

The Day Orature

Competition Adjudication Rubric

Performer Name: _____

Age Category: _____

Judge: _____

About This Rubric

This rubric reflects the values of the Mĩcere Gĩthae Mũgo Foundation and the African orature tradition: that the spoken word is a living art form, a vessel of community memory, and an instrument of human dignity. Criteria 1–4 are the foundation criteria of this competition.

Criteria 5–10 are additional dimensions that honor the full richness of orature as theory, practice, and social commitment. Each criterion is scored on a scale of 1–4.

Judges are encouraged to add written notes for each criterion.

1. Artistry and Craft — <i>Original Criterion</i>				
Criterion	Excellent (4)	Proficient (3)	Developing (2)	Beginning (1)
1. Artistry and Craft	The performance demonstrates exceptional command of orature techniques. Language is vivid, precise, and evocative. Structure, rhythm, and pacing are masterfully controlled and serve the work beautifully.	The performance shows strong artistic skill. Language is mostly vivid and well-chosen. Structure and rhythm are clear and generally effective with minor inconsistencies.	Some artistic elements are present but inconsistent. Language is occasionally vivid. Structure and rhythm show effort but lack consistent control.	Artistic craft is minimal or absent. Language is flat or unclear. Little evidence of intentional structure, rhythm, or pacing.
Score Awarded:	Notes / Comments:			_____ / 4

2. Content and Meaning — Original Criterion				
Criterion	Excellent (4)	Proficient (3)	Developing (2)	Beginning (1)
2. Content and Meaning	The work carries a rich, layered message communicated with depth and clarity. Themes are meaningful, resonant, and clearly intentional. The audience is left with something substantial to reflect upon.	The work has a clear message and meaningful themes. Content is mostly well-developed with minor gaps in depth or clarity.	A general theme or message is present but underdeveloped. Meaning is occasionally unclear or inconsistent.	Content lacks a clear message or meaningful theme. The work's purpose is difficult to identify.
Score Awarded:	Notes / Comments:			_____ / 4

3. Authenticity and Connection — Original Criterion				
Criterion	Excellent (4)	Proficient (3)	Developing (2)	Beginning (1)
3. Authenticity and Connection	The performer brings genuine personal and cultural authenticity to the work. The audience feels a deep, sincere human connection. The performance feels lived-in, not performed.	The performer demonstrates clear authenticity and mostly connects with the audience sincerely. Occasional moments feel less personal or genuine.	Some moments of authentic connection are present but the performance feels inconsistent or rehearsed in ways that distance the audience.	Little or no sense of authentic connection. The performance feels detached, imitative, or disconnected from personal or cultural truth.
Score Awarded:	Notes / Comments:			_____ / 4

4. Age-Appropriate Impact — <i>Original Criterion</i>				
Criterion	Excellent (4)	Proficient (3)	Developing (2)	Beginning (1)
4. Age-Appropriate Impact	The work is ideally suited to the intended age group in content, language, and emotional register. It engages, challenges, and resonates with that audience in a memorable and appropriate way.	The work is mostly appropriate and impactful for the intended age group with minor elements that may not fully land or connect.	The work is generally appropriate but impact is limited. Some content or language may be slightly mismatched to the intended audience.	The work is poorly matched to the intended age group. Content, language, or emotional register significantly misses the audience.
Score Awarded:	Notes / Comments:			_____ / 4

5. Performance and Delivery — <i>Additional Criterion</i>				
Criterion	Excellent (4)	Proficient (3)	Developing (2)	Beginning (1)
5. Performance and Delivery	Vocal quality, projection, tone, and physical presence are all compelling and fully serve the work. The performer uses pause, breath, gesture, and movement with skill and intention. The body and voice are unified instruments.	Vocal and physical delivery are strong and mostly effective. Minor weaknesses in projection, gesture, or use of pause do not significantly detract from the performance.	Some elements of vocal or physical delivery are effective but others are underdeveloped. The performer shows awareness of delivery but has not yet fully controlled it.	Delivery is flat, inaudible, or distracting. Little evidence of intentional use of voice, gesture, or physical presence.
Score Awarded:	Notes / Comments:			_____ / 4



6. Use of Oral Tradition Elements — <i>Additional Criterion</i>				
Criterion	Excellent (4)	Proficient (3)	Developing (2)	Beginning (1)
6. Use of Oral Tradition Elements	The performance draws skillfully and knowingly on specific orature conventions — proverbs, call-and-response, praise poetry, repetition, riddles, storytelling structures, or others. These elements feel organic, not decorative.	Oral tradition elements are present and mostly well-integrated. The performer shows knowledge of specific conventions even if deployment is occasionally self-conscious.	Some oral tradition elements are present but feel surface-level or inconsistently applied. Knowledge of specific forms is evident but not yet fully embodied.	Little or no evidence of engagement with specific oral tradition forms or conventions.
Score Awarded:	Notes / Comments:			_____ / 4

7. Language and Voice — <i>Additional Criterion</i>				
Criterion	Excellent (4)	Proficient (3)	Developing (2)	Beginning (1)
7. Language and Voice	The work honors the linguistic heritage of the tradition it draws from. Indigenous language, mother tongue, or community-specific expression is used with care and confidence. The performer's voice is distinctly their own.	Language choices reflect awareness of the tradition's linguistic heritage. The performer's voice is mostly distinct with minor generic or borrowed elements.	Some attention to language and tradition is present but the performer's own voice is not yet clearly established. Linguistic choices are occasionally generic.	Little attention to the linguistic dimension of the tradition. The performer's voice is absent or indistinguishable from generic speech.
Score Awarded:	Notes / Comments:			_____ / 4

8. Community Resonance — Additional Criterion				
Criterion	Excellent (4)	Proficient (3)	Developing (2)	Beginning (1)
8. Community Resonance	The performance creates genuine shared feeling between performer and audience. Call-and-response, invitation, or other communal dynamics are skillfully activated. The audience is a participant, not merely a spectator.	The performance mostly engages the audience as community. Moments of genuine shared response are present even if not consistently sustained.	Some awareness of the communal dimension of orature is present but the performance mostly treats the audience as passive observers.	The communal dimension of orature is absent. The performance is entirely one-directional with no sense of shared space or audience engagement.
Score Awarded:	Notes / Comments:			_____ / 4

9. Preservation and Memory — Additional Criterion				
Criterion	Excellent (4)	Proficient (3)	Developing (2)	Beginning (1)
9. Preservation and Memory	The work actively carries forward something from a living oral tradition — history, values, knowledge, or story that might otherwise be lost. It honors the archive of the community with clear intention and care.	The work shows meaningful engagement with preserving or transmitting elements of oral tradition. The connection to living memory is mostly clear.	Some connection to preservation or cultural memory is present but underdeveloped. The work engages with tradition but without strong intentionality.	Little or no evidence that the work is connected to preserving or transmitting oral tradition. The relationship to cultural memory is absent.
Score Awarded:	Notes / Comments:			_____ / 4

10. Social Justice Orientation — *Additional Criterion:
(in the spirit of the Mīcere Gīthae Mūgo Foundation)*

Criterion	Excellent (4)	Proficient (3)	Developing (2)	Beginning (1)
<p>10. Social Justice Orientation</p> <p>Score Awarded:</p>	<p>The work speaks directly and powerfully to justice, human dignity, community well-being, or liberation. It embodies the values of <i>Utu</i> — that our humanity is bound up with one another's. The message is clear and the artistic execution magnifies it.</p> <p>Notes / Comments:</p>	<p>The work engages meaningfully with themes of justice or human dignity. The connection to these values is clear even if not the primary or most powerful element.</p>	<p>Some awareness of social themes is present but the work does not yet develop them into a coherent or resonant message.</p>	<p>Social justice themes are absent or, if present, are so underdeveloped as to have no meaningful impact.</p> <p>_____ / 4</p>

SCORE SUMMARY		
Criterion	Score (out of 4)	Notes
1. Artistry and Craft	____ / 4	
2. Content and Meaning	____ / 4	
3. Authenticity and Connection	____ / 4	
4. Age-Appropriate Impact	____ / 4	
5. Performance and Delivery	____ / 4	
6. Use of Oral Tradition Elements	____ / 4	
7. Language and Voice	____ / 4	
8. Community Resonance	____ / 4	
9. Preservation and Memory	____ / 4	
10. Social Justice Orientation	____ / 4	
TOTAL SCORE	____ / 40	

Overall Comments and Feedback for Performer:

*"Utu is the essence of being human — you cannot claim it unless you share it with and affirm it in others."
— Micere Githae Mugo*

