

TEST OF EFFECTIVE ADJUDICATING
by Arthur Houle
("C" Answers by Scott McBride Smith)

For each number please circle the letter ("A," "B," or "C") that you feel is the most effective adjudication strategy:

- A.** Show a desire to help by your friendly, constructive tone.

B. The student is an affront to your long years of education and professionalism. Express your annoyance and frustration with the performance.

C. Let the student know that you are not qualified to judge and do not know the repertoire by confining your comments exclusively to student's appearance ("You look so cute in your white dress") and the general benefits of music study.
- A.** Focus on how to correct deficiencies in a positive way.

B. See if you can assign whose fault it is -- the teacher? Student? A meddling parent? Other? The problem will never be solved until we know who to blame!

C. Include a wordy paragraph on how you imagine a famous concert artist might play this piece. Be sure to include specifics that an 11-year old student will find impossible to read or accomplish.
- A.** Avoid comparisons with other students or siblings.

B. Make your point by relating the student's shortcomings to other superior performances by better students (preferably by name).

C. Tell the student how your internationally renowned teacher, Madame [fill in the blank] at the world famous music school of [blank] told you how to play this piece. Remember, you are the world's greatest authority on this and you have an obligation to share your wisdom at length. Naturally, your ideas are far superior to anyone else's.
- A.** Identify specific issues that should be addressed, along with suggestions on relevant effective practice techniques.

B. Don't risk alienating the student with burdensome advice. Keep it general. Better they don't know why you rated them the way you did (they could never handle it!). Say things like "needs improvement" and just leave it at that.

- C.** Suggest that a multi-year course of study with you is the only possible recourse for improvement.
5. **A.** Compliment the person *and* the performance, but critique *only* the performance.
B. When criticizing, speak to the person playing, rather than the problem. Say things like, "Why do you go so fast when it's clearly marked 'Adagio'?"
C. Some people should never study piano. It is your job to let students know about this.
6. **A.** Start and finish your comments by praising everything that is good about the performance. Address the areas for improvement with a caring, supportive tone (a little humor may help).
B. These students will NEVER learn if you coddle them. Keep it deadly serious and let them know they have disappointed EVERYONE! Zero right in on the mistakes, nail every one of the them (even the smallest mistakes need correcting!), and, above all, keep it personal! Bad students lower the whole profession and make their teachers and parents look bad!
C. Why bother to comment? You are above this sort of mundane discourse and besides, no one can read your writing.
7. **A.** Regardless of your preferences, respect the way you have been asked to adjudicate.
B. If you don't like the adjudication form, do it YOUR way - it's better!
C. The competition organizers have some nerve giving you a form in the first place. Who in the heck do they think they are? Let them know you feel this way.
8. **A.** Be as objective and open-minded about interpretation as you reasonably can.
B. If you have special knowledge based on intensive research, wear it on you sleeve and let them know that YOU know the one true way it should be done! They'll respect you more for it.
C. See 3C above.