

DIAMOND *AWARDS*



**Shining a spotlight
on the stars of tomorrow!**

The Diamond Awards Program and Show Guidebook

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For questions, email diamondawards@waltonartscenter.org

To learn more about the National High School Musical Theatre Awards, visit jimmyawards.com.

DIAMOND AWARDS



PRESENTED BY
Walton Arts Center



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

Participation is FREE. There is no fee to apply or participate.

- + Teachers register their high school musical for the Diamond Awards.
- + Adjudicators are sent to your school's musical.
- + Students receive written feedback for their performance.
- + The top placing students are invited to participate in the Diamond Awards "bootcamp" and perform during the awards ceremony on **May 23, 2026** at Walton Arts Center.
 - + The Best Lead Actor and Best Lead Actress winners will advance to New York City to compete in the Broadway League Foundation's National High School Musical Theatre Awards®, "The Jimmy Awards®."
 - + Walton Arts Center will cover the cost of this trip for the two winners. Once there, they'll receive training from Broadway professionals and compete for The Jimmy Award for Best Lead Actor and Best Lead Actress.

Diamond Award Categories

- + Best Lead Actor
- + Best Lead Actress
- + Best Supporting Performers
- + Best Ensemble Performance
- + Spirit of the Diamonds
- + Outstanding Performance Recognition in Vocal, Acting, or Dance
- + Sparkle Award for Outstanding Educator
- + Student Reporter

How to Register

Teachers or Directors may complete the Diamond Awards Registration 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:

October 1

Deadline to submit registration

November 21

Student Reporter registration deadline

November 1– April 24

Productions must occur during this time to be adjudicated

April 27

Finalists Announced

May 20-23

Diamond Awards Rehearsals (students may need to be excused from classes)

May 23

The Diamond Awards

June 22

The Jimmy Awards



Diamond Awards School Application Form

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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 (AKA The Jimmys).
- + 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.
- + Only instrumental tracks/recordings or live musicians may be used for accompaniment during performances.
- + 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.

Adjudication Process

Utilizing a comprehensive rubric provided by the Diamond Awards, the Best Lead Actor and Best Lead Actress winners are determined by a combined total score of the following 2-step adjudication process:

1. Performance in high school musical:

- + 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 and Supporting finalists.

2. Audition during Diamond Awards Rehearsals:

- + Each finalist for Best Lead Actor and Best Lead 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. This song should not be from your high school musical role.

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Best Lead Actor & Best Lead Actress

- + To be eligible for Best Lead Actor and Best Lead 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.
- + 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 will be adjudicated. Teachers will not be asked to nominate individual students for awards.
- + Best Lead Actor and Best Lead Actress finalists will be determined by the adjudication scores. Winners will be determined using the 2-step process above.

Best Supporting Performers

- + Must be enrolled at the participating high school presenting the musical.
- + Supporting Performer nominations & awards are chosen at the discretion of the adjudicators.
- + All nominated supporting performers will be invited to participate in a portion of the Diamond Awards rehearsals May 22 & perform during the show on May 23.

Best Ensemble Performance

- + Students must be enrolled at the participating high school presenting the musical.
- + Best Ensemble Performance nominations & awards are chosen at the discretion of the adjudicators.
- + The ensemble will be invited to perform a group number from their musical during The Diamond Awards show. To provide time to prepare, they will be notified on April 27.

Spirit of the Diamonds

- + This award is to recognize a student who embodies the spirit of this musical theatre celebration.
- + This award will be determined by votes from students during the Diamond Awards show rehearsal process.

The Sparkle Award for Outstanding Educator

- + This award is to recognize a teacher who has made an impact in the life of their students through arts education.
- + A teacher will be selected from nominations submitted by students, fellow teachers, administrators, and parents.

Outstanding Performance Recognition in Vocal, Acting, or Dance

- + These awards are to recognize students who excel in a particular musical theatre skill.
- + Awards in each category are chosen at the discretion of the adjudicators.

Student Reporter

- + Students must be enrolled at the participating high School presenting the musical.
- + A winner will be selected to submit to The Jimmy Awards.
- + Must be available for the Diamond Awards, May 20-23 and The Jimmy Awards, June 21-23, 2026.

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Responsibilities

Teacher/Director Responsibilities

- + Act as the primary liaison between Walton Arts Center's Diamond Awards and the school.
- + Attend Virtual Information Session
- + 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.
- + 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.
- + Ensure production sheet music is available to Walton Arts Center.
- + Assist in preparing students selected to perform in the awards show.
- + List participation in the Diamond Awards in your musical's playbill. The logo and copy will be provided.
- + 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." Digital tickets should be sent to diamondawards@waltonartscenter.org

Student Responsibilities - Best Lead Actor & Best Lead Actress

- + Must be available for the Diamond Awards rehearsals and show: May 20-23, 2026.
- + Be available and able to travel to NYC for Jimmys week: June 12- 23, 2026.
- + Provide current color headshots. (no selfies)
- + Sign participation forms- including personal release, waiver, photo/video release.
- + Prepare a 32-bar cut from The Jimmys' qualifying show and role for a panel of judges. This audition is private. This song is different from your nominated role's songs, and is up to you to choose the song that shows off your talent.
- + Provide Walton Arts Center with all necessary components to be sent to The Jimmys (We will assist with completing these, if needed: Resume with template provided, Essay, Bio, Response Video, Information and Medical forms, Parent Permission form, etc).

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The Diamond Awards Show

The Diamond Awards show will be held on Saturday, May 23, 2026.

The awards show is filled with performances, including Best Ensemble Performance, group numbers that showcase the talent of Best Lead Actor and Best Lead 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 Thursday, May 21 and Friday, May 22, with a dress rehearsal and show on Saturday, May 23, 2026. The opening and closing numbers will be rehearsed and performed by finalists for Best Lead Actor & Best Lead Actress and winners of Best Supporting Performers. These students may need to be excused from classes on Thursday, May 21 and Friday, May 22 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 Lead Actor & Best Lead 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 twenty (20) 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.

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Diamond Awards 2025-2026 - Student Reporter Search

- Walton Arts Center's Diamond Awards Student Reporter award category recognizes students who have an interest in journalism, film or digital marketing. Up to two students will be selected as the Diamond Awards Student Reporters and are eligible to advance to the National High School Musical Theatre Awards, also known as the Jimmy Awards. This is an opportunity to showcase student creativity and skills in event coverage, visual storytelling, video editing, videography, photography, and/or social media.

Students in the reporter search will get the opportunity to learn from and work with industry professionals. The Student Reporter winners will cover the Diamond Awards rehearsals and show on Walton Arts Center's social media, as well as receive their award on stage during the show on May 23, 2026.

If selected as a national winner for the Jimmy Awards, students will receive an all-expense paid trip to New York City to work directly with the Jimmy Awards digital team, June 21-23, 2026.

For full details on the Jimmy Awards Student Reporter search, please visit:
<https://www.jimmyawards.com/participation/student-reporter-search/>

There is no cost to participate in the Diamond Awards or the Jimmy Awards.

Eligible Students:

- Must be enrolled in a school that is participating in the Diamond Awards. Students may be in the cast of the musical, but not in a Leading Role.
- Must be in grades 9-12.
- Must be available to attend the Diamond Awards (May 23, 2026), as well as the Jimmy Awards in New York City (June 21-23, 2026), should they be selected at the national level.
- Will be required to sign a Code of Conduct and media release.

To Register:

- Students must register themselves for this category by November 21, 2025, via the registration link thediamondawards.org or scanning the QR code:



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Diamond Awards 2025-2026 - Student Reporter Search

Selection:

The Diamond Awards will use a 2-step process to select the Student Reporter winners.

We want to see your personality shine in your videos! Show us how you would use your unique perspective to build interest in and awareness of the Diamond Awards.

The students determined by the submissions board to have the best camera presence, creativity, adherence to the stated guidelines, and other similar criteria, will be chosen as the Diamond Awards Student Reporters. The submission board's determination will not be subject to review.

Video 1: After registering, students will be emailed instructions to create a video in the style of an Instagram Reel/TikTok video and submit to the Diamond Awards by December 23, 2025.

The top Student Reporters will be announced January 30, 2026, to advance to Video 2.

Video 2:

- + In February, Student Reporters will receive additional training from local media professionals.
- + Students will create and submit a draft video using the Jimmy Awards guidelines, due March 23. Feedback will be provided.
- + The final video is due to the Diamond Awards by April 6.
- + Selected Student Reporters will be invited to work with the Diamond Awards team to provide coverage of the Diamond Awards rehearsal process and show.
- + Student Reporter winners will be announced at the Diamond Awards show and will be eligible to advance to the national program, the Jimmy Awards.

Timeline:

- + November 21: Deadline to register for the Student Reporter award category
- + December 23: Submit your 1st video using the instructions sent by the Diamond Awards
- + January 30: Top Student Reporters announced
- + February TBD: hands-on training from media professionals to prepare for Video 2
- + March 23: Draft of 2nd video due (this is the video that may be submitted to the Jimmy Awards)
- + April 6: Final 2nd video due
- + May 21-23: The Diamond Awards – Top Student Reporters will assist with coverage for this event & winners will be announced.
- + June 21-23: The Jimmy Awards

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2025-2026 Diamond Awards

High School Musical Theatre Awards Adjudication Rubric

Individual Performers

CRITERIA	1-3 EMERGING = Rarely	4-6 DEVELOPING = Sometimes	7-9 PROFICIENT = Often	10 EXCELLENT = Always
VOCALS	Performer <i>rarely</i> sang with emotional understanding, adequate volume, proper diction, correct pitch and tone, supported breathing and dramatic expression. Performer <i>rarely</i> executed the correct notes and rhythms. The performer <i>rarely</i> produced a fluid and audibly pleasing quality in music.	Performer <i>sometimes</i> sang with emotional understanding, adequate volume, proper diction, correct pitch and tone, supported breathing, and dramatic expression. Performer <i>sometimes</i> executed the correct notes and rhythms. The performer <i>sometimes</i> produced a fluid and audibly pleasing quality in music.	Performer <i>often</i> sang with emotional understanding, adequate volume, proper diction, correct pitch and tone, supported breathing, and dramatic expression. Performer <i>often</i> executed the correct notes and rhythms. The performer <i>often</i> produced a fluid and audibly pleasing quality in music.	Performer <i>always</i> sang with emotional understanding, adequate volume, proper diction, correct pitch and tone, supported breathing, and dramatic expression. Performer <i>always</i> executed the correct notes and rhythms. The performer <i>always</i> produced a fluid and audibly pleasing quality in music.
ACTING	Pace and physicality <i>rarely</i> supported the performer's understanding of their character, their relationships to other characters, and story context. Dialogue and words were <i>rarely</i> clearly understood with proper pronunciation and articulation for the character.	Pace and physicality <i>sometimes</i> supported the performer's understanding of their character, their relationships to other characters, and story context. Dialogue and words were <i>sometimes</i> clearly understood with proper pronunciation and articulation for the character.	Pace and physicality <i>often</i> supported the performer's understanding of their character, their relationships to other characters, and story context. Dialogue and words were <i>often</i> clearly understood with proper pronunciation and articulation for the character.	Pace and physicality <i>always</i> supported the performer's understanding of their character, their relationships to other characters, and story context. Dialogue and words were <i>always</i> clearly understood with proper pronunciation and articulation for the character.
OVERALL PRESENTATION	Performer <i>rarely</i> demonstrated an overall, cohesive understanding of stage presence, artistic interpretation, and the ability to engage an audience.	Performer <i>sometimes</i> demonstrated an overall, cohesive understanding of stage presence, artistic interpretation, and the ability to engage an audience.	Performer <i>often</i> demonstrated an overall, cohesive understanding of stage presence, artistic interpretation, and the ability to engage an audience.	Performer <i>always</i> demonstrated an overall, cohesive understanding of stage presence, artistic interpretation, and the ability to engage an audience.

2025-2026 Diamond Awards

High School Musical Theatre Awards Adjudication Rubric

Ensemble Performance

CRITERIA	1-3 EMERGING = Rarely	4-6 DEVELOPING = Sometimes	7-9 PROFICIENT = Often	10 EXCELLENT = Always
VOCALS	Ensemble <i>rarely</i> demonstrated effective group musical dynamics and awareness. Ensemble <i>rarely</i> executed the correct notes and rhythms. Ensemble <i>rarely</i> produced a fluid and audibly pleasing quality in music.	Ensemble <i>sometimes</i> demonstrated effective group musical dynamics and awareness. Ensemble <i>sometimes</i> executed the correct notes and rhythms. Ensemble <i>sometimes</i> produced a fluid and audibly pleasing quality in music.	Ensemble <i>often</i> demonstrated effective group musical dynamics and awareness. Ensemble <i>often</i> executed the correct notes and rhythms. Ensemble <i>often</i> produced a fluid and audibly pleasing quality in music.	Ensemble <i>always</i> demonstrated effective group musical dynamics and awareness. Ensemble <i>always</i> executed the correct notes and rhythms. Ensemble <i>always</i> produced a fluid and audibly pleasing quality in music.
ACTING	Ensemble performers <i>rarely</i> interacted as a collective unit, listening to each other and reacting accordingly. Ensemble <i>rarely</i> demonstrated strong characterization, and awareness of relationships to other characters and the context of the story.	Ensemble performers <i>sometimes</i> interacted as a collective unit, listening to each other and reacting accordingly. Ensemble <i>sometimes</i> demonstrated strong characterization, and awareness of relationships to other characters and the context of the story.	Ensemble performers <i>often</i> interacted as a collective unit, listening to each other and reacting accordingly. Ensemble <i>often</i> demonstrated strong characterization, and awareness of relationships to other characters and the context of the story.	Ensemble performers <i>always</i> interacted as a collective unit, listening to each other and reacting accordingly. Ensemble <i>always</i> demonstrated strong characterization, and awareness of relationships to other characters and the context of the story.
DANCING/MOVEMENT	Ensemble <i>rarely</i> knew the choreography/blocking, and <i>rarely</i> demonstrated technique, energy and style throughout the performance.	Ensemble <i>sometimes</i> knew the choreography/blocking, and <i>sometimes</i> demonstrated technique, energy and style throughout the performance.	Ensemble <i>often</i> knew the choreography/blocking, and <i>often</i> demonstrated technique, energy and style throughout the performance.	Ensemble <i>always</i> knew the choreography/blocking, and <i>always</i> demonstrated technique, energy and style throughout the performance.