

Theatre BC's 20th Annual Canadian National Playwriting Competition Compiled Jurors' Remarks for Winners & Finalists

Full Length Winner (\$1000 Cash Award)

"The Death of Sir Arthur Currie" by Jeff Pitcher, North Vancouver, BC

Synopsis:

The Death of Sir Arthur Currie is based on the trial of Sir Arthur Currie, commander of the Canadian Expeditionary Force during World War 1 when he sued the owner of a small town newspaper in Ontario for libel in 1928 and his subsequent death.

Jurors' comments included:

"...great jumps between settings and moments...the writer keeps this story on a very tight rope ...excellent characters...Arthur Currie is contradictory and complex...intriguing look at an important moment in Canadian history....sparks debate on current issues "

"...This play kept me hanging on! Good voice for characters – true, swift and moving dialogue. ...drive throughout ... balance between historical and theatrical kept me engaged."

"Wonderfully written...all characters are believable... I like going from the courtroom back to the war... exciting to read...lots of energy and the energy never lets up."

One Act Winner (\$750 Western Canada Theatre Cash Award)

"The Big Polka Dot" by Joel Janisse, Windsor, ON

Synopsis:

Ivan has written a play satirizing the new religion de jour, Polka Dotology. It is the hit of the New York Fringe and Ivan and the lead actor Scott "Skinny" Ridowski are approached about adapting it for Hollywood. The catch is, they must meet with Polka Dotology's religious head (or is it cult leader) first.

Jurors' comments included:

"Hilarious, absurd story, exploring truly scary power of belief and righteousness...laugh-out-loud moments throughout....tight piece of theatre that is more than ready for an audience."

"Interesting characters, original idea and perspective...good drive, dialogue – witty humor...plot twists - love it!"

Special Merit Winner (\$500 City of Kamloops Cash Award)

"Pox" by Harold Rhenisch, Campbell River, BC

Synopsis:

Two incorrigible gamblers from 1871 return to the grasslands to settle a bet, only to reenact (and bungle) a crime that saw six Shuswap girls mysteriously dead during a treaty negotiation. To enliven their bet, the gamblers exchange roles halfway through.

Jurors' comments included:

"Good humor - poetic text....Really liked "walk in Shuswap shoes"...love to see it on its feet...."

"Theatricality inherent in the character choices...kudos for creating a truly west-coast story... succeeds in maintaining a dizzying sense of time ...conversations unfold in unexpected ways, sprinkled with thoughtful and frequently contradictory postures on conquest history and consequence...a challenging piece of acting and stagecraft for producers on any level..."

"This is an amazing play...very clever and thought-provoking material...a twist in characters keeps you on your toes..."

FINALISTS (alphabetical order by title)

"A Dying Family Tradition" by Dianne Lococo, Toronto, ON

Synopsis:

Cadence arrives home from her mother's funeral. She is all alone in the world—until her dead mother appears. Then her dead father. Then an Australian bashes into Cadence's home and life, insisting that she is Cadence's long-lost sister. A mean yogi further disrupts the family by staking claim to Cadence's inheritance. People die. It's a family tradition.

Jurors' comments included:

"Dark humor captures interest and a sense of "what happens next?" ...dynamic relationships...very funny"

"The characters are fun. One set. No scene changes. Fun ending."

"Funny and fresh...great stage tricks...script is tight enough to deserve a home on a regional mainstage... funniest character in this year's competition: Melody, the man-sized Australian boor."

"A Year of Winter" by Scott Sharplin, Edmonton, AB

Synopsis:

A brilliant artistic partnership between a painter and her schizophrenic friend becomes strained when financial success threatens their intricately constructed private world.

Jurors' comments included:

"...original relationship...dialogue is well-written...poetic text. Lovely dark play."

"...wildly inventive dialogue that takes the audience along for the (ride)...surprising, engrossing – masterful build to the climax...resonant images....impressive psychological thriller."

"A very thought-provoking play...the characters are quirky and different....dialogue flows...the ending leaves you wanting more."

"Dream for Upirngaq" by Tanya M. Gadsby, Victoria, BC

Synopsis:

In a time long before Europeans arrived in the north, bleak starvation has gripped a small family of Inuit living on the land. The youth in the family are losing faith in the traditional ways while their elders still tell the old stories and believe the starvation will pass. When four young lovers become lost on the tundra at night, they fall prey to the whims of the gods and spirit world. *Dream for Upirngaq* follows the basic plot of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, but emphasizes the rich culture and traditions of the Inuit.

Jurors' comments included:

"Interesting-original adaptation....very beautiful Inuit story...beautiful language throughout"

"Effortless and beautiful fusion of Inuit culture and Elizabethan comedy...the play takes us to a specific Canadian place but the setting is exploited for all its magic and whimsy....."