

EnsembleArts
Philly

Serving the region through world-class performances at the Kimmel Center, Academy of Music, Miller Theater, and Forrest Theatre

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Students step into the spotlight! @EnsembleArtsPhilly (Facebook/Instagram) is once again hosting this year's @independenceawards (Instagram)—the high school, regional musical theater awards—at the Miller Theater, part of an ongoing partnership to empower and educate local students. For more info, visit www.ensembleartsphilly.org.

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**ENSEMBLE ARTS PHILLY PRESENTS
ANNUAL PHILADELPHIA INDEPENDENCE AWARDS,
PART OF ONGOING COMMITMENT TO
ARTS EDUCATION,
MAY 19, 2026**

The Philadelphia Independence Awards celebrates high school musical theater, acting as the Regional Awards Program affiliate of The National High School Musical Theatre Awards® (the Jimmy Awards®)

Student nominations announced TODAY

NEW this year: Local student reporters will attend day of workshops with Ensemble Arts ahead of covering May event

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE (Philadelphia, PA, April 24, 2026) — Ensemble Arts Philly is proud to present the annual Philadelphia Independence Awards, a celebration of high school musical theater talent, live on stage at the Miller Theater on Tuesday, May 19 at 7:30 PM. The Awards Ceremony is presented as a part of an ongoing partnership between The Philadelphia

Independence Awards and Ensemble Arts Philly. The Philadelphia Independence Awards provides rigorous musical theater training and development for existing high school theater programs, promotes diverse elements of the professional theater community, and fosters support for under-resourced school theater programs. As a non-profit organization, Ensemble Arts Philly is committed to investing in arts education with programs that guide young people to discover and highlight their own talent, inspiring future audiences and audience members. 28 awards will be given out on May 19 in both performing and non-performing categories. The awards show will also feature performances from select productions. [Click here to view the 2026 nominations.](#)

NEW this year: Ensemble Arts and the Philadelphia Independence Awards are hosting two student reporters for a day of workshops and learning ahead of the May 19 event. The two students are Shae Gruber from Central Bucks High School and Madeline Pomager from Plymouth Whitmarsh High School. Both students will then be nominated to join the Jimmy Awards team in New York City as a student reporter. Each year, the Jimmy Awards invites select student reporters from participating Regional Awards Programs (RAP) to cover the Jimmy Awards events through social media. This provides a chance to expand connections into local schools' journalism, film, and other related departments. Student reporters work directly with the Jimmy Awards digital team, which allows them to receive an insider look at the digital marketing strategy of Jimmy Awards coverage while gaining insight into the field as a whole.

"As a parent whose child participated in the Philadelphia Independence Awards program in 2023, I can speak firsthand to how remarkable this program is and how it reflects Ensemble Arts Philly's commitment to share the transformative power of the performing arts and uplift the Greater Philadelphia community," said Ryan Fleur, president and CEO. "We are proud to host this event for the second year in our Miller Theater, a venue with its own storied history hosting Broadway tours, pre-Broadway runs, and 'before they were famous' actors."

"Our celebration of high school musical theatre is truly inspiring. When more than 1,000 young people come together in pursuit of a shared passion, it is something worth honoring," said Brian Weiner, president and founder, The Philadelphia Independence Awards. "The partnership among PIA, Ensemble Arts Philly, and the Philadelphia theatre community not only celebrates the art form, but also cultivates learning, sparks creativity, fuels innovation, and challenges students to reach new heights. We must also recognize their dedication beyond the stage, as they raise funds for under-resourced high school theatre programs across our region."

The Philadelphia Independence Awards are the Regional Awards Program affiliate of The Jimmy Awards®/The National High School Musical Theatre Awards® (NHSMTA®) for the Greater Philadelphia area. The NHSMTA® program impacts more than 100,000 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 sends a Best Actress and Best Actor winner from each of these competitions to New York for a week-long theatre intensive of coaching and rehearsals with industry professionals in preparation for a one-night-only talent showcase on Broadway. Named for Broadway impresario James M. Nederlander, the program has been the catalyst for more than \$2,000,000 in educational scholarships.

Ensemble Arts Philly is a member of The Broadway League, the national trade association for the Broadway Theatre Industry. The Broadway League's 700-plus members include theatre owners and operators, producers, presenters, and general managers in North American cities, as well as suppliers of goods and services to the commercial theatre industry. The structure of

the NHSMTA® is such that a Broadway League member in any local market can host a local awards ceremony.

In the case of the Philadelphia Independence Awards, their awards program is presented in partnership with and sponsored by Ensemble Arts Philly. Since the Independence Awards' inception, Ensemble Arts Philly has sponsored the program so that students from the Philadelphia region can compete in the Jimmy Awards in New York City.

For four years, Ensemble Arts Philly has hosted the Independence Awards' Free Day of Workshops at the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts, in conjunction with local theater companies and universities. This day provides FREE theater workshops for students in the Philadelphia area. Any student can register to attend, regardless of their school's membership status. In January 2026, over 90 students attended the Free Day of Workshops.

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Tickets

Schools attending the Philadelphia Independence Awards can purchase tickets starting Friday, May 1, at 10 AM. The general public can purchase tickets starting Tuesday, May 5, at 10 AM.

Tickets can be purchased online at www.ensembleartsphilly.org or by calling 215-893-1999. In-person ticket sales can be conducted daily from 10 AM–6 PM at the Academy of Music Box Office, located at 240 S. Broad Street. See www.ensembleartsphilly.org for more information.

Philadelphia Independence Awards

Miller Theater

Tuesday, May 19, 2026, 7:30 p.m.

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ABOUT ENSEMBLE ARTS PHILLY

For more information about ENSEMBLE ARTS PHILLY, visit www.ensembleartsphilly.org.