**.

Key research foundations include:



- **Classical Dramatic Theory:**
Foundational concepts of structure, narrative, and genre originate from classical scholarship, particularly in relation to tragedy, comedy, and dramatic causality.
- **Modern and Political Theatre Theory:**
Twentieth-century movements that foreground theatre as a space for critical inquiry, social engagement, and political intervention, emphasising audience awareness and intellectual participation.
- **Performance and Ritual Theory:**
Scholarship that expands the definition of theatre beyond scripted drama to include ritual, embodiment, spatial dynamics, and performer–audience relationships.
- **African Theatre and Decolonial Scholarship:**
African performance studies that centre on oral traditions, ritual systems, indigenous languages, and community-based performance. These perspectives challenge Eurocentric hierarchies and affirm African theatre as philosophically, aesthetically, and structurally complete in its own right.

A central guiding principle underpinning this document is the recognition that **African theatre does not separate ritual, music, dance, and story, but integrates them into a unified performance language.** This principle informs both classification and adjudication throughout the framework.

2.4. Positioning of the Framework

This document is intended to function as:

- A **mandatory reference text** for KTA jurors
- A **shared vocabulary** for artists, educators, and producers
- A **living document**, reviewed periodically to reflect the evolving nature of Kenyan theatre

By grounding adjudication in research, cultural awareness, and methodological clarity, the framework strengthens the credibility, fairness, and intellectual integrity of the Kenya Theatre Awards and contributes to the broader development of a Kenyan theatrical canon.

3. CONCEPTUAL DEFINITIONS: FORM, TYPE, AND GENRE

A persistent challenge in theatre adjudication is the conflation of **form**, **type**, and **genre**. These terms are frequently used interchangeably in everyday discourse, yet they refer to fundamentally different aspects of theatrical practice. When not clearly distinguished, this confusion can lead to misclassification, inconsistent judging, and the application of inappropriate evaluative criteria.

For the purposes of the **Kenya Theatre Awards (KTA)**, the following definitions are **standardised and non-negotiable**. Jurors, practitioners, and stakeholders are expected to apply them consistently.

3.1. Forms of Theatre

A **form of theatre** refers to the **artistic method, stylistic approach, and performance conventions** through which a theatrical work is created and presented. Form determines the *performance language* of a production, how performers use the body, voice, space, time, narrative structure, and audience relationship.



Key Question:

How is this theatre made and performed?

Forms are shaped by:

- Historical and cultural traditions
- Philosophical and aesthetic principles
- Political and ideological intentions
- Training methodologies and performance systems

Examples of theatrical forms include:

- Ritual theatre
- Storytelling theatre
- Realism and naturalism
- Epic theatre
- Theatre of the Absurd
- Physical and movement-based theatre
- Documentary and verbatim theatre

Adjudication Significance:

Identifying form enables jurors to assess whether a production **successfully fulfils the intentions and conventions of its chosen performance language**. A work should not be penalised for failing to meet the expectations of a different form. For example, ritual theatre should not be judged by realist criteria, and epic theatre should not be evaluated on emotional immersion.

3.2. Types of Theatre

A **type of theatre** refers to the **format, scale, or organisational structure** of the theatrical event. Type describes *what kind of theatrical production* is being presented in practical and structural terms.

Key Question:

What kind of theatrical event is this?

Types are determined by:

- Performance format
- Number of performers
- Structural organisation
- Relationship to space and audience

Examples of theatrical types include:

- Straight play
- Musical theatre
- Opera or dance theatre



- One-person show
- Two-hander
- Ensemble theatre
- Repertory theatre
- Site-specific or street theatre

Adjudication Significance:

Understanding type allows jurors to account for **structural constraints and opportunities** inherent in different production formats. A solo performance, for example, demands different evaluative considerations from a large ensemble production. Type ensures that productions are assessed fairly within their organisational realities.

3.3. Genres of Theatre

A **genre of theatre** refers to the **narrative world, thematic focus, and emotional register** of a theatrical work. Genre shapes audience expectation and frames how the story functions emotionally and thematically.

Key Question:

What kind of story is being told, and how is the audience meant to respond?

Genres are primarily determined by:

- Story content and subject matter
- Emotional trajectory
- Thematic concerns
- Intended audience response

Examples of theatrical genres include:

- Tragedy
- Comedy
- Melodrama
- Farce
- Tragicomedy
- Political theatre
- Social realism
- Psychological drama
- Satire and dark comedy

Adjudication Significance:

Genre guides jurors in evaluating **narrative effectiveness and emotional coherence**. A tragedy is not judged by how funny it is, nor a comedy by how tragic it becomes. Significantly, genres may overlap; adjudicators must identify the **dominant genre**, rather than expecting narrative purity.

3.4. Why These Distinctions Matter in Adjudication



For effective and fair adjudication, **form, type, and genre must be identified independently**. Each answers a different evaluative question:

Concept	Core Question
• Form	How is the story told?
• Type	What theatrical structure is used?
• Genre	What story and emotional world are explored?

A single production may therefore be accurately described as:

- **Form:** Epic Theatre
- **Type:** Straight Play
- **Genre:** Political Drama

This clarity prevents category confusion, supports consistent judging across diverse productions, and ensures that theatrical works are evaluated **on their own artistic terms**.

KTA Position Statement

The Kenya Theatre Awards affirm that **clarity of definition is foundational to fairness in adjudication**. By standardising the use of form, type, and genre, this framework ensures that Kenyan theatre, particularly culturally grounded and hybrid work, is recognised, understood, and assessed with intellectual rigour and cultural sensitivity.

4. HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF THEATRE FORMS (GLOBAL CONTEXT)

The evolution of theatre forms across global history reflects changing social structures, philosophical worldviews, religious beliefs, and political priorities. Understanding this evolution enables adjudicators to contextualise stylistic choices and recognise that no single theatrical form represents a universal or superior standard.

This historical overview is not intended to establish a hierarchy of forms, but to provide reference points that inform how contemporary theatre languages emerged and continue to influence practice worldwide, including in Kenya.

4.1. Classical Foundations

Early formalised theatre traditions are often traced to Ancient Greece, where theatre functioned as a civic and philosophical practice. Dramatic performance explored moral responsibility, fate, power, and communal values.



Classical Greek theatre introduced foundational concepts such as:

- Structured plot and dramatic arc
- Tragedy and comedy as distinct narrative modes
- Performance as a public, communal event

The writings of **Aristotle**, particularly *Poetics*, articulated ideas of mimesis (representation), catharsis, and unity of action. While influential, these principles represent one cultural approach to theatre rather than a universal model.

4.2. Medieval and Ritualised Performance Traditions

In medieval Europe, theatre became closely linked to religious instruction through mystery, miracle, and morality plays. Performance served didactic and spiritual purposes, often staged in public spaces and incorporating music, spectacle, and symbolism.

Globally, this period parallels performance traditions in Africa, Asia, and the Americas, where ritual, ceremony, and storytelling remained central. These traditions reinforce the understanding that theatre has historically been embedded in **community life, belief systems, and social order**, rather than confined to scripted drama.

4.3. Renaissance and Humanist Theatre

The Renaissance marked a shift toward human-centred storytelling, poetic language, and complex characterisation. Elizabethan theatre expanded narrative scope, blending comedy, tragedy, politics, and the supernatural.

This era reinforced:

- Language as a central theatrical tool
- Psychological motivation and character complexity
- Theatre as both popular entertainment and philosophical inquiry

These developments influenced later dramatic literature and performance structures but did not displace ritualised or communal forms practised elsewhere.

4.4. Realism and Naturalism (19th Century)

The nineteenth century introduced realism and naturalism, which sought to depict everyday life with psychological and social accuracy. Theatre became increasingly concerned with:

- Ordinary characters and domestic settings
- Social class, morality, and power
- Cause-and-effect narrative logic



Naturalism extended realism by emphasising environmental, biological, and social determinism. While realism remains influential, particularly in institutional theatre, it represents a **specific historical response to industrial and social change**, not a neutral or universal form.

4.5 Modernist Revolutions in Theatre (20th Century)

The twentieth century saw a radical questioning of realist conventions. Theatre practitioners challenged illusion, narrative coherence, and emotional immersion in response to war, industrialisation, colonialism, and political upheaval.

Key modernist developments included:

- Epic and political theatre, foregrounding critical distance and social analysis
- Expressionism prioritises inner psychological states
- Absurdism, reflecting existential uncertainty and fragmentation

The work of practitioners such as **Bertolt Brecht** and **Samuel Beckett** expanded the possibilities of theatrical form beyond narrative realism.

4.6. Postmodern and Postdramatic Theatre

Late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century theatre further destabilised traditional structures. Postdramatic and contemporary performance often:

- Reject linear storytelling
- Blend theatre with multimedia, movement, and visual art
- Emphasise presence, process, and audience perception

These developments reflect a global shift toward hybridity and interdisciplinary practice, aligning with long-standing African performance systems that integrate multiple expressive modes.

4.7 Implications for Kenyan Theatre Adjudication

This historical overview underscores several critical points for adjudication:

- Theatre forms emerge from **specific cultural and historical conditions**
- No single form, particularly Western realism, should be treated as a default standard
- Contemporary Kenyan theatre exists within a global continuum while remaining rooted in African performance logics

Jurors must therefore evaluate productions **within their chosen form and lineage**, recognising both inherited traditions and deliberate departures from them.

KTA Position



The Kenya Theatre Awards affirm that historical awareness is essential for fair adjudication. Understanding the global evolution of theatre forms enables jurors to distinguish between stylistic choices, cultural practices, and technical execution, ensuring that innovation and tradition are assessed with equal rigour and respect.

5. AFRICAN THEATRE TRADITIONS AND PERFORMANCE SYSTEMS

African theatre traditions constitute a complete and sophisticated performance system that predates written dramatic literature and Western theatrical institutions. These traditions are rooted in ritual, storytelling, music, dance, masquerade, and communal participation, and they function as integral components of social, spiritual, political, and cultural life.

In African contexts, theatre has historically not existed as a separate or elite art form, but as a **collective, embodied practice** embedded in everyday experience. Performance is inseparable from community, belief systems, and social responsibility. This foundational reality must inform how African and Kenyan theatre is classified, interpreted, and adjudicated.

5.1. Core Characteristics of African Theatre Systems

African theatre traditions are defined by integration rather than separation. Key characteristics include:

- **Holistic Integration**
Music, movement, speech, ritual, and visual symbolism function as a unified performance language rather than discrete elements.
- **Communal Orientation**
Performance is created *with* and *for* the community. The audience is often an active participant rather than a passive observer.
- **Embodiment and Orality**
Knowledge, history, and meaning are transmitted through the body, voice, rhythm, and repetition rather than written text alone.
- **Functional Purpose**
Performance serves social functions such as education, healing, initiation, remembrance, resistance, and celebration.

These characteristics position African theatre as **foundational** rather than experimental or derivative.

5.2. Ritual Theatre

Ritual theatre originates from ceremonial practices associated with rites of passage, spiritual invocation, healing, mourning, harvest, and social transition. In ritual performance, the performer may function as a conduit, mediator, or symbolic presence rather than a psychologically individualised character.

Key Characteristics

- Symbolic and codified movement
- Use of repetition and cyclical time



- Call-and-response structures
- Strong use of music, chant, and gesture
- Collective participation

Adjudication Considerations

Ritual theatre must not be assessed using realist or narrative-driven criteria. Jurors should prioritise:

- Symbolic coherence
- Embodied intention
- Cultural authenticity
- Clarity of ritual purpose

5.3. Storytelling and Oral Narrative Performance

Storytelling theatre draws on oral traditions in which history, morality, humour, and philosophy are transmitted through narration. Performers may move fluidly between the roles of narrator, character, commentator, and musician.

Key Characteristics

- Direct address to the audience
- Improvisation and responsiveness
- Role-switching and multi-voiced narration
- Use of rhythm, song, and repetition
- Minimal reliance on scenery or props

Adjudication Considerations

Evaluation should focus on:

- Vocal and physical command
- Narrative clarity
- Audience engagement
- Linguistic rhythm and precision

5.4. Dance-Drama and Music-Integrated Performance

In African performance systems, movement and music are primary storytelling tools rather than decorative additions. Dance-drama communicates emotion, conflict, transformation, and meaning through the body.

Key Characteristics

- Choreographed or stylised movement vocabularies
- Percussion, song, or live music as narrative drivers
- Emotional and symbolic storytelling through physicality



Adjudication Considerations

Jurors should assess:

- Integration of movement and narrative
- Physical discipline and precision
- Emotional clarity conveyed through the body

5.5. Community and Festival Theatre

Community-based performance often emerges from collective creation processes and addresses local histories, social issues, and communal concerns. These performances may occur in open spaces, schools, marketplaces, or festivals.

Key Characteristics

- Collective authorship
- Audience participation
- Use of local language and cultural references
- Social and educational intent

Adjudication Considerations

Community theatre should be evaluated on:

- Clarity of purpose
- Ethical representation
- Effectiveness of engagement
- Artistic coherence within context

Scale or production resources must not be mistaken for artistic value.

5.6. African Theatre and Contemporary Theory

African theatre scholarship affirms that African performance systems are philosophically and aesthetically complete. Thinkers such as **Wole Soyinka** and **Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o** emphasise the inseparability of ritual, language, politics, and community in African theatre.

Their work challenges colonial frameworks that position African performance as primitive, informal, or pre-theatrical. Instead, African theatre is recognised as a **complex, intentional, and meaning-driven system** with its own performance logics.

5.7. Implications for Kenyan Theatre Adjudication

For the Kenya Theatre Awards, recognising African theatre traditions requires a deliberate shift in adjudication mindset:

- African theatre forms must not be treated as deviations from Western norms



- Hybridisation with contemporary forms should be understood as continuity, not dilution
- Cultural specificity must be valued as an artistic strength

KTA Position Statement

The Kenya Theatre Awards affirm that **African theatre traditions are foundational to Kenyan theatre practice**. These traditions constitute legitimate, sophisticated performance systems and must be evaluated on their own terms. Jurors are required to recognise and respect African performance logics when adjudicating works rooted in ritual, storytelling, music, movement, and community-based theatre.

6. CONTEMPORARY THEATRE FORMS IN KENYA

Contemporary theatre in Kenya is characterised by **hybridity, adaptability, and socio-political responsiveness**. It emerges at the intersection of indigenous African performance systems, global theatrical movements, and the lived realities of modern Kenyan society. Rather than adhering to singular or “pure” forms, Kenyan theatre practitioners frequently blend styles, methodologies, and disciplines to create work that is locally grounded and globally conversant.

This hybridity is not a sign of aesthetic confusion, but a reflection of Kenya’s historical, linguistic, and cultural layering. Contemporary Kenyan theatre responds to urbanisation, political change, economic inequality, identity negotiation, and shifting social values, often using theatre as a space for dialogue, critique, and collective reflection.

6.1. Social Realism and Contemporary Realist Theatre

Social realism remains one of the most prominent contemporary theatre forms in Kenya. These works depict recognisable social environments and focus on lived experiences such as family dynamics, class struggle, corruption, unemployment, gender relations, faith, and generational conflict.

Key Characteristics

- Everyday settings and situations
- Psychologically motivated characters
- Dialogue grounded in natural speech patterns
- Clear cause-and-effect narrative structures
- Strong engagement with social issues

Adjudication Considerations

Jurors should assess:

- Truthfulness and consistency of character behaviour
- Credibility of dialogue and situation
- Depth of social insight



- Emotional and thematic coherence

Realist theatre should not be judged on spectacle, but on authenticity and narrative integrity.

6.2. Political and Protest Theatre

Political theatre in Kenya has deep historical roots and continues to function as a vehicle for civic engagement, resistance, and critique. Contemporary political theatre may take realist, epic, satirical, or symbolic forms and often addresses governance, power, injustice, memory, and national identity.

Key Characteristics

- Clear political or ideological intent
- Engagement with current or historical socio-political issues
- Use of symbolism, satire, or direct address
- Emphasis on message and audience awareness

Adjudication Considerations

Evaluation should focus on:

- Clarity of political argument
- Ethical handling of sensitive subject matter
- Effectiveness of theatrical strategies
- Balance between message and artistry

Political theatre should not be penalised for being confrontational or uncomfortable.

6.3. Documentary and Verbatim Theatre

Documentary and verbatim theatre draw on real-life testimonies, interviews, archival material, and factual events as the foundation of their performances. In Kenya, this form has been increasingly used to address historical trauma, social injustice, personal testimony, and marginalised voices.

Key Characteristics

- Use of real or edited source material
- Emphasis on authenticity and representation
- Minimal fictionalisation
- Strong ethical responsibility

Adjudication Considerations

Jurors should assess:

- Integrity and clarity of source material
- Ethical representation of lived experience
- Theatrical shaping of factual content



- Emotional and intellectual impact

The success of documentary theatre lies in how truth is theatrically framed, not in dramatic embellishment.

6.4. Physical, Movement-Based, and Devised Theatre

Physical theatre and devised performance prioritise the body, space, rhythm, and ensemble creation processes. Dialogue may be minimal or secondary to movement, gesture, and visual composition.

Key Characteristics

- Ensemble-led creation
- Strong physical and spatial awareness
- Visual and symbolic storytelling
- Non-linear or fragmented structures

Adjudication Considerations

Assessment should prioritise:

- Physical discipline and precision
- Clarity of visual language
- Ensemble cohesion
- Conceptual coherence

These works should not be judged using text-heavy or realist standards.

6.5. Spoken Word, Music, and Interdisciplinary Performance

Many contemporary Kenyan theatre works integrate spoken word poetry, live music, dance, multimedia, and digital elements. These interdisciplinary forms reflect youth culture, urban expression, and evolving performance aesthetics.

Key Characteristics

- Blending of artistic disciplines
- Rhythm and musicality as narrative tools
- Direct audience engagement
- Flexible performance structures

Adjudication Considerations

Jurors should consider:

- Integration of disciplines into storytelling
- Artistic balance and cohesion
- Performance skill across mediums
- Innovation and intentionality



Interdisciplinary theatre should be assessed on integration, not novelty alone.

6.6. Language, Multilingualism, and Code-Switching

Contemporary Kenyan theatre frequently employs multiple languages within a single production, including English, Kiswahili, Sheng, and indigenous languages. Language choice is often a deliberate artistic and political decision.

Adjudication Considerations

Jurors must recognise:

- Language as a performance tool, not a barrier
- Accessibility through context, embodiment, and tone
- Cultural specificity as artistic strength

Language diversity must not disadvantage a production in adjudication.

6.7. Implications for Adjudication

Contemporary Kenyan theatre resists narrow classification. Jurors must therefore:

- Identify dominant forms rather than expecting purity
- Recognise hybridisation as continuity with African performance traditions
- Assess intention, coherence, and effectiveness over adherence to inherited norms

KTA Position Statement

The **Kenya Theatre Awards** recognise contemporary Kenyan theatre as a dynamic, hybrid practice shaped by African traditions, global influences, and present-day realities. Such work must be evaluated through contextual, intention-led adjudication that values innovation, cultural specificity, and artistic clarity.

7. TYPES OF THEATRE: STRUCTURE, SCALE, AND ORGANISATION

Types of theatre refer to the **format, scale, and organisational structure** of a theatrical production. Unlike form (how the work is performed) or genre (the kind of story being told), type addresses the **practical configuration** of the theatrical event.

Understanding type is essential to fair adjudication, as different production types involve distinct creative demands, limitations, and opportunities. Jurors must therefore assess work **within the realities of its chosen structure**, rather than measuring all productions against a single model.

7.1. Performance Types

7.1.1. Straight Play



A straight play relies primarily on spoken dialogue and dramatic action to tell its story. Music, if present, is not the primary narrative driver.

Key Characteristics

- Dialogue-centred storytelling
- Emphasis on character interaction
- Linear or non-linear dramatic structure

Adjudication Considerations

Jurors should focus on:

- Strength of text and delivery
- Character development
- Narrative clarity and pacing

7.1.2. Musical Theatre

Musical theatre integrates song, music, and often dance as essential narrative tools. Musical elements advance plot, reveal character, and shape emotional arcs.

Key Characteristics

- Songs integral to storytelling
- Music-driven emotional progression
- Vocal and physical performance demands

Adjudication Considerations

Evaluation should include:

- Integration of music and narrative
- Vocal performance quality
- Musical dramaturgy and coherence

7.1.3. Opera and Dance Theatre

Opera and dance theatre prioritise music or movement as the primary expressive language. Text, where present, supports rather than leads narrative development.

Adjudication Considerations

Jurors should assess:

- Technical and expressive skill
- Narrative clarity through non-verbal means
- Integration of music, movement, and staging

7.1.4. Puppetry, Mask, and Object Theatre



These forms employ non-human performers or symbolic objects as central storytelling devices.

Adjudication Considerations

Assessment should focus on:

- Animation technique and precision
- Symbolic clarity
- Performer–object relationship

7.2. Structural Types

7.2.1. One-Person Show

A one-person show is performed by a single actor who may embody multiple characters, perspectives, or narrative voices.

Adjudication Considerations

Jurors should prioritise:

- Vocal and physical versatility
- Sustained audience engagement
- Narrative and emotional range

7.2.2. Two-Hander

A two-hander centres on two performers whose relationship drives the narrative. The form demands precision, balance, and sustained interaction.

Adjudication Considerations

Evaluation should include:

- Chemistry and listening between performers
- Structural balance of roles
- Emotional and dramatic progression

7.2.3. Ensemble Theatre

Ensemble theatre distributes narrative responsibility across a group rather than a single protagonist. Collaboration and collective storytelling are central.

Adjudication Considerations

Jurors should assess:

- Ensemble cohesion and timing
- Group dynamics and responsiveness
- Balance between individual and collective moments



7.2.4. Repertory and Touring Theatre

These productions are designed for multiple performances, often across varied venues and audiences.

Adjudication Considerations

Assessment should consider:

- Adaptability of performance
- Consistency and sustainability
- Engagement across contexts

7.3. Spatial and Audience Configuration Types

7.3.1 Proscenium Theatre

A conventional stage-audience separation, often used for realist and large-scale productions.

Adjudication Note

Jurors should consider effective use of stage picture, composition, and focus.

7.3.2. Thrust Stage and Theatre-in-the-Round

These configurations place the audience on multiple sides of the performance space, increasing intimacy and spatial awareness.

Adjudication Note

Assessment should prioritise spatial clarity and audience relationship.

7.3.3. Site-Specific Theatre

Site-specific theatre is created for a particular location, where environment is integral to meaning.

Adjudication Considerations

Jurors should assess:

- Integration of site and narrative
- Creative use of environment
- Audience navigation and engagement

7.3.4. Street and Public Space Theatre

Performed in open or non-ticketed environments, often with spontaneous audiences.

Adjudication Considerations

Evaluation should focus on:

- Clarity and accessibility



- Performer presence and adaptability
- Audience engagement strategies

7.4. Why Type Matters in Adjudication

Understanding type ensures that:

- Scale is not confused with quality
- Resource limitations are not mistaken for artistic weakness
- Structural ambition is assessed realistically

A one-person show should not be judged against the spectacle of a large musical, nor should a community production be measured by commercial theatre standards.

KTA Position Statement

The **Kenya Theatre Awards** affirm that recognising theatrical type is essential to equitable adjudication. Productions must be evaluated within the structural, spatial, and organisational realities they intentionally inhabit, ensuring fairness across diverse theatrical practices.

8. GENRES OF THEATRE: NARRATIVE, THEME, AND EMOTIONAL WORLD

Genres of theatre describe the **narrative nature, thematic focus, and emotional experience** a theatrical work creates for its audience. Genre shapes expectation: it signals whether a production seeks to provoke laughter, sorrow, reflection, discomfort, critique, or a complex combination of emotional responses.

Unlike form and type, which describe *how* theatre is made and organised, **genre speaks to what kind of story is being told and how the audience is meant to feel and respond**. Correctly identifying genre is therefore essential to fair adjudication, as it determines the criteria by which narrative success is measured.

For the purposes of the **Kenya Theatre Awards (KTA)**, genres are understood as **interpretive frameworks**, not restrictive labels.

8.1. Classical Genres

8.1.1. Tragedy

Tragedy explores human suffering, moral conflict, loss, and downfall. It often confronts questions of power, fate, responsibility, injustice, and sacrifice. Emotional engagement is central, frequently leading the audience toward reflection, empathy, or catharsis.

Key Characteristics

- Serious thematic focus
- Irreversible consequence or loss
- Moral or existential conflict



- Emotional gravity

Adjudication Considerations

Jurors should assess:

- Emotional and thematic depth
- Narrative inevitability and coherence
- Integrity of tragic trajectory

Tragedy should not be judged by its ability to entertain lightly, but by its capacity to engage meaningfully with suffering and consequence.

8.1.2. Comedy

Comedy seeks to amuse while often exposing human folly, contradiction, and social absurdity. It may be light-hearted or sharply critical, using humour as a tool for insight.

Key Characteristics

- Humour derived from character, situation, or language
- Social observation or critique
- Resolution that restores balance or order

Adjudication Considerations

Evaluation should focus on:

- Effectiveness and clarity of humour
- Timing, rhythm, and delivery
- Insight beneath the laughter

Comedy should not be dismissed as trivial; its success lies in precision, intelligence, and emotional resonance.

8.1.3. Melodrama

Melodrama heightens emotion and moral contrast, often presenting clear distinctions between virtue and wrongdoing. Emotional response is foregrounded over psychological subtlety.

Key Characteristics

- Heightened emotional stakes
- Clear moral positions
- Expressive performance style

Adjudication Considerations

Jurors should assess:



- Consistency of tone
- Emotional clarity
- Intentional use of exaggeration

Melodrama should not be criticised for lack of realism when exaggeration is an intentional stylistic choice.

8.1.4. Farce

Farce is a form of comedy driven by exaggerated situations, misunderstandings, rapid pacing, and physical humour.

Key Characteristics

- Fast-paced action
- Escalating absurdity
- Physical comedy and timing

Adjudication Considerations

Assessment should focus on:

- Precision of execution
- Clarity of structure
- Comedic rhythm and control

8.2. Contemporary and Hybrid Genres

8.2.1. Tragicomedy

Tragicomedy blends humour and sorrow, reflecting the complexity of lived experience where laughter and pain coexist.

Adjudication Considerations

Jurors should assess:

- Balance between comic and tragic elements
- Emotional truthfulness
- Tonal coherence

8.2.2. Political Theatre

Political theatre addresses power, governance, justice, resistance, and civic responsibility. Its primary intent is critical engagement rather than emotional comfort.

Adjudication Considerations

Evaluation should focus on:

- Clarity of political argument



- Theatrical effectiveness of critique
- Ethical handling of subject matter

Political theatre should not be penalised for challenging or unsettling audiences.

8.2.3. Social Realism

Social realism examines lived social conditions such as class, gender, labour, family, faith, and inequality within recognisable contexts.

Adjudication Considerations

Jurors should assess:

- Authenticity of representation
- Depth of social insight
- Narrative and emotional coherence

8.2.4. Psychological Drama

Psychological drama foregrounds inner emotional and mental states, often exploring memory, trauma, desire, and identity.

Adjudication Considerations

Assessment should prioritise:

- Psychological credibility
- Subtext and emotional layering
- Performance precision

8.2.5. Documentary and Testimonial Drama

This genre draws from real events, testimonies, or historical material to present lived experience on stage.

Adjudication Considerations

Jurors should focus on:

- Ethical representation
- Narrative shaping of factual material
- Emotional and intellectual impact

8.2.6. Satire and Dark Comedy

Satire uses humour, irony, and exaggeration to critique social, political, or cultural systems. Dark comedy finds humour in discomfort, contradiction, or taboo subjects.

Adjudication Considerations

Evaluation should assess:



- Sharpness of critique
- Clarity of intention
- Balance between humour and seriousness

8.3 Genre Overlap and Dominance

Many contemporary productions operate across multiple genres. This framework recognises genre overlap as a legitimate artistic strategy.

Adjudication Principle:

Jurors must identify the **dominant genre**, the primary emotional and thematic engine of the work, rather than expecting narrative purity or excluding secondary tones.

8.4. Why Genre Matters in Adjudication

Correctly identifying genre ensures that:

- Emotional intention is not misread as technical failure
- Comedy is not judged as shallow drama
- Tragedy is not penalised for emotional weight
- Political and satirical works are not dismissed as didactic

Genre alignment enables jurors to evaluate **narrative success on its own terms**.

KTA Position Statement

The Kenya Theatre Awards affirm that genre classification is essential to fair and informed adjudication. By recognising the narrative, thematic, and emotional intentions of a production, jurors ensure that theatrical works are assessed according to the stories they seek to tell and the experiences they aim to create.

9. HYBRIDISATION AND INTERSECTIONS IN KENYAN THEATRE

Hybridisation is a defining characteristic of contemporary Kenyan theatre. Most productions cannot be confined to a single form, type, or genre; instead, they operate at intersections shaped by cultural inheritance, artistic innovation, and present-day realities. This hybridity is neither accidental nor indicative of conceptual weakness—it is a deliberate and historically grounded artistic strategy.

Kenyan theatre exists within multiple performance lineages simultaneously: African ritual and storytelling traditions, realist and political theatre, music- and movement-based performance, spoken word, and multimedia experimentation. Hybridisation reflects the lived complexity of Kenyan society, where languages, identities, histories, and artistic influences overlap.

9.1. Understanding Hybrid Theatre Practice

Hybrid theatre integrates two or more of the following:



- **Forms** (e.g. ritual and realism; epic theatre and storytelling)
- **Types** (e.g. ensemble work within a musical structure; solo performance in a site-specific context)
- **Genres** (e.g. tragedy blended with satire; political theatre infused with comedy)

Such integration may occur simultaneously or shift throughout the production. Hybrid works often resist linear categorisation, demanding a more nuanced analytical approach from adjudicators.

9.2. African Continuity and Contemporary Hybridisation

Hybridisation in Kenyan theatre should be understood as **continuity rather than departure**. African performance systems have always embraced integration, of music, movement, narrative, and audience participation. Contemporary hybridity extends this logic into modern contexts, incorporating:

- Urban and youth performance languages
- Contemporary music and spoken word
- Digital and multimedia tools
- Global performance methodologies

Hybrid theatre therefore represents an evolution of African performance logic, not its dilution.

9.3 Common Hybrid Configurations in Kenyan Theatre

While hybridisation is not formulaic, common intersections include:

- Ritual theatre combined with political commentary
- Social realism infused with music and movement
- Documentary material framed through storytelling or physical theatre
- Comedy used to explore tragic or traumatic subject matter
- Spoken word integrated into narrative drama

These configurations require jurors to assess **coherence, clarity, and intentionality**, rather than conformity to inherited models.

9.4. Adjudication Principles for Hybrid Work

When evaluating hybrid productions, jurors should apply the following principles:

- **Identify Dominant Elements**
Determine which form, type, and genre primarily drive the work, even when multiple elements are present.
- **Assess Integration, Not Quantity**
The effectiveness of hybridity lies in how elements interact, not how many are included.
- **Judge Intention Before Execution**
Understand why hybridisation is employed and what it seeks to achieve artistically or politically.



- **Avoid Penalising Complexity**

Complexity and experimentation should not be mistaken for lack of discipline or clarity when they are intentional.

Hybrid works should be assessed on whether their intersecting elements **serve a unified artistic vision**.

9.5. Risks of Misjudgement Without an Intersectional Lens

Without a clear understanding of hybridisation, adjudication risks:

- Misclassifying innovative work
- Penalising culturally grounded performance languages
- Privileging singular, familiar forms
- Mistaking hybridity for inconsistency

This framework explicitly resists such outcomes by providing tools for intersectional analysis.

9.6. Hybridisation and the Future of Kenyan Theatre

Hybridisation will continue to shape Kenyan theatre as artists respond to:

- Changing social and political realities
- Technological advancement
- Global exchange and collaboration
- Evolving audience expectations

The capacity to assess hybrid work fairly is therefore not optional—it is essential to the relevance and credibility of contemporary adjudication.

KTA Position Statement

The **Kenya Theatre Awards** affirm that hybridisation is a legitimate, historically grounded, and artistically rigorous mode of theatre-making in Kenya. Jurors are required to approach hybrid productions with analytical flexibility, cultural awareness, and an intention-led evaluative lens, ensuring that innovation and integration are recognised as strengths rather than anomalies.

10. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK FOR ADJUDICATION (TRI-LENS MODEL)

To ensure fairness, consistency, and cultural sensitivity in adjudication, the **Kenya Theatre Awards (KTA)** adopt a **Tri-Lens Model of Analysis**. This model requires jurors to evaluate every production through **three distinct but interrelated lenses: Form, Type, and Genre**.

The Tri-Lens Model prevents category confusion, reduces subjective bias, and ensures that productions are assessed **on their own artistic terms**, rather than against unrelated standards.

10.1. Purpose of the Tri-Lens Model



The Tri-Lens Model is designed to:

- Separate *how* a work is made from *what* story it tells
- Distinguish artistic intention from execution
- Enable consistent evaluation across diverse theatrical practices
- Support informed discussion and calibration among jurors

By applying the same analytical structure to every production, jurors create a shared evaluative language while respecting artistic diversity.

10.2. The Three Lenses Explained

Lens 1: Form

Guiding Question:
How is the story told?

This lens examines the **production's performance, language, and stylistic approach**.

Jurors should identify:

- The dominant theatrical form or combination of forms
- Performance conventions used (e.g. narration, ritual, realism, distancing)
- Actor–audience relationship
- Use of body, voice, space, rhythm, and symbolism

Key Consideration:

Jurors must assess whether the production **successfully fulfils the intentions and conventions of its chosen form**, not whether it conforms to a different or more familiar style.

Lens 2: Type

Guiding Question:
What kind of theatrical event is this?

This lens focuses on the **structural and organisational configuration** of the production.

Jurors should identify:

- Performance type (e.g. straight play, musical theatre, dance theatre)
- Structural type (e.g. solo, two-hander, ensemble)
- Spatial configuration (e.g. proscenium, site-specific, street theatre)

Key Consideration:

Assessment must account for the **constraints and possibilities inherent in the chosen type**. Scale, resources, and format should inform, not distort, judgment.



Lens 3: Genre

Guiding Question:

What story is being told, and what emotional world is created?

This lens examines the **narrative intent and emotional trajectory** of the work.

Jurors should identify:

- The dominant genre or genres
- Central themes and concerns
- Intended audience response (e.g. reflection, laughter, discomfort, empathy)

Key Consideration:

Jurors must assess narrative effectiveness **within the logic of the genre**, recognising overlap while identifying the dominant emotional engine.

10.3. Applying the Tri-Lens Model in Practice

For every production, jurors should explicitly state:

- **Dominant Form**
- **Primary Type**
- **Core Genre**

Example:

- **Form:** Epic Theatre
- **Type:** Straight Play
- **Genre:** Political Drama

This articulation should precede any evaluative discussion. It establishes a shared understanding and prevents misaligned critique.

10.4 Evaluating Intention and Execution

Once the three lenses are identified, adjudication proceeds in two stages:

1. **Artistic Intention**
 - a. What is the production attempting to do?
 - b. Why has this form, type, and genre been chosen?
2. **Execution and Effectiveness**
 - a. How successfully are these intentions realised?
 - b. Are the chosen methods applied with clarity, discipline, and coherence?



A production may be ambitious in intention but uneven in execution; conversely, it may be modest yet highly effective. The Tri-Lens Model allows jurors to recognise both realities without collapsing one into the other.

10.5. Benefits of the Tri-Lens Model

Consistent use of this framework:

- Prevents penalising culturally grounded or hybrid work
- Reduces subjective comparison between unrelated productions
- Enables constructive, evidence-based jury discussion
- Supports transparency and credibility in final decisions

10.6 Mandatory Use in KTA Adjudication

The Tri-Lens Model is not optional. It is the **standard analytical framework** for all KTA adjudication processes, including:

- Live performance assessment
- Shortlisting discussions
- Final award deliberations

Jurors are expected to explicitly reference the Tri-Lens Model in their discussion and scoring.

KTA Position Statement

The Kenya Theatre Awards affirm that fair and informed adjudication depends on structured analysis. The Tri-Lens Model, examining **Form, Type, and Genre**, provides a rigorous, culturally responsive, and practical framework through which Kenyan theatre can be evaluated with integrity, consistency, and respect for artistic diversity.

11. PRACTITIONER METHODOLOGIES IN THEATRE PRACTICE

Theatre practitioners, artists, theorists, directors, playwrights, and facilitators, shape how theatre is made, understood, and evaluated. Practitioner methodologies influence **forms** (how theatre is performed), **genres** (what stories are told), and **types** (how theatre is organised and experienced).

For adjudication, familiarity with practitioner methodologies enables jurors to:

- Recognise **artistic intention and lineage**
- Assess work **within its chosen tradition or method**
- Avoid misjudging culturally or stylistically specific practices
- Distinguish deliberate stylisation from technical limitation



This section provides **interpretive lenses**, not a hierarchy or requirement for imitation. Inclusion of a practitioner does not imply endorsement of a single aesthetic, nor does it prescribe standards of “good” theatre.

11.1. Classical and Foundational Practitioners

Aristotle

Contribution: Dramatic structure and tragedy

Aristotle’s *Poetics* articulated principles of plot, character, conflict, mimesis, and catharsis, shaping narrative-driven theatre and later realist traditions.

Adjudication Lens

- Coherence of narrative structure
- Cause-and-effect progression
- Emotional and thematic resolution

11.2. Modern and Political Theatre Practitioners

Bertolt Brecht

Contribution: Epic Theatre

Brecht rejected emotional immersion in favour of critical distance, employing narration, episodic structure, and visible stage mechanics to provoke analysis.

Adjudication Lens

- Clarity of political or social argument
- Effectiveness of distancing techniques
- Intellectual engagement over emotional absorption

Augusto Boal

Contribution: Theatre of the Oppressed

Boal transformed audiences into “spect-actors,” using participatory forms (Forum Theatre, Image Theatre) for social dialogue and empowerment.

Adjudication Lens

- Ethical facilitation and audience agency
- Clarity of process and purpose
- Responsiveness to lived experience

11.3. Performance, Ritual, and Postdramatic Thinkers

Jerzy Grotowski



Contribution: Poor Theatre

Grotowski stripped theatre to essentials, actor, audience, space, emphasising rigorous physical and vocal training.

Adjudication Lens

- Performer discipline and presence
- Precision and economy of means
- Actor–audience relationship

Peter Brook

Contribution: The Empty Space

Brook advocated simplicity, immediacy, and intercultural exploration, asserting that any space can become theatre.

Adjudication Lens

- Conceptual clarity
- Use of space and focus
- Cross-cultural sensitivity

11.4. African and Decolonial Practitioners (Critical for Kenya)

Wole Soyinka

Contribution: Ritual, myth, and tragedy

Soyinka integrates Yoruba cosmology, ritual, and political critique, asserting African theatre's philosophical depth.

Adjudication Lens

- Symbolic and mythic coherence
- Cultural specificity
- Integration of ritual and narrative

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o

Contribution: Decolonised theatre and language

Ngũgĩ champions theatre rooted in local language, community participation, and political consciousness.

Adjudication Lens

- Community engagement
- Language choice and accessibility
- Political and cultural intentionality



11.5. Contemporary Practitioners and Ensemble Methodologies

Théâtre du Soleil (Ariane Mnouchkine)

Contribution: Collective and intercultural theatre

Ensemble-led creation blending movement, music, and global traditions.

Adjudication Lens

- Ensemble cohesion
- Collective storytelling
- Visual dramaturgy

Anne Bogart

Contribution: Viewpoints and contemporary composition

Focus on space, tempo, shape, and movement as compositional tools.

Adjudication Lens

- Spatial awareness
- Rhythmic structure
- Ensemble responsiveness

11.6. Practitioner-Specific Methodologies (Selected Profiles)

Steven Berkoff

Aims and Method

Rejection of naturalism in favour of heightened, physical, symbolic theatre; extreme physicality; poetic, muscular language; minimalist staging.

Adjudication Considerations

- Physical precision and discipline
- Clarity of symbolic gesture
- Ensemble synchronisation

Berkoff-influenced work should not be judged by naturalistic standards.

Graeae Theatre Company

Aims and Method

Disability-led practice integrating access (sign language, captioning, audio description) as an aesthetic choice.

Adjudication Considerations



- Integration of access into performance language
 - Authentic representation and agency
 - Innovation and clarity across modes
- Accessibility is a creative driver, not a limitation.*

Kneehigh

Aims and Method

Ensemble-led devising; playfulness; music as narrative engine; mythic storytelling; visual imagination.

Adjudication Considerations

- Ensemble cohesion and trust
- Integration of music and movement
- Emotional generosity and clarity

Katie Mitchell

Aims and Method

Rigorous realism, feminist perspectives, and live cinema on stage; meticulous actor tasks and technical integration.

Adjudication Considerations

- Precision of detail and performance tasks
- Cohesion between live action and mediated imagery
- Psychological and thematic clarity

11.7. Using Practitioner Methodologies in Adjudication

When practitioner influence is evident, jurors should identify:

1. **Primary practitioner influence(s)** (if any)
2. **Methodological clarity** - how clearly the approach is applied
3. **Intentional deviation** - whether departures are purposeful and effective

Practitioner awareness should **inform interpretation**, not constrain innovation. Kenyan theatre frequently blends multiple methodologies; such hybridity should be assessed for coherence and intention.

KTA Position Statement

The **Kenya Theatre Awards** recognise theatre practitioners as intellectual and artistic architects of performance traditions. Informed understanding of practitioner methodologies ensures adjudication that is fair, culturally grounded, and artistically rigorous, honouring both African performance systems and global theatre discourse.



12. IMPLICATIONS FOR JURY PRACTICE AND DECISION-MAKING

The effectiveness of the Kenya Theatre Awards depends not only on the quality of theatrical work presented, but on the rigour, fairness, and consistency of the adjudication process. This framework establishes clear implications for how jurors observe, analyse, discuss, and evaluate productions.

For the **Kenya Theatre Awards (KTA)**, adjudication is understood as an **intellectual, cultural, and ethical responsibility**, not merely a matter of personal preference or taste.

12.1. From Opinion-Based Judgement to Analytical Evaluation

Jurors are required to move beyond subjective reactions such as:

- “I liked it / I didn’t like it”
- “It worked for me / it didn’t work for me”

Instead, all evaluative statements must be grounded in:

- Identified **Form, Type, and Genre**
- Stated **artistic intention**
- Observable **execution and effectiveness**

This shift ensures that disagreement among jurors becomes **analytical rather than personal**, and that final decisions can be justified transparently.

12.2. Intention Before Execution

A central principle of this framework is the distinction between **intention** and **execution**.

Jurors must first ask:

- What is the production attempting to do?
- Why has this form, type, and genre been chosen?

Only after intention is clearly identified should jurors assess:

- How effectively the intention is realised
- Where execution is strong, uneven, or incomplete

This approach prevents productions from being penalised for **what they are not trying to be**, and instead evaluates them on the basis of their declared artistic terms.

12.3. Contextual and Culturally Responsive Assessment

Jurors are expected to assess work within its:

- Cultural context



- Performance tradition
- Language choice
- Resource and scale realities

Culturally grounded performance, particularly work rooted in African theatre traditions, must not be misinterpreted as informal, underdeveloped, or experimental simply because it does not align with Western realist conventions.

Cultural specificity is to be recognised as **artistic strength**, not limitation.

12.4. Managing Hybrid and Non-Linear Work

Given the prevalence of hybridisation in Kenyan theatre, jurors must:

- Identify dominant elements rather than expecting purity
- Evaluate coherence and integration, not uniformity
- Recognise intentional complexity

Hybrid work should never be dismissed for being “hard to classify.” Difficulty in classification often signals innovation rather than failure.

12.5. Equity Across Scale, Resources, and Production Contexts

Jurors must not conflate:

- Budget with quality
- Scale with artistic merit
- Technical polish with conceptual depth

A small-scale, community-based, or minimalist production can demonstrate exceptional artistry, just as a large-scale production can fall short conceptually. Equity in adjudication requires sensitivity to **structural realities without lowering artistic standards**.

12.6 Evidence-Based Jury Deliberation

During deliberations, jurors are expected to:

- Reference the Tri-Lens Model explicitly
- Cite specific moments, choices, or patterns in the work
- Avoid generalisations unsupported by observation

Healthy disagreement is expected and valued, but final decisions must emerge from **reasoned analysis**, not consensus-driven compromise or dominant voices.

12.7. Consistency and Calibration Among Jurors



To ensure fairness:

- Jurors must apply the same analytical framework to all productions
- Calibration discussions should precede and inform scoring
- Personal aesthetic preference must not override shared criteria

This framework enables jurors with different backgrounds and tastes to evaluate work **through a common analytical language**.

12.8. Ethical Responsibility of the Juror

Jurors occupy positions of trust and influence within the theatre ecosystem. Ethical adjudication requires:

- Respect for artists and audiences
- Awareness of power dynamics
- Responsibility in public commentary and feedback

Judgement must be rigorous yet respectful, critical yet constructive.

KTA Position Statement

The Kenya Theatre Awards affirm that jury practice must be analytical, culturally responsive, and ethically grounded. By adhering to this framework, jurors ensure that decisions are transparent, defensible, and aligned with the artistic diversity and integrity of Kenyan theatre.

13. ALIGNMENT WITH KENYA THEATRE AWARDS CATEGORIES

For an awards system to remain credible and equitable, its categories must be clearly aligned with recognised theatrical **forms, types, genres, and practitioner methodologies**. Misalignment between categories and practice risks excluding innovative work, misclassifying productions, or rewarding familiarity over intention and excellence.

This framework provides a structured basis for aligning existing and future award categories within the **Kenya Theatre Awards (KTA)** to the realities of Kenyan theatre practice.

13.1. Principles for Category Alignment

All KTA categories should adhere to the following principles:

- **Form-Neutral Evaluation**
Categories should not implicitly privilege a single theatrical form (e.g. realism) unless explicitly stated.
- **Type-Aware Judging**
Structural differences (solo, ensemble, musical, site-specific) must be acknowledged within category criteria.



- **Genre-Responsive Assessment**

Narrative intent and emotional world should guide evaluation, not personal taste or tonal preference.

- **Inclusivity of Hybrid Practice**

Categories must allow for hybrid and interdisciplinary work without forcing misclassification.

13.2. Mapping Core Production Categories

The following illustrates how productions can be aligned analytically—without restricting artistic freedom:

Category Area	Analytical Alignment
Best Production	Any form, any type, any genre — assessed through the Tri-Lens Model
Best New Work / Original Script	Genre and form identified; originality assessed in context
Best Adaptation	Form and genre transformation prioritised over fidelity
Best Ensemble	Ensemble type; form-neutral
Best One-Person Show	Solo type; form- and genre-neutral
Best Musical Theatre Production	Musical type; genre identified separately
Best Physical / Movement-Based Work	Physical form; any type or genre

This approach allows diverse work to compete fairly within shared evaluative logic.

13.3. Alignment of Performance Categories

Performance awards should be aligned to **acting and performance methodologies**, not a single acting tradition.

Category	Framework Alignment
Best Actor / Actress	Assessed within dominant form and acting methodology
Best Supporting Performance	Role function within type and genre



Best Ensemble Performance	Collective execution within ensemble type
Best Physical Performance	Embodiment and movement-based form

Adjudication Note:

Stanislavskian realism must not be treated as the default acting standard across all categories.

13.4. Alignment of Design and Technical Categories

Design categories should assess **conceptual coherence within form and genre**, not technical excess.

Category	Analytical Focus
Best Set Design	Relationship to form, space, and narrative
Best Costume Design	Character, symbolism, cultural logic
Best Lighting Design	Mood, rhythm, and genre support
Best Sound / Music Design	Integration with form and narrative
Best Hair & Make-Up Design	Character identity, progression, and coherence

Design excellence must be evaluated **contextually**, particularly in minimalist or ritual-based work.

13.5. Writing, Direction, and Conceptual Categories

Creative leadership categories should be assessed through **intentionality and coherence**, not scale.

Category	Framework Focus
Best Director	Alignment of form, type, and genre
Best Playwright	Narrative, theme, and genre clarity
Best Adaptation	Transformational vision
Best Concept / Vision	Integration of artistic elements

13.6. Recognising and Supporting Emerging Forms

This framework identifies areas where **future category development** may be appropriate, including:



- Physical and Movement-Based Theatre
- Documentary and Verbatim Theatre
- African Traditional / Ritual Performance
- Site-Specific and Immersive Theatre
- Disability-Led and Accessible Performance
- Youth and Educational Theatre

The inclusion of such categories should reflect **observed practice**, not imported models.

13.7. Avoiding Category-Based Bias

Jurors must avoid:

- Assuming prestige based on category
- Treating certain categories as “minor” or “secondary”
- Penalising work that does not fit neatly into legacy structures

All categories should be approached with **equal analytical seriousness**.

KTA Position Statement

The Kenya Theatre Awards affirm that award categories must evolve in response to theatre practice. By aligning categories with recognised forms, types, genres, and practitioner methodologies, KTA ensures that excellence is recognised fairly, innovation is encouraged, and Kenyan theatre is represented in its full artistic diversity.

14. EQUITY, CULTURAL SENSITIVITY, AND DECOLONISED ASSESSMENT

Equitable adjudication in theatre requires more than neutrality; it requires **active awareness of historical, cultural, and structural imbalances** that shape how artistic work is perceived and valued. In the Kenyan context, theatre practice exists within a legacy of colonial aesthetics, linguistic hierarchies, and imported evaluative standards that have historically marginalised African performance systems.

The **Kenya Theatre Awards (KTA)** therefore commit to an adjudication philosophy that is **culturally sensitive, equity-driven, and consciously decolonised**.

14.1. Understanding Decolonised Assessment

Decolonised assessment does not reject global theatre knowledge; rather, it **resists the uncritical application of Eurocentric norms as universal standards**. It recognises that theatrical excellence is culturally situated and that African performance traditions possess complete aesthetic, philosophical, and technical systems of their own.

Decolonised adjudication requires jurors to:

- Question inherited assumptions about “quality” and “professionalism”



- Recognise African performance logics as valid and rigorous
- Evaluate work within its cultural and historical lineage

14.2. Cultural Sensitivity in Performance Evaluation

Cultural sensitivity involves recognising that:

- Meaning is often carried through **embodiment, rhythm, and symbol**, not text alone
- Audience participation and collective response are legitimate performance strategies
- Silence, repetition, and non-linearity may be culturally intentional
- Performance may prioritise **function** (education, healing, resistance) over spectacle

Jurors must therefore avoid misreading culturally grounded choices as technical weakness or lack of sophistication.

14.3. Language Equity and Linguistic Justice

Kenyan theatre is multilingual by nature, employing English, Kiswahili, Sheng, indigenous languages, and hybrid registers. Language choice is often a deliberate artistic, political, and accessibility decision.

Adjudication Principles

- Language must not disadvantage a production
- Comprehension may be achieved through context, embodiment, and tone
- Translation is not a prerequisite for legitimacy
- Linguistic specificity enhances authenticity and cultural depth

Jurors are expected to approach multilingual work with openness and interpretive generosity.

14.4. Equity Across Scale, Resources, and Access

Decolonised assessment requires sensitivity to structural realities, including:

- Access to funding and infrastructure
- Geographic location and venue type
- Training pathways and institutional support

Equity does **not** mean lowering standards; it means:

- Evaluating ambition relative to available resources
- Distinguishing artistic limitation from structural constraint
- Recognising ingenuity and clarity within minimalist practice

A small-scale or community-based production must be judged with the same seriousness as a large institutional one.



14.5. Disability, Access, and Inclusive Practice

Inclusive and disability-led theatre practices expand the language of performance rather than diminish it. Accessibility tools such as sign language, captioning, audio description, and alternative sensory modes can function as **aesthetic and narrative choices**.

Adjudication Principles

- Accessibility is not a technical add-on
- Disability-led narratives must be assessed for agency and authenticity
- Integrated access should be evaluated as part of artistic vision

Jurors must avoid viewing accessibility as a limitation or special consideration.

14.6. Gender, Identity, and Representation

Theatre often engages with issues of gender, sexuality, identity, and power. Jurors must approach such work with:

- Ethical sensitivity
- Awareness of social context
- Respect for diverse lived experiences

Discomfort or challenge does not constitute artistic failure. Work that interrogates social norms must be evaluated on clarity, integrity, and intentionality.

14.7. Avoiding Systemic Bias in Adjudication

Jurors must actively guard against:

- Privileging Western realism as the default standard
- Valuing polish over meaning
- Equating institutional backing with artistic merit
- Penalising experimentation or cultural specificity

Bias is often subtle and unconscious; this framework exists to counteract it through structure, language, and reflection.

KTA Position Statement

The Kenya Theatre Awards affirm that equitable adjudication requires cultural awareness, ethical responsibility, and deliberate decolonisation of assessment practices. By recognising diverse performance systems, languages, identities, and access realities, KTA ensures that Kenyan theatre is evaluated with fairness, dignity, and respect for its full artistic spectrum.

15. JURY TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING



The integrity and credibility of the Kenya Theatre Awards depend on the preparedness, consistency, and reflective practice of its jurors. Jury training is therefore not an optional orientation activity, but a **core institutional responsibility** that sustains fair, informed, and culturally responsive adjudication over time.

The **Kenya Theatre Awards (KTA)** commit to a structured and continuous approach to jury training and capacity building, aligned with the principles and analytical tools outlined in this framework.

15.1. Mandatory Jury Induction

All jurors, regardless of prior experience, must undergo a **mandatory induction programme** before participating in adjudication.

The induction shall include:

- Guided study of this framework document
- Shared understanding of **Form, Type, and Genre** distinctions
- Practical application of the **Tri-Lens Model** using sample productions
- Discussion of equity, cultural sensitivity, and decolonised assessment
- Clarification of ethical responsibilities and adjudication conduct

Induction ensures that all jurors begin the adjudication process with a **common analytical language and evaluative baseline**.

15.2. Calibration and Alignment Sessions

To maintain consistency across diverse juries and production contexts, KTA shall facilitate **calibration sessions** at key stages of the adjudication process.

Calibration activities may include:

- Group discussion of anonymised case studies
- Comparison of scoring rationales
- Clarification of category alignment and criteria
- Resolution of definitional or methodological ambiguities

Calibration strengthens collective judgement while preserving independent analysis.

15.3. Ongoing Professional Development

Jury capacity building is an ongoing process. KTA shall support continued learning through:

- Annual workshops or seminars on emerging theatre practices
- Exposure to contemporary Kenyan and African performance trends
- Engagement with global adjudication standards and discourse
- Reflection on previous adjudication cycles



This approach ensures that jurors remain **current, adaptable, and critically engaged**.

15.4. Diversity and Representation in Jury Composition

Capacity building also involves **intentional jury composition**. KTA shall strive for juries that reflect:

- Diversity of theatrical practice (performance, design, writing, directing)
- Cultural and linguistic breadth
- Gender balance and generational representation
- Inclusion of practitioners experienced in community, educational, and experimental theatre

Diverse juries enhance interpretive depth and reduce systemic bias.

15.5. Documentation and Knowledge Transfer

To ensure institutional memory and continuity:

- Jury training materials shall be documented and updated
- Key adjudication insights may inform future revisions of this framework
- Outgoing jurors may contribute reflective feedback for incoming panels

This process positions the framework as a **living document**, responsive to evolving practice.

15.6. Accountability and Ethical Reinforcement

Training shall reinforce ethical standards, including:

- Confidentiality of deliberations
- Respectful discourse and dissent
- Avoidance of conflicts of interest
- Responsibility in public commentary

Jurors are expected to uphold the values of KTA as representatives of the national theatre ecosystem.

KTA Position Statement

The Kenya Theatre Awards affirm that robust jury training and capacity building are essential to fair and credible adjudication. By investing in structured induction, calibration, and continuous learning, KTA ensures that jurors are equipped to evaluate Kenyan theatre with intellectual rigour, cultural awareness, and ethical responsibility.

16. CONCLUSION: TOWARDS A NATIONAL THEATRE CANON

This framework affirms that theatre in Kenya is not an emerging or peripheral practice, but a **fully realised artistic, cultural, and intellectual tradition**. Kenyan theatre encompasses ritual and realism, community



and institution, memory and innovation, local language and global exchange. Its richness lies not in uniformity, but in diversity, hybridity, and purposeful evolution.

By articulating clear distinctions between **form, type, genre, and practitioner methodology**, this document provides a shared analytical language through which Kenyan theatre can be understood, evaluated, and celebrated with fairness and rigour. It moves adjudication away from subjective preference and inherited bias toward **intention-led, context-aware, and culturally responsive assessment**.

For the **Kenya Theatre Awards (KTA)**, the adoption of this framework represents a deliberate shift in role and responsibility. KTA is positioned not only as an awards platform, but as a **custodian of theatrical knowledge, critical discourse, and artistic integrity** within Kenya and the wider African theatre ecosystem.

This framework does not seek to fix Kenyan theatre into rigid definitions or closed categories. Instead, it establishes principles that allow practice to grow, adapt, and challenge itself while remaining legible and fairly assessed. It recognises that a national theatre canon is not a static list of approved works or styles, but a **living, evolving body of practice shaped by artists, audiences, history, and society**.

Through structured adjudication, ethical responsibility, and ongoing jury capacity building, this document contributes to the long-term development of Kenyan theatre as both **art and heritage**. It ensures that excellence is recognised across scales, languages, identities, and performance traditions, and that innovation is understood as continuity rather than rupture.

In adopting this framework, the Kenya Theatre Awards affirm a commitment to:

- Fairness grounded in clarity and research
- Cultural confidence rooted in African performance systems
- Openness to hybridity, experimentation, and change
- The preservation and evolution of Kenya's theatrical legacy

This is not merely an adjudication guide. It is a **statement of intent**—towards a national theatre canon that is inclusive, rigorous, self-aware, and boldly Kenyan.

17. GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

Adjudication

The structured process of evaluating theatrical work using agreed analytical criteria rather than personal preference.

African Theatre

Performance systems rooted in African cultural traditions that integrate ritual, music, movement, storytelling, and communal participation.

Artistic Intention

The purpose, vision, and aims guiding the creative choices of a production.



Audience Relationship

The way a performance engages, involves, or positions the audience (e.g. observers, participants, witnesses).

Calibration

A process through which jurors align understanding, criteria, and evaluative standards to ensure consistency.

Canon

A body of recognised work, ideas, and practices that collectively represent a theatrical tradition; understood here as evolving, not fixed.

Community Theatre

Theatre created with or for a specific community, often addressing local issues and employing participatory methods.

Cultural Specificity

Artistic choices grounded in particular cultural, linguistic, or social contexts.

Decolonised Assessment

An evaluative approach that resists imposing Eurocentric standards as universal and recognises culturally grounded performance systems as complete and valid.

Dominant Element

The primary form, type, or genre driving a production when multiple elements are present.

Embodiment

The use of the body as a central expressive tool in performance.

Ensemble Theatre

A performance structure where storytelling responsibility is shared among a group rather than centred on a single protagonist.

Execution

The effectiveness with which artistic intention is realised in performance.

Form (of Theatre)

The method, style, and performance conventions through which theatre is created and presented.

Key question: How is the story told?

Genre (of Theatre)

The narrative, thematic focus, and emotional world of a production.

Key question: What kind of story is being told, and how should the audience feel?

Hybridisation

The intentional blending of multiple forms, types, or genres within a single production.



Intention-Led Assessment

An adjudication approach that evaluates a production based on what it seeks to achieve before judging effectiveness.

Narrative World

The thematic and emotional universe constructed by a production.

Oral Performance

Storytelling traditions relying on voice, rhythm, memory, and audience interaction rather than written text.

Performance Language

The combined use of voice, body, space, rhythm, and symbol to communicate meaning on stage.

Practitioner Methodology

A recognised approach to theatre-making associated with a practitioner or tradition that informs style, process, and intention.

Realism

A theatrical form that seeks to represent life as it appears, emphasising psychological credibility and natural behaviour.

Ritual Theatre

Performance rooted in ceremonial practice, symbolic action, and communal meaning rather than linear narrative.

Scale

The size and resource level of a production; not a measure of artistic quality.

Site-Specific Theatre

Theatre created for and inseparable from a particular location.

Social Realism

A genre focusing on lived social conditions such as class, family, labour, and inequality.

Structural Type

The organisational format of a production (e.g. solo, ensemble, two-hander).

Tri-Lens Model

The KTA analytical framework requiring assessment of **Form, Type, and Genre** for every production.

Type (of Theatre)

The format, scale, or organisational structure of a theatrical event.

Key question: What kind of theatrical production is this?

Verbatim / Documentary Theatre

Theatre created from real testimonies, interviews, or factual material.



Glossary Use Note (For Jurors)

This glossary defines how terms are used **within the Kenya Theatre Awards framework**. Jurors are expected to apply these definitions consistently during adjudication, discussion, and scoring.

18. BIBLIOGRAPHY & SUGGESTED READING

Foundational Dramatic Theory

- **Aristotle. *Poetics*.**
Core reference on tragedy, narrative structure, mimesis, and catharsis.
- **Konstantin Stanislavski. *An Actor Prepares*.**
Foundational text on psychological realism, objectives, and truthful behaviour.

Modern & Political Theatre

- **Bertolt Brecht. *Brecht on Theatre*.**
Key essays on Epic Theatre, critical distance, and political engagement.
- **Augusto Boal. *Theatre of the Oppressed*.**
Introduces participatory theatre and audience-as-agent methodologies.

Performance, Space, and Postdramatic Thinking

- **Peter Brook. *The Empty Space*.**
Clear, accessible reflections on immediacy, space, and intercultural practice.
- **Jerzy Grotowski. *Towards a Poor Theatre*.**
Actor-centred performance, discipline, and presence.
- **Hans-Thies Lehmann. *Postdramatic Theatre*.**
Overview of non-linear, contemporary performance forms.

African Theatre & Decolonial Perspectives

- **Wole Soyinka. *Myth, Literature and the African World*.**
African ritual, tragedy, and cosmology in performance.
- **Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. *Decolonising the Mind*.**
Language, culture, and resistance in African artistic practice.
- **Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. *Theatre of the Oppressed and African Theatre (selected essays)*.**
Community, language, and participatory performance in African contexts.



Contemporary Practice & Methodologies

- **Anne Bogart. *A Director Prepares*.**
Viewpoints, composition, and contemporary ensemble practice.
- **Katie Mitchell. *The Director's Craft*.**
Precision, realism, and integration of live cinema.
- **Graeae Theatre Company. *Ramps on the Moon* (project documentation).**
Accessibility as aesthetic practice.

Adjudication, Criticism, and Evaluation

- **Michael Billington. *State of the Nation*.**
Theatre criticism, context, and evaluative language.
- **International Theatre Institute. Selected papers on performance diversity and evaluation.**

Recommended Use for Jurors

Jurors are **not required** to read all listed texts. The bibliography serves to:

- Support shared terminology and concepts
- Provide reference points during calibration
- Encourage informed, reflective adjudication

Priority reading for jurors:

1. Aristotle – *Poetics* (selected sections)
2. Stanislavski – *An Actor Prepares* (objectives & action)
3. Brecht – *Brecht on Theatre*
4. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o – *Decolonising the Mind*
5. Peter Brook – *The Empty Space*