



PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAL 2016 Preselection Report

Preselection Jury:

Glynis Beukes-Kapa (Namibia), Jan-Willem Bult (Netherlands), Alvaro Ceppi (Chile), Metka Dedakovich (Slovenia), Patricia Ellingson (Canada), Frederik Hansen (Denmark), David Kleeman (USA), Sandra Le Blanc-Marissal (Germany), Roziyah Naam (Malaysia), Bernadette O'Mahoney (Australia), Alison Stewart (United Kingdom), Nils Stokke (Norway)

REPORT ON CATEGORY 11-15 Non-Fiction

by David Kleeman, USA

The 11 – 15 Non-Fiction category was heavily populated with tough, issue-oriented entries. Self-discovery is a universal adolescent theme, and the struggle of teens to find themselves is always present at the festival. With the PRIX JEUNESSE 2016 theme of “Identity,” however, combined with world events of the past two years, we saw a striking selection of stories around migration and youth refugees.

Some dealt with the journey – how does a family decide it must abandon its home – everyone and everything a child has known since birth – and what do they encounter as they seek a new, better life? Some explored the challenge of settling into a new country – teens already feel like a “fish out of water” and immigration amplifies that. How do you maintain traditions while also adopting new ways? Some looked at migration from the perspective of teens born in a country now receiving migrants.

Some of these stories were heartbreaking – for example, an 11-year-old placed onto a boat by his parents because circumstances and economics only allowed one family member to escape. At the same time, there were moments of enormous triumph, resilience, and strength. Further, we saw true cultural exchanges, where teens came to better understand each other's.

Like every other category at PRIX JEUNESSE 2016, we were only able to put forward about one in five of the entries. So, we looked for a strong feeling of authenticity. In some stories, we felt the hand of an adult director shaping the narrative. In others, the protagonist's parent or another adult within the story became too central or manipulative.

Fortunately, young people's lives aren't all struggle. We witnessed humor, substantial physical challenges overcome, and intellectual discoveries. We saw a show that succeeded at PRIX JEUNESSE as a preschool series ten years ago, brought back with the same characters, format, charm and humor, its content "aged up" for teens that loved the series as toddlers.

We saw yet another Dutch show about a transgendered teen, but this one featured a unique and extraordinary scene: two friends – one born male but becoming female and the other vice versa – sharing experiences that only each other could truly understand. On another aspect of adolescent development, we passed on to the finals the most visually-explicit entry ever on female anatomy and puberty; it will shock, but indisputably gives girls and boys essential information without embarrassment or sensationalism.

We were especially pleased to find several programs in which older people shared their personal histories, using innovative narrative or visualization. We are losing a generation that shaped the world for today's teens, and it's important to capture those stories for the next generation, so that we remember, not repeat, the past (as Santayana warned).

To be honest and fair, this was not the strongest category of entries to PRIX JEUNESSE 2016. It's a very difficult audience to reach. Worldwide, teens are shifting to social and sharing media, and user-generated video. It's a challenge for traditional "TV" to give them the immediacy, personalization and honesty they crave. Fortunately, we have found great examples where a producer or director has listened to the youth audience and given them the kind of open window they desire.

REPORT ON CATEGORY 11-15 Fiction

by Jan-Willem Bult, Netherlands

A total of 34 entries competed in this category and at the end the nominators could select 12 for the finals.

The selected programs represent 11 countries in 4 continents.

The last editions the festival operated with a combined fiction and non-fiction category for the 12-15 year olds. So this year's category change was a new experience and the fiction programmes that were entered in this category showed an interesting mix of stories for and with children and stories for and with teens.

We watched from Singapore schoolkids hunting ghosts in a fantasy comedy to a British teen being abused in a realistic drama. From an Argentine story about integration to a Japanese folktale with the big bad wolf and the three little pigs on trial in the courtroom.

But we also had to leave out productions that are also valuable to watch and fortunately they will be available in the Media Bar for screening.

Many of the selected productions serve very well this year's theme of PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAL: identity. Stories from girls as well as boys, representing different social groups, cultures and characters.

This category offers a rich variety of productions and creative ideas.

Coming to the screenings of this category will make you laugh, shiver, wonder, maybe cry and hopefully uncomfortable sometimes. PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAL is always a celebration of diversity and takes you to unknown places, languages, cultures and moral values.

It will sometimes challenge us but surely make us learn.

On behalf of my fellow nominators Glynis Beukes-Kapa (Namibia), Alvaro Ceppi (Chile), Metka Dedakovich (Slovenia), Patricia Ellingson (Canada), Frederik Hansen (Denmark), David Kleeman (USA), Sandra Le Blanc-Marissal (Germany), Roziah Naam (Malaysia), Bernadette O'Mahoney I wish you an exciting and inspiring PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAL 2016!

REPORT ON CATEGORY 7 – 10 Non-Fiction + Up to 6 Non-Fiction

by Frederik Hansen, Denmark

For this year's pre-selection in the non-fiction categories it was incredibly inspiring and uplifting to see how high the general quality of the submissions were and how regions, without the same experience and background as the more established countries, amazed us with strong content and high production value.

The overall feeling of the members of the pre-selection process, after having screened hours and hours of content, is that this year's non-fiction finalists will give insight and delight and will challenge the viewers and start many important discussions about telling stories and portraying reality for children. During the pre-selection we had many passionate discussions and advocated for and against the different approaches we saw in the many programs, and each discussion was carried out in an atmosphere of deep respect for the content, the producers and the group.

Creators of content for children have a responsibility to do what they can to help children gain a greater awareness of others around them, especially those who are different. The Syrian refugee crisis was a subject that was covered impressively by many producers. A complicated situation to get the full perspective on, but taking on the children's point of view and conveying their emotions through their stories

seems essential to make the audience get a deeper understanding of the situation and we saw some good examples of that approach.

There were many well made and strong stories that relied on the children to show and tell their reality. The programs that stood out was the ones that trusted and gave room for the children to be authentic and also trusted in the intelligence of the child and their desire to be involved in making change and “righting the wrong”, but also the programs that made us smile and laugh and sincerely wanted to bring laughter and joy in the kids lives stood out.

Portraying children with high focus on authenticity led to many discussions about the role of adult hosts in children's television. Discussions about acting and presenting and to what degree the adult hosts should drive and pace the program.

It was interesting and inspiring to see how different regions and cultures use adult presenters and hosts in various ways. Some have a very classic approach where the presenter clearly is in the driver's seat, others use presenters as more neutral helpers. And then there will be some presenters in this years selection that without doubt will ignite engaged discussions.

“Pushing boundaries” was very present in the programs we screened and especially in the “up to 6 non-fiction”-category there are a number of examples this year that will result in very heated discussions on what is and what isn't appropriate content for the pre-schoolers - but who could imagine a true PRIX JEUNESSE without those very important discussions.

REPORT ON THE CATEGORIES 7 – 10 Fiction + Up to 6 Fiction

by Alison Stewart, United Kingdom

FICTION 7-10 YEARS

This was a large category, with 81 entries and 7 more which were moved from other categories to be judged here.

There were many engaging dramas and strong animated entries, but the jury commented on the wide divergence of content in terms of age appropriateness, and several entries were transferred into the older or younger fiction categories.

Perhaps this gives evidence to the difficulty of serving this age group, who want to be “grown up” and yet need help with coping with the more serious issues that life can present. Some of the successful entries dealt sensitively with issues such as the refugee crisis (“Dad” from S4C in Wales); dealing with dementia in an older family member (“Granny Is My Little Sister” from South Korea); the death of a parent (“Rocket Island”, UK, and “Gortimer Gibbon's Life on Normal Street”, USA); and domestic abuse (“With All Right”, Sweden, and “The Peppercorns” Germany)

The theme of this year's PRIX JEUNESSE Festival is "What it means to be me – Identity in Children's TV" and this theme was explored best in the entries where children were seen to be making their own decisions when faced with dilemmas. Particularly successful here were "Bendik and the Monster" from Norway, where a boy explores his identity in a funny and touching animation; "Friends and Foes" from Taiwan, where a young boy has to make difficult friendship decisions; and "Bicycle Brother" from Thailand, where a brother and sister face a moral dilemma.

The jury commented on a lack of comedy and humour in the entries in this category – surprising when funny content is so important for the age group. There was light relief however in shows such as "Little Lunch" from Australia, "Annedroids" from Canada and "Hank Zipzer" from UK.

The re-entry rule caused much discussion (several strong entries had to be ruled out because of this). A programme can be considered for re-entry if it has changed considerably in terms of content or treatment, but evaluating the scale of change is not always easy, and the jury would appreciate more clarity in this rule for future Festivals.

A final thought? It was wonderful to see children not only at the heart of the programmes in this category, but also to see them largely empowered to make their own decisions in their stories.

Up to 6 FICTION

This was a delightful category to judge. In the 70+ entries the jury found humour, great drama, beautiful animation, engaging puppetry and a certain amount of craziness!

Is this fiction or non-fiction? A question we asked many times as we viewed the entries. But this is a key point when discussing content for this young age group, where there's something to learn in almost every programme a pre-schooler watches. Children often find it easy to understand factual content when it's delivered in the form of a story, and there were quite a few 'hybrid' entries in the category.

A strikingly high number of entries featured girl leads – too many to single out here! We found strong and diverse personalities, and we saw a broader range of characters amongst the female protagonists than amongst their male counterparts.

The dramas are notable for some great performances by very young actors – in "Sofia Flux" from Norway, "Katie Morag and the Dancing Class" from the UK, and "The Girl with the Yellow Helmet" from Denmark.

Many of the animated entries offered programmes of deceptive simplicity which deal with weightier subject matter. Latin American entries continue to offer high

quality animation and storytelling which showcase local culture and history – for example, “Ruka’s Adventures and the Treasures of the Sea” from Chile. “Trude’s Pet” from Germany treats the subject of jealousy with humour and poignancy. “Lily’s Driftwood Bay” from Northern Ireland addresses the subject of death with great sensitivity. And with “The Piglet who wanted to be a Bird” from Macedonia – it’s all in the title! A search for identity and acceptance.

Other interesting questions raised in this thought provoking category . . . what does “doing nothing” really mean? (“Hi Opie!” from Canada); can you play with the moon? (“The Moon and Me” from Germany); what is a Mom? (“Papo’s Workshop”, from Ecuador) and who exactly are “The Stayawakes”? (from Finland).

To sum up this category - the programmes are for little people . . . but the themes are big!