



The Diamond Awards Program and Show Guidebook

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Mission

The Diamond Awards aim to recognize and celebrate student achievement, and to focus the attention of the community and school districts on the importance of musical theater and arts education.

Who this Program is for

The Diamond Awards program is for high schools producing a full-length musical, that want to provide their students with additional educational opportunities and constructive feedback.

How the Program Works

Participating High School musicals are reviewed by 2-3 adjudicators. Each adjudicator submits feedback that also includes nominations for the Diamond Awards Best Actor and Best Actress finalists. Feedback and comments will be provided to the participating schools. Walton Arts Center will announce the Diamond Awards finalists April 29, 2025. On May 4, 2025, the awards program culminates in a show that recognizes and celebrates student excellence in musical theatre, and as such, additional awards will be given in several categories. The awards show will feature performances by award finalists and recipients.

The winners of the Diamond Awards for Best Actor and Best Actress will receive an all-expenses paid trip to New York City to participate in the National High School Musical Theatre Awards (NHSMTA), where they will receive professional training and compete with winners from dozens of other regional programs for a national audience.

Diamond Award Categories

- Best Actor
- Best Actress
- Best Supporting Performers
- Best Ensemble Performance
- Sparkle Award for Outstanding Educator

How to Participate

Teachers or Directors may complete the [Diamond Awards Application Form](#) for their school to participate in the Diamond Awards. Additional information will be needed from students who place as finalists and nominees for the Diamond Awards.

Participation is free of charge. There is no fee to apply or participate.

Important Dates:

- August 27, 2024: Information Session
- October 1, 2024 – Deadline to submit applications
- November 1, 2024 – April 27, 2025: Productions must occur during this time to be adjudicated.
- April 29, 2025: Finalists and Nominations announced
- May 2-3, 2025: Diamond Awards Rehearsals
- May 4, 2025: Dress Rehearsal and Diamond Awards Show

[Diamond Awards School Application Form](#)



Rules and Guidelines:

- The Diamond Awards is open to all high schools producing a qualifying musical in Arkansas, as defined by the [National High School Musical Theatre Awards](#).
- It is recommended, but not required, that high schools be within a 2.5 hour driving distance from Walton Arts Center.
- Each high school may only participate in one Regional Awards Program.
- Each high school may only submit one application for one production per school year.
- Use of vocal tracks or “sweetener tracks” during the submitted musical is not permitted, as it does not allow for accurate or fair adjudication. Only instrumental tracks/recordings may be used in performances.
- Per the NHSMTA program, students are adjudicated in the category corresponding to their gender identification, not the gender of the role that they played. Students identifying as non-binary or gender-fluid may choose to either select the category in which they wish to be adjudicated (regardless of the gender of the role) OR they may be adjudicated based on the gender of the role they played. All casting or script change requests for performances in the NHSMTA program must be approved

beforehand.

- **ALL student finalists and nominees must fall into one of these categories:**
 - They must be enrolled at the participating high school presenting the musical.
 - They are cast in a show at a single-gender school who engages students of different genders to fulfill casting requirements.
 - They are a homeschooled student cast in a participating school's show.

- **Best Actor & Best Actress Finalists:**
 - To be eligible for Best Actor and Best Actress at the Diamond Awards and compete at the NHSMTA, students must perform a role considered a qualifying role in an approved musical by the NHSMTA.
 - The full list and guidelines can be found on the [National Awards website](#).
 - Finalists must be a current high school student, grades 9 through 12.
 - A finalist may participate in one (1) Regional Awards Program only.
 - All students performing qualifying roles in an approved musical may be adjudicated. Teachers will not be asked to nominate individual students for awards. Best Actor and Best Actress finalists will be chosen by the adjudicators that attend the performances.

- **Best Supporting Performers** must be enrolled at the participating high school, presenting the musical. These awards are chosen at the discretion of the adjudicators.

Adjudication Process – The Diamond Awards uses a 2-step adjudication process to determine finalists for Best Actor and Best Actress. Utilizing a comprehensive rubric provided by the Diamond Awards, the Best Actor and Best Actress winners are determined by a combined total score of the following:

1. **High school musical production:**
 - A panel of 2-3 theater professionals will view and evaluate a performance of each participating school's musical production.
 - Adjudicators will review all qualifying roles in the approved musical to determine Lead finalists and Supporting nominees.
2. **Audition during Diamond Awards Rehearsals:**
 - Each finalist for Best Actor and Best Actress will perform one 32-bar cut from a song of their choice from a NHSMTA approved musical.
 - This is a private audition in front of a panel of adjudicators.

Responsibilities

Teacher/Director Responsibilities

- Act as the primary liaison between Walton Arts Center’s Diamond Awards and the school.
- Attend Information Session- August 27, 2024
- Provide high quality photographs of your production to Walton Arts Center for use during and for promotion of the Diamond Awards.
- Provide full cast list with student names.
- Retain sheet music from your production through June, 2025, and submit sheet music for students who are finalists in the Diamond awards, and sheet music or a recorded track for the Ensemble Performance Award recipient.
- Distribute information and updates regarding the Diamond Awards to the students and school community.
- Respond to correspondence from Walton Arts Center in a timely manner.
- Be responsible for making production sheet music available to Walton Arts Center.
- Assist in preparing students selected to perform in the awards show.
- Ensure the school list/acknowledge their participation in the Diamond Awards, including the show date of May 4, 2025, in the program for their musical production. The logo and copy will be provided to schools.

Tickets for Adjudicators

- Schools must provide up to 7 complimentary tickets (2 for each adjudicator and 1 for a Walton Arts Center staff member) for performance dates selected to review.
- Tickets should be held at the box office for adjudicators under “Diamond Awards.”

Best Actor and Best Actress Finalists Responsibilities

- Must be available for the Diamond Awards rehearsals and show: May 2-4, 2025.
- Provide current color headshots. (If you need help getting quality headshots, please email diamondawards@waltonartscenter.org)
- Sign participation forms- including personal release, waiver, photo/video release.
- Prepare a 32-bar cut from a NHSMTA qualifying show and role for a panel of judges. This audition is private.
- Be available and able to travel to NYC for NHSMTA week: June 2025 (exact dates TBD).
- Provide Walton Arts Center with all necessary components to be sent to NHSMTA (Walton Arts Center will assist with completing these).

Adjudicator Responsibilities

- Attend a mandatory training session
- Attend all shows assigned, and will not be assigned to a school for which there may be a conflict of interest.
- Fill out an adjudication form evaluation after every performance, no later than 3 days after seeing the performance.
- Receive and respond to all communications with the Diamond Awards staff.
- Must have reliable transportation.
- Express interest to be considered to adjudicate by filling out the form:

[Adjudicator Interest Form](#)



The Diamond Awards Show Guide

The Diamond Awards show will be held on Sunday, May 4, 2025.

Award Finalists and Schools will be notified of their placement to participate on April 29, 2025. The awards show is filled with performances, including Best Ensemble Performance, group numbers that showcase the talent of Best Actor and Best Actress finalists and Best Supporting Performers, in addition to solos by finalists. Students are performing, not competing during the Diamond Awards show.

Rehearsal dates are Friday, May 2 and Saturday, May 3, with a dress rehearsal and show on Sunday, May 4, 2025. The opening and closing numbers will be rehearsed and performed by finalists for Best Actor & Best Actress and winners of Best Supporting Performers. These students will need to be excused from classes on Friday, May 2 for rehearsal.

Schools and Students Performing and Receiving Awards

Directors are required to submit sheet music for their students who are finalists in the Diamond awards, and sheet music or a recorded track for the Ensemble Performance Award recipient.

Best Actor & Best Actress finalists will be grouped together in medleys of 8-10 students and will perform one 32-bar cut (no longer than 1-minute) from their role performed in their High School Musical. Students in each group may also be asked to perform as ensemble for the other soloists in their medley.

Best Supporting Performers will perform in one group number during the Diamond Awards show.

Best Ensemble Performance award recipient will perform one number from their High School Musical, to be decided by the Teacher/Director and the Musical Director of the Diamond Awards.

Sparkle Award for Outstanding Educator nominations may be submitted by students, fellow educators, and parents of students. The winner of this award will be decided by a panel of judges, and the award will be presented at the Diamond Awards.

Tickets for Performers & Directors:

Complimentary tickets are distributed as follows:

- Teacher/Director main contact will receive two (2) comp tickets.
- Schools receiving Best Performance by an Ensemble will receive up to fourteen (14) comp tickets for the ensemble performers.
- Best Supporting Performer nominees will each receive one (1) comp ticket.
- The Teacher receiving the Sparkle Award for Outstanding Educator will receive two (2) comp tickets.

Tickets for Non-Performers:

Tickets will be available to purchase at www.waltonartscenter.org or by calling the Box Office at #479-443-5600.