

A JUDGE'S PERSPECTIVE

USING EMPOWERING LANGUAGE TO UNDERSTAND AN ADCRG'S ROLE

Irish dance judges (ADCRG's) are dedicated individuals who have a vested interest in the success of all Irish dancers. At each competition, judges are tasked with the difficult job of quickly evaluating a brief performance by each dancer within a subset of dancers, and then ranking the performances based on what they observed.

Important note: judges are ranking the performance, not ranking the people.

Sometimes a dancer may feel like saying "this judge tends to score me really low, therefore this judge doesn't like me." There is an inherent flaw in that line of thinking. First and foremost, the judge is not evaluating the dancer as a person; the judge is evaluating that dancer's performance on that particular day, as compared to that particular subset of dancers. Word choices may seem like mere nuance. However, words have power.

Dancers are empowered when a conscious effort is made to use objective word choices. Here's an example:

Instead of a dancer saying, "This judge tanked me, he really doesn't like me at all."

Try saying, "My scores from this judge were really low in this competition, there must be something he was looking for that I didn't deliver well on this stage today."

Choosing to use objective language demonstrates a sense of respect to the judges, and respect to the dancers in the competition (including yourself!!). It is an important aspect of good sportsmanship.

Additionally, choosing to use objective language empowers a dancer to focus on the specific attributes of their dance performance, and to consider tangible goals for improving that performance.

Some judges offer comments on score sheets at a feis, others don't. However, judging trends are usually observable over time. Judges are human, and each judge tends to have certain "must see" skills that they are looking to reward in competition, above the usual important basic technique and skills of Irish dancing. For example, dancing high on toes (i.e. - on the ball of the foot, heels off the ground) and dancing with good extension (i.e. - straight legs) are two of the many basic skills that are an important part of any Irish dance performance. However, one judge may look more critically at one of those skills than another, and will rank performances accordingly.

One of the training tools used in the Teelin Champ Program is to encourage dancers to practice with intention for specific attributes of their dancing by considering who will be watching their competitive performance. Leading up to major championship events, printed pictures are hung in the studio of the judges who will be at the upcoming event. On the back of each judge's picture, some of the dance attributes that judge has a history of rewarding in competition are listed, such as foot placement, lift, performance quality, etc. Dancers are told that these are the techniques they should focus on perfecting when they are in front of those particular judges, because that will give the judge an opportunity to reward the dancer for demonstrating those skills well. (Hint: the pictures are strategically rotated to ensure that the dancers practice with intention for perfecting ALL of the attributes that are so important in Irish dancing. It's a great training tool!)

Focus on the task of dancing, and always strive for improvement. Feis well, and enjoy the journey!