

The Merrion — “Comment”

Producing theatre · 340 seats, six shows a year · Louisville, Kentucky

COMPLETED BY	Delphine Okonjo-Vaughan, General manager
ALSO IN THE ROOM	Bartholomew Ngata-Price, production · Susanna Ivers, front of house
DATE	2 August 2026

1 · The decision

In one sentence, what decision does this dashboard exist to get made?

What we change before the next run, and what we are deliberately not changing.

Who opens it, and when?

Three of us, the second Tuesday after a run closes, in a room, for about an hour. It is read rather than watched.

How does that decision get made today, without it?

A satisfaction index. We had one for three years. It sat between 4.1 and 4.3 the whole time and I cannot name a single thing it caused. It went up the run we had no heating in the stalls.

So what should replace it?

Nothing. That is not a gap to fill — I do not want a better score, I want no score. A single number moves without anything changing, it gets defended in board meetings by people who have not read one comment, and the only action it ever suggests is to get more people to fill in the form.

Is there a rule the decision follows? Write it out, in the order it applies.

1. The comment is the unit. Counts go beside a quote, never instead of one. 2. Group by what it is about, and order by who owns it — access first, the play last. 3. Volume is not weight. 4. A count that misleads on its own carries the reason next to it. 5. Everything gets a decision in a sentence, including the decision to do nothing.

Say more about volume not being weight.

Eighty-four people mentioned the interval queue. Three people described not being able to get a wheelchair to a seat, and one of them left without seeing the show. Those two cannot be ranked against each other and I do not want a tool that pretends they can. Sorted by count, the wheelchair line is twenty-fourth and nobody ever reads it.

What has to be on it that a feedback tool usually leaves off?

Who answered, against who came. Members are a third of our audience and nearly two thirds of the forms. School groups are a fifth of the audience and one form in twenty-five. Every count on the comments page is therefore a count of what regulars think, and that has to be on a screen rather than in a footnote, because footnotes get read once.

Should the counts be reweighted to correct for that?

No. The arithmetic is easy and the answer is a lie with a decimal point on it. Scaling four school forms up to twenty-two percent would produce a confident statement about eight hundred and fifty children from four sentences, and somebody would put it in a funding application.

Anything else that must be there?

The things we are not changing, with the reason, including the loudest thing on the form. The interval stays at twenty minutes because the crew needs twenty minutes to turn the set. Eighty-four people asked and the answer is no, and if there is nowhere to write that down then front of house has a shrug and I have a complaint that comes back every run for ever.

Anything you specifically do not want on it?

No score, no index, no stars, no sentiment analysis. No comment attributed to a named person and no linking a form to a booking — somebody who tells us the wheelchair spaces feel like a fire exit should not wonder whether the person selling them their next ticket has read it with their name on it. And do not tidy up the quotes. The two most useful sentences we have read in five years were both rude.

2 · Screens requested

SCREEN	WHAT IT IS FOR	WHAT IT MUST SHOW
The comments	What people said, in their words, grouped by what it is about.	Verbatim quotes at reading size, the count and the change on the last run beside them, a caveat where the count misleads, and what is being done in a sentence.
Who answered	How the people who replied differ from the people who came.	Share of forms against share of the audience, for booking type and age, with the gap in points and nothing reweighted.
Not changing	What we heard, decided against, and why.	The count first, the real reason, the alternative where there is one, and wording front of house can say out loud.

3 · Figures, and the comparison each one carries

FIGURE	MUST APPEAR AGAINST
Mentions of a theme	The same theme on the previous run, and the number of forms returned
Forms returned	Attendance for the run
Share who answered	Their share of the audience, from box office data

No figure appears on this dashboard without the comparison beside it. A number with nothing to compare it against is not information, and the component that renders these will not accept one.

4 • What this must not do

- 1. No score, index, star rating or sentiment figure, anywhere.
- 2. No comment attributed to a named person, and no form linked to a booking.
- 3. No reweighting of counts to correct for who answered.
- 4. No quote edited for tone.
- 5. No ordering by volume.

Treated as binding rather than as a preference. Every item above is checked again before the tool is handed over.

CONFIRMATION

The answers above are mine and may be used to build the tool described. The Merrion is a fictional business profile supplied for demonstration and testing; every figure appearing in the delivered dashboard is sample data.

SIGNED — DELPHINE OKONJO-VAUGHAN

DATE