



dr. phillips center presents

# **A P P L A U S E A W A R D S**

## Applause Awards 2025 Handbook

### **ABOUT THE APPLAUSE AWARDS**

The Applause Awards at the Dr. Phillips Center celebrates the achievements of area high school teachers, designers, and students involved in musical theater programs and productions. A qualified team of adjudicators evaluate productions and students to provide directors with valuable written feedback. At the end of the academic school year, the Dr. Phillips Center hosts an awards ceremony to recognize the outstanding achievements of high school musical theater in a showcase in the Walt Disney Theater at the Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts.

Modeled after the Tony Awards®, the showcase features outstanding performances from participating high schools and celebrates their enthusiasm, dedication, and talent while encouraging participating schools to grow and continue improving their programs.

At the conclusion of the Applause Awards ceremony, our panel of judges select two Applause Award Outstanding Lead Performers to represent Central Florida in The Jimmy Awards competition held through The Broadway League in New York City at the end of June.

The selected students will compete for the national title, while spending two weeks with Broadway professionals, producers, directors, and casting agents to further their knowledge and talent.

### **OUR PURPOSE**

The Applause Awards program is designed to celebrate, support, and advocate for high school musical theater education throughout Central and North Florida. The program celebrates high school musicals, students, and teachers by formally recognizing the extraordinary achievements of our community's productions.

### **GOALS**

1. To recognize, honor, and encourage excellence in high school students' musical theater performances through a constructive review process.
2. To invest and celebrate inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility in the performing arts.
3. To provide professional development and networking opportunities for students, directors, and school programs.

## APPLAUSE AWARDS 2025 IMPORTANT DATES

1. **February 28, 2025**- deadline to register and submit adjudication fee

adjudication fee - if you need an invoice to process payments, please contact us and we will provide one. Checks should be made payable to:

Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts  
155 E. Anderson Street, Orlando FL 32801  
memo "applause awards 2025"

***\*\*This year, we will accommodate up to 50 shows. We will not be able to accept registrations once this number is reached. In addition, a school may only submit two shows maximum (a double cast show is considered one show). Please register early to guarantee participation.***

2. **September 27, 2024**- adjudication period begins
3. **April 4, 2025** - applause awards ceremony tickets on sale
4. **Sunday April 27, 2025** - adjudication period ends  
***\*\*Please note - this date will be moving up a weekend next year to April 19, 2026***
5. **Friday, May 2, 2025** - award recipients notified
6. **Saturday May 17, 2024-Saturday May 31, 2025** applause awards ceremony rehearsals
  - a. Performers are required to attend rehearsals at the Dr. Phillips Center. Most rehearsals are scheduled during the evenings.
7. **Saturday May 31, 2025**- applause awards ceremony

### a note on time commitment

Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts knows that many hours of hard work go into preparing a high school musical theater production. One of the goals of the program is to provide visibility for the work that is being produced in our community. During the school year, there is little additional time commitment from directors/teachers other than communicating pertinent information. However, if your show or student/s are selected to receive an Applause Award for Outstanding Musical, it will require an additional time commitment for rehearsals in addition to the showcase performance. **If you wish to NOT be considered in the Outstanding Musical category, you will be able to denote this on your production application.**

## PARTICIPANT ELIGIBILITY

The Applause Awards program is open to public and private high schools producing musical theater in Central Florida. To be eligible for participation for the 24/25 season, a school should meet the following qualifications:

- Schools must be located within a 150-mile radius of Dr. Phillips Center, located at 155 East Anderson Street, Orlando, FL 32801, unless otherwise arranged.
- High school musical theater productions should take place between September 11, 2024 and April 27, 2025.  
*As a reminder, next year's cut off date for shows is April 19, 2026.*

## ADJUDICATION REGISTRATION

A registration adjudication fee per high school production cast is required to participate. Once you submit your registration form and payment, you will receive a confirmation email. This email will act as your receipt. If you need an invoice to process payments, please contact us and we will provide one. Checks should be made payable to Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts. **If you need assistance in payment, please reach out to the Dr. Phillips Center Education Team for financial assistance options.**

**This year, payment will be determined by your school's location. To ensure we are able to cover the costs of both the adjudicators fee and adjudicator mileage reimbursement, the county the school is located in will determine the cost of the registration fee.**

Orange, Osceola, Seminole, Lake, and Volusia counties: \$375\*

Brevard, Indian River, and Flagler counties: \$600

Alachua and St. Johns counties: \$700

Duval County: \$800

*\*Any title I designated school in Orange, Osceola, Seminole, Lake, and Volusia counties will only be required to pay \$150*

## ADDITIONAL TRAVEL REQUIREMENTS

New this year, if your school is located in a county that is not Orange, Osceola, Seminole, Lake, or Volusia county we are asking schools to prioritize adjudicator attendance at only matinee show dates. If you do not have a matinee show date, or you prefer an adjudicator comes to an evening show, it will be the school's responsibility to provide each adjudicator with a hotel option. Please ensure hotel options are safe, clean, and within a 10 mile radius of the school.

## PRODUCTION TYPES

Musical theater productions should fall into one or more of the following categories:

- A published musical, operetta or revue (either currently held by a licensing house or in the public domain) presented with the approval or permission of the original creators, publishers, or their representatives.
- A new or unpublished musical, operetta or revue (featuring an original script, music, and lyrics) presented with the approval or permission from the original creators or their representatives.
- An original musical theater compilation featuring excerpts or scenes from a variety of sources (either currently held by a licensing house or in the public domain) presented with the approval or permission of the original creators or their representatives.
- For Outstanding Lead performers to be considered for The Jimmy Awards, school productions must be listed with the National High School Musical Theatre Awards at [jimmyawards.com/participation/qualifying-shows-and-roles](https://jimmyawards.com/participation/qualifying-shows-and-roles). Please note this list will be updated quarterly in accordance with licensing approvals for the 2025 Jimmy Awards.

## ADJUDICATION PROCESS

Dr. Phillips Center education team will email adjudicator feedback to the primary theater director after the production has been evaluated.

To designate awards for artistic excellence, adjudicators score high school musical theater productions on a variety of elements. Once the final production or auditionee has been evaluated and scored, final tallies will identify top nominees and final winners. Adjudicators will be responsible for evaluating how each high school musical theater production is meeting or exceeding its own potential.

Nominations will be announced **Friday, May 2, 2025**.

## AWARD NOTIFICATION

Top scores of nominated individuals, production categories, and performances will be awarded the Applause Awards. Schools are notified of award recipients on **Friday, May 2, 2025**. Scholarships are announced during the Applause Awards Ceremony.

## ADJUDICATION QUALIFICATIONS

Dr. Phillips Center conducts pre-screenings, interviews, demo adjudication reviews, and training to ensure top performing arts professionals, with backgrounds in casting, music, theater, dance, design, and related fields serve as adjudicators for Applause Awards.

Each year, the Applause Awards recruits new adjudicators to ensure fresh perspectives, as well as, retaining previous qualified individuals. Applause Awards Adjudicators are recognized as individuals carrying an incredible wealth of knowledge towards the entire musical theater production and implementation process. Former Broadway performers, Disney and Universal casting agents and show producers, reputable performing arts educators in the community, are just a few of this year's selected cohort.

## APPLAUSE AWARDS CEREMONY DETAILS

On Saturday, May 31, 2025 at 7pm, Dr. Phillips Center will present a Tony Awards® inspired showcase in Walt Disney Theater honoring schools and students for artistic excellence in musical theater. This event will be a tribute to the enthusiasm, dedication, and accomplishments of Central Florida's high school musical theater programs. Participants have the opportunity to receive awards and perform on the Walt Disney Theater stage as a part of that evening's program. Students, faculty, administrators, and staff from participating high schools are encouraged to promote and attend the awards showcase. Two students will be selected to participate in the 2025 National High School Musical Theatre Awards (The Jimmys) in New York City at the end of June, all expenses paid.

## APPLAUSE AWARDS CATEGORIES

*\*awards given to top cumulative adjudicator scores in each category*

### outstanding musical (production category)

Awarded to productions which display overall excellence in every category.

### outstanding ensemble (production category)

Awarded to ensembles that complement one another on stage, both singing and acting.

### outstanding orchestra (production category)

Awarded to productions featuring excellence in a student orchestra. Since not all schools use orchestras, this is a nominating category only and does not contribute towards the Best Musical overall score.

### outstanding direction, outstanding musical direction, outstanding choreography (production category)

Awarded to the director/musical director/choreographer for overall excellence in vision and the execution of that vision.

### outstanding set design, outstanding lighting design, outstanding hair and makeup design, outstanding sound design (production category)

Awarded to designers for overall excellence in their area of expertise.

### outstanding costume design (production category)

Awarded to designers for overall excellence in costume design. Costumes must be at least 60% built this year to be considered for contention.

### outstanding lead performer (student individual category)

Awarded to students displaying excellent acting, dancing, and singing abilities in a lead role.

### outstanding supporting performer (student individual category)

Awarded to students displaying excellent acting and singing abilities in a supporting role.

### outstanding singer, actor, and dancer (student individual categories)

Awarded to students displaying excellent vocal technique, acting, or dance execution within a musical production.

### outstanding young performer (student individual category)

Awarded to performers younger than high school age that display excellence in singing, acting, and dancing in a musical production.

### outstanding stage management (student individual category)

Awarded to students for competently and smoothly calling cues for the performance and providing evidence of efficient, organized, and effective Pre to Post Production systems.

### applause award scholarship (student individual category)

Senior troupe members who apply and exhibit the highest level of excellence in their craft are in contention for an Applause Awards Scholarship. The final decisions are made by a separate panel of adjudicators. School Directors will be required to submit a letter of recommendation, and students will be required to submit a one-page essay describing their desire for the scholarship. **All student essays and teacher recommendation letters should be submitted by Friday May 2, 2025.**

### community engagement

Awarded to schools who create and implement activities or events that incorporate community engagement initiatives that better their school or surrounding community during their show process. **Community engagement applications are due no later than Friday May 2, 2025.**

## PRODUCTION INFORMATION PACKET

At the beginning of the school year, the Dr. Phillips Center education team will email the production information packet to the primary contact teacher. This packet asks directors to provide cast lists and other information that will be shared with adjudicators. You will also have the opportunity to share supplementary information on your production including the resources available to your school and theater department, director's notes, the rationale behind artistic choices, and specific areas on which you would like feedback. *These forms are also available on our website.*

## PRODUCTION ATTENDANCE

Dr. Phillips Center education team will contact schools to confirm which performances adjudicators will attend. You must list all public performances for our team of adjudicators to choose from for adjudication. Once your adjudication dates are confirmed, plan on reserving up to two complimentary tickets and programs per adjudicator and Dr. Phillips Center representative under the name "Dr Phillips Center Adjudicator." Please note that the three adjudicators assigned to your production may or may not attend the same performance. Please anticipate up to 8 tickets per show. Adjudications consist of the following:

- **feedback:** directors receive detailed feedback on various elements of their high school musical theater productions. Dr. Phillips Center education team will email adjudicator feedback to the primary contact teacher approximately two to three weeks after the production has been evaluated.
- **scoring:** in order to designate awards for artistic excellence, adjudicators score high school musical theater productions on a variety of elements. Once the final production has been evaluated and scores compiled, you will receive an email from Dr. Phillips Center sharing adjudicator feedback and nominations announcement.
- **accommodations:** **As a reminder, if a school is located outside of Orange, Osceola, Seminole, Lake, and Volusia counties, and would like adjudicators to attend evening shows, the school will be responsible for providing adequate hotel accommodations for each adjudicator. This does not apply to matinee show times.**

## APPLAUSE AWARDS PERFORMANCE REHEARSAL SCHEDULE

There may be multiple winners for each category and they will be honored onstage throughout the ceremony. Any student winning an Outstanding Lead Performer Award is invited to perform a solo from the nominated show and is also invited to perform in the ceremony. Most rehearsals are scheduled during the evenings. **All Outstanding Lead Performers who want to be considered for the Jimmy Awards must attend each night of rehearsal, with the exception of one absence for any involvement in a high school graduation.** Conflicts will need to be submitted the week following the winner announcement and approved by the show director and Dr. Phillips Center Education Team.

Outstanding Musical Award winners are invited to perform a short medley from the award-winning production. **We are asking all Outstanding Musical Award winners to provide accompanist tracks to their selected song or medley of choice.** Please plan accordingly. Any student winning an Outstanding Supporting Performer, Outstanding Singer, Outstanding Dancer, or Outstanding Actor is invited to perform in the awards ceremony. Rehearsals will be scheduled May 17- May 31, 2025. Times to be determined. The ceremony takes place on Saturday, May 31, 2025 at 7pm.

## A NOTE ON DOUBLE CASTING

If a school decides to double cast one or more roles, you must submit two applications and double the payment if you would like to have both casts adjudicated and considered for awards. You cannot merge two different casts, since it could influence the ensemble and overall independent student performer scoring dependent on casting.

## PUBLICITY

All participating schools are asked to mention their involvement with the Applause Awards in their show programs/playbills and highlight the Applause Awards ceremony on May 31, 2025, at the Dr. Phillips Center. This information serves as an endorsement of your school's participation in the program. Dr. Phillips Center encourages high schools to announce their participation and encourage ticket sales for the Applause Awards in school newspapers, school or department websites, social media sites, and newsletters. An approved program ad will be provided by the Dr. Phillips Center at the beginning of the 2024-2025 season.

## INFORMED LIABILITY & MEDIA RELEASE FORMS

The forms, found at the end of this handbook, are required by all students participating in the awards ceremony and other Dr. Phillips Center educational activities offered throughout the year. These forms are also available for download on our website. If students plan on participating in master classes or any other Dr. Phillips Center activities, please distribute copies of the informed consent and photo release forms for completion. Dr. Phillips Center team will contact teachers from registered high schools with specific due dates for the release forms.

Completed forms may be emailed to: [applauseawards@drphillipscenter.org](mailto:applauseawards@drphillipscenter.org)

## CONFIDENTIALITY

Feedback and scoring will be submitted through a secure online form. Please note that at this time adjudicators will not provide oral critiques following the performance, nor should schools expect to receive scores verbally or written. Adjudicators must not discuss their opinions, evaluations, scores, or feedback with anyone, in any format. This includes faculty, staff or students from participating high schools, other adjudicators, colleagues, reviewers, social media networks, etc. Please do not contact adjudicators with questions. All inquiries should be directed to the Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts education team.

## TICKETS

Tickets will be available for purchase through Dr. Phillips Center box office and online. We encourage all participating schools to attend. Award-winning students performing in the ceremony have a designated seating area and do not need a ticket. Tickets will go on sale April 4, 2025.

## APPLAUSE AWARDS POLOS

Individual student performance winners in categories including Outstanding Lead Performer, Outstanding Supporting Performer, Outstanding Singer/Actor/Dancer that are performing in the Applause Awards Ceremony are given a polo to keep and wear for the performance. Director's Choice performers, Orchestra performers, and any participating tech winners, will receive an Applause Awards t-shirt.

All schools receiving an Outstanding Musical Award should plan to wear their production costumes or show shirts.

## MUSIC

Schools and nominated outstanding lead performers are asked to submit the arranged sheet music from the production. You will be asked to submit the piano, bass, drums and guitar scores or tracks in case they are selected to perform. If selected as an Outstanding Musical, please prepare tracks for your 5 minute production number. Do not worry about song cuts unless you wish to perform a medley of songs for your outstanding musical performance. For all Outstanding Lead Performer nominees, just send the entire sheet music selection of your preferred song, for piano, bass, drums, and guitar. **This must be a solo song that the lead performer initially sang in their production. Show creative team will be selecting and/or approving all cuts of music.**

## STAGE MANAGEMENT SUBMISSIONS

In order to receive an accurate nomination in stage management, stage managers will need to submit a copy of their prompt book materials. Materials should come directly from the stage managers. They can either email documents to [applauseawards@drphillipscenter.org](mailto:applauseawards@drphillipscenter.org) or [sara.york@drphillipscenter.org](mailto:sara.york@drphillipscenter.org). Stage Managers can also provide hard copy materials to be left at will call for adjudicators to receive upon arrival to your show. Place materials in a labeled notebook or folder, labeled to Applause Awards Adjudicator.

## NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL THEATRE AWARDS (NHSMTA)

The Jimmy Awards®/The National High School Musical Theatre Awards® (NHSMTA®) program impacts more than 140,000 students who participate in high school musical theatre competitions sponsored by presenters of Touring Broadway productions throughout the United States. Presented by the Broadway League Foundation, the program invites two winners from each of these regional ceremonies to participate in a theatre intensive including coaching and rehearsals with Broadway professionals in preparation for a one-night only talent showcase. The program has been the catalyst for more than \$4,000,000 in educational scholarships. For more information, please visit: [www.JimmyAwards.com](http://www.JimmyAwards.com)



## SCORING RUBRIC FOR PRODUCTION CATEGORIES.

This year, Applause Awards categories will be scored on three - five major key elements of each specific category. Adjudicators will reference these categories in measuring overall excellence across each aspect.

### **Outstanding Ensemble**

1. Uniformity
2. Characterization
3. Energy

### **\*Outstanding Orchestra (applicable for orchestras with 70% student musicians)**

1. Dynamics
2. Musicality
3. Cohesiveness

### **Outstanding Choreographer**

1. Clean and Cohesive
2. Artistic Alignment
3. Energy and Stage Presence

### **Outstanding Direction**

1. Storytelling
2. Character Development
3. Creative Vision
4. Innovative and Resourceful

### **Outstanding Music Direction**

1. Expression
2. Phrasing
3. Harmonies & Blending

### **Outstanding Set Designer**

1. Practical and Functional
2. Stylistically Appropriate
3. Innovative

\*Not contributing to overall outstanding musical contention

### **Outstanding Lighting Designer**

1. Practical and Functional
2. Story Enhancing
3. Innovative
4. Elevated Quality

### **Outstanding Sound Designer**

1. Clarity and Quality
2. Balance and Levels
3. Innovative
4. Consistent Sound

### **Outstanding Costume Designer (Must be at least 60% or more built)**

1. Functional
2. Stylistically Appropriate
3. Fit
4. Workmanship
5. Creativity

### **Outstanding Hair and Makeup Designer**

1. Stylistically Appropriate
2. Unified Look
3. Professional and Stage Ready

### **Outstanding Stage Manager**

1. Prompt Book
2. Cues
3. Transitions

## SCORING RUBRIC FOR STUDENT PERFORMANCE CATEGORIES

### Outstanding Lead Performer & Supporting Performer (depending on role cast in)

*(Outstanding Lead Performers will be in contention for Jimmy nomination and will be identified through this category)*

1. Performer knew their material and executed the rhythmic requirements of the music. Performer had a basic understanding of their character and could be heard/understood. Performer had moments of activating their body presence into their song showing connection with the piece.
2. In addition, performer seemed relaxed, focused, in the moment and performed with energy. Performer included elements of musical phrasing and interpretation with a pleasant sound. Performer knew character objectives and remained in character throughout, stayed in focus, and made some character choices. Performer used some body language to emphasize phrasing, had better than average execution.
3. In addition, performer had strong characterization which added to the piece, and stayed engaged and in character throughout. Performer was mostly on pitch throughout the performance. Performer effectively used body language and physicality with precision, animation, and reflected their character appropriately.
4. In addition, performer maintained their character while singing, effectively enunciated, had proper vocal technique and was on pitch. Made strong character choices elevating the storytelling of the piece.
5. In addition, performer truly **captured the essence of storytelling**. Performer understood and correctly executed the musical style of show and character, expressed **character backstory development**, had **excellent vocal technique** with a clear and solid tone and musical interpretation. Performer showed a **complete and consistent absorption of the character** and were able to fully communicate that to the audience. They took risks, made strong and appropriate choices with their characters' motivations and drives, and **possessed strong stage presence**. Evidence, through performance, of an understanding of the character in the context of the play from which they are taken. Ability, through performance, to illustrate a grasp of language, character, and the event being dramatized. Theatrical presence in combination with style and honesty of performance is central to the evaluation. **Demonstrated concentration, control of material, flexibility and versatility of voice, movement, and expression.**

## Outstanding Dancer

1. Performer was able to execute the movement and/or choreography.
2. In addition, performer moved with ease, had good execution of movement and technique.
3. In addition, performer moved with precision, animation, and reflected character.
4. In addition, performer's movement enhanced character, showing strong and consistent execution of the movement.
5. In addition, performer's movement/choreography were executed flawlessly, telling its own story showcasing true emotional depth and connection between the choreography and what they want their audience to feel.

## Outstanding Actor

1. Performer understood their character, could be heard, and understood.
2. In addition, performer understood character objective throughout their monologue, and made some character choices.
3. In addition, performer was able to show natural reaction and phrasing, with vocal tone variation in expression while making strong character choices.
4. In addition, performer showed a good sense of character backstory development in how they delivered their monologue, truly absorbed the character, and fully communicated character objective and intention to their audience.
5. In addition, performer showed in depth understanding of their character and showed authenticity/vulnerability to their audience. Showed a comfortable and strong stage presence showing a consistent connectivity to its character.

## Outstanding Singer

1. Performers sung mostly in tune and on tempo.
2. In addition, there were vocal dynamics present which added depth to character presence, and emotion of scene to successfully translate storyline to the audience.
3. In addition, the vocal tone was clean, resonant, balanced, and controlled. The musicality was pleasant to the ear, and kept the audience engaged throughout each vocal piece sung. Performer executed "legit" (heavily rooted traditional, classical voice) style with crisp/proper diction, belts were supported and placed with correct placement for optimal sound and clarity, pop rock vocalization sounded bright with great balance between vibrato and straight toned with empathetic, reactive, and emotion-based intention.
4. In addition, the vocal sounds reinforce the text and performer showcased healthy technique while singing and breathing. Performer had beautiful open, round sounds and had clean transitions from head to chest voice, through open space and round head voice. Vocal fry, breathy tone, glottal stops, and vowel manipulation were all clean, authentic, and intentionally balanced.
5. In addition, the vocal performance of songs moved the audience leaving them feeling safe every time the singer performed. The musicality choices amplified the production experience through its beauty and perfection of tone, dynamics, and emotion.

## ADJUDICATORS CANNOT PROVIDE FEEDBACK ON

1. How the adjudicator would have directed the show. It is not their job to cast a vision of your show, but may provide feedback as an artistic professional.
2. Food and drink accommodations for the adjudicator.
3. Parking accommodations for the adjudicator (unless address was wrong, or parking was a logistical complication for all patrons).
4. Audience Etiquette: While we all can agree it is important to educate our audience on appropriate patron behavior, it is not a reflection of the director, show, or cast.

## ADJUDICATORS CAN PROVIDE FEEDBACK ON

1. Elements of cultural, physical, or verbal sensitivities that could cause potential audience discomfort.  
Examples may include:
  - a) An adjudicator providing feedback regarding the elevated use of sexuality or profanity that was not proactively communicated as a disclaimer in program or pre-show announcement in advance to curtain.
  - b) A character or a show that is written with a culture or demographic intent that is integral to the historical context of the story, and the casting choice/s represented did not reflect the authors intent.
2. The general front of house experience.  
Examples may include:
  - a) Student ushers were beyond friendly and welcoming to guests.
  - b) Parking accommodation is limited in your temporary performance location, so communication regarding parking in the ticket confirmation email could improve overall guest experience for your patrons.
3. Ideas for improvement or alternative perspectives on how various production elements can be approached for you to reflect and explore.
4. Although the adjudicator should not tell the director or creative team member how to direct the show, adjudicators can observe and provide feedback on how the vision was provided to performers and if they were able to translate the director's overall vision.

*General reminder, feedback is subjective. Judges will score based on the judging criteria.*

# handbook agreement form

By signing, you agree that you have read the entirety of this document and the attached materials. You agree to our terms and conditions within these documents.

## PLEASE SIGN

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school director name (*please print*)

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school director signature

date