

TENNESSEE
THEATRE
SINCE 1928

*Marquee
Awards*

MAY 17, 2026

PARTICIPATING SCHOOL
HANDBOOK

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SUMMARY

The Marquee Awards are dedicated to supporting the talents, education, and opportunities of high school theater students in our region to build a strong and inclusive theater community.

This program will consist of two pieces:

🎓 **Education** - Throughout the school year, participating schools have many opportunities for education including workshops with industry and local professionals, performance and production feedback from adjudicators, and nomination and recognition in several award categories.

👥 **Community** - Throughout the school year, participants have many opportunities to come together and get to know one another, outside of educational and professional development opportunities. The Marquee Awards strive to connect and encourage one another, and to build lasting relationships that elevate the the arts community in our region.

The Tennessee Theatre is a member of The Broadway League, the national trade association for the Broadway industry, and sponsors an official Regional Awards Program of the Jimmy Awards®, which allows the Marquee Awards' Outstanding Actress and Actor to participate in the national celebration of outstanding student achievement in high school musical theatre.

Accessibility

The Marquee Awards are committed to creating a welcoming and inclusive environment, where all individuals are treated with dignity and respect. We strive to ensure that every person involved in the awards feels safe, seen, and supported. We celebrate inclusion and are dedicated to fostering an atmosphere based on fairness, character, and community.

The Marquee Awards are committed to ensuring that all participating schools are treated equitably, regardless of their financial resources or available facilities. We recognize that schools vary widely in terms of budgets, access to materials, and production capabilities. Judging and recognition are based on the creativity, dedication, and storytelling demonstrated in each performance—not on the size of a school's budget or the technical resources available. Our goal is to celebrate excellence in high school theatre in a way that is inclusive, fair, and accessible to all.

PARTICIPATION GUIDELINES

Participation Levels

Non-Adjudicated Level

This level is a great fit for programs who:

- ☉ Do not produce a Jimmys eligible musical
- ☉ Produce a Jr. version of a musical, produce scenes from musicals or a musical revue
- ☉ Produce a Jimmys eligible musical but do not want to be considered for award categories specific to their production.

Included in this level:

- ☉ Feedback from adjudicators
- ☉ Recognition of All-Star Cast and Crew members (these students will also be invited to perform in the Awards Ceremony)
- ☉ Invitations to all educational and social activities included in the Marquee Awards Program
- ☉ Social media shout-out promoting your Marquee Awards performance/production

Criteria:

- ☉ Have a teacher at the participating school serving as program contact
- ☉ Produce a musical revue, Jr. edition, musical scenes, or full-length musical
- ☉ School production includes majority students in grades 9-12

Adjudicated Level

This level is great for programs who produce a full-length, Jimmys eligible musical and want to be considered for all awards categories.

Included in this level:

- ☉ Feedback from adjudicators
- ☉ Recognition opportunities in all awards categories (students from each school will also be invited to perform in the Awards Ceremony)
- ☉ Invitations to all educational and social activities included in the Marquee Awards Program
- ☉ Social media shout-out promoting your Marquee Awards production
- ☉ Optional Instagram takeover during Opening Week of your Marquee Awards production

Criteria:

- ☉ Have a teacher at the participating school serving as program contact
- ☉ Produce a full-length, Jimmys eligible musical
- ☉ Production includes majority students in grades 9-12

PARTICIPATION GUIDELINES

Licensing

You should go through the normal process of securing rights for your production. The Theatre will request an extension of your rights on your behalf should your school have students performing in the Awards Ceremony. If you are performing your production with tracks, please still request orchestra scores, as students will be performing with a live band if nominated in certain categories.

Please do not return your music and other materials when your show ends. If you do, you will be responsible for overnighting costs to get music should you be nominated in the Outstanding Overall Musical or Outstanding Lead Actor/Actress categories. Please do not contact licensing houses directly regarding Awards Ceremony performances or license extensions.

Rehearsal Sit-Ins

Each Adjudicated School will have the opportunity for a professional in the area of their choice to come to a rehearsal and provide feedback before opening night. This could include music, lighting, sound, set design, general feedback, etc. This feedback will not in any way impact the school's final adjudication, but will serve as an opportunity to receive feedback and make adjustments in areas that they might not have access to otherwise. This is completely optional, and subject to schedule availability of our feedback providers.

ADJUDICATION

Adjudicator Selection and Training

Our judges for Non-Adjudicated Participants, Adjudicated Participants and Finalist Auditions are all chosen by application submissions, and include community members who work in the arts (technical design, education, vocal instruction, choreography, higher education admissions, etc.) as well as those who previously worked in those fields. All adjudicators take part in training sessions on how to provide appropriate feedback, anti-biased adjudication, and have a deep understanding of musical theater and the Marquee Awards and Jimmy Awards programs.

Not all adjudicators participate in all levels of adjudication.

Non-Adjudicated Participants

All non-adjudicated schools will receive an onsite production evaluation by at least three members of the judges' panel. After the onsite visits, comprehensive written feedback of the performance will be compiled. Feedback will be sent to teachers within one week of the performance, or by April 27, whichever is first. **Adjudication of your performance must occur by April 24, 2025. Please note that for the 2026-27 school year, this deadline will be April 16, 2025.**

Adjudicated Participants

All adjudicated schools will receive an onsite production evaluation by at least five members of the judges' panel. After the onsite visits, comprehensive written feedback and scores of the productions will be completed, using the rubrics included in this packet. If a show is double-cast, it will only be seen once; the school chooses the cast that will be judged. Feedback will be sent to teachers within one week of the performance, or by April 27, whichever is first. **Adjudication of your show must occur by April 24, 2025. Please note that for the 2026-27 school year, this deadline will be April 16, 2025.**

One finalist from each school will be chosen in the categories of Outstanding Lead Actor and Outstanding Lead Actress and will participate in a second round of adjudication on April 29, 2026 at 6pm. Any student performing in a role from the National High School Musical Theatre Awards list of eligible shows and roles is eligible to be chosen. Students will be selected for these auditions based on adjudicator scoring. At this audition, finalists will sing 32 bars from the eligible role that they performed during their school's musical, as well as participate in a dance call for our panel of judges. More information and score sheets can be found later in this packet.

For the purposes of this program, a finalist is a student that performed in a Jimmy Awards eligible role and was selected based on performance scores to participate in the finalist auditions. There will be one Lead Actor and one Lead Actress selected from each school. A nominee is a student that was selected in any of the Award Categories and is eligible to win that award. They will participate in the Awards Ceremony and accept the award should they/their school end up winning.

The final nominations in all categories except Outstanding Lead Actor/Actress will be sent to the schools via email on April 27, 2026, as well as be announced in a streamed announcement video. Outstanding Lead Actor and Actress finalists will also be announced at this time. Outstanding Lead Actor and Actress nominees will be announced on May 1, 2026.

SUBMITTED MATERIALS

Performance Details Form

Once your participation in the Marquee Awards has been confirmed, you will receive a Performance Details Form to complete specific to your school and production. This will be due two weeks prior to your opening night.

Adjudicated Participants

- ⊗ Licensing information
- ⊗ Design and production team information
- ⊗ Selection of one Featured Actor and one Featured Actress to be adjudicated
- ⊗ Confirmation of which Lead Actor and Lead Actress would like to receive feedback and be considered for Finalist Auditions
- ⊗ Any casting changes
- ⊗ Production budget
- ⊗ Information regarding space constraints in your venue
- ⊗ Information regarding rehearsal schedule, amount, etc.
- ⊗ Information regarding any accommodations or medical concerns with your performers
- ⊗ Any other pertinent information you want our adjudicators to be aware of

Non-Adjudicated Participants

- ⊗ Licensing information (if applicable)
- ⊗ Design and production team information
- ⊗ Any casting changes
- ⊗ Production budget
- ⊗ Information regarding space constraints in your venue
- ⊗ Information regarding rehearsal schedule, amount, etc.
- ⊗ Information regarding any accommodations or medical concerns with your performers
- ⊗ Any other pertinent information you want our adjudicators to be aware of

Post-Show Materials

Within two weeks of your production or by April 27, whichever is first, you will be expected to submit the materials listed below via an online folder. The link will be provided once participation is confirmed.

- ⊗ Final program in PDF format (including headshots of performers if at all possible)
- ⊗ Final production budget
- ⊗ Orchestra parts for the song you would perform if nominated for Outstanding Overall Musical (Adjudicated Participants only)
- ⊗ Production Photos (a shot list will be provided in the fall)

COMMUNICATION

It is imperative that efficient communication be present between participating schools' educators, students and the Marquee Awards staff. There is a lot of information being shared, sometimes with quick deadlines and turnarounds. To ensure efficiency and ease for everyone involved, we will outline below some methods of communication and information sharing that will be utilized throughout the school year.

Monthly email newsletter - This will be sent out at the beginning of each month with important updates, workshop opportunities, social events, etc.

Dedicated hidden landing page - This will be a hidden link accessible only to participants where all important documents and materials will live. The link will be shared with participants following the participation application deadline. We will have separate landing pages for educators and students/parents.

Student Liasons - New this year, each participating school will select one student to represent their program and serve as a liason between the Marquee Awards team and their schools. This will allow for a clearer line of communication regarding awards program logistics events, but also ensure that students have a voice in the opportunities offered and growth of the awards program. This group will meet bimonthly, mostly via Zoom.

Zoom Information Meetings - A variety of informational sessions will be held throughout the year, in addition to the in-person Teacher Meeting at the beginning of the school year.

- ☉ Parent informational meeting in January - any interested parent may join to learn more about the logistics of the awards process, what different types of nominations mean, and the Jimmy Awards process
- ☉ Finalist Audition informational meeting in March - any student in a lead eligible role is invited to learn more about the finalist audition process, and an overview of the Jimmy Awards
- ☉ Nominee informational meeting in May - any student accepting an award during the Awards Ceremony will be required to attend a Zoom meeting going over logistics of the ceremony, and what it means to be accepting an award

IMPORTANT DATES

Sept. 2, 2025:	Last day to register to participate (Click here for the form)
Sept. 22 2025:	Mandatory participating teacher meeting and kick-off party
January 2026:	Parent Information Meeting (Zoom)
March 2026:	Finalist Audition Information Meeting (Zoom)
April 24, 2026:	Last day for show adjudication
April 27, 2026:	All nominees announced except Outstanding Lead Actor & Actress (Outstanding Lead Actor & Actress finalists announced)
April 29, 2026:	Finalist Auditions All-Star Cast/Crew nominations due Inspiring Teacher nominations due Student Design submissions due
May 1, 2026:	Outstanding Lead Actor and Actress nominees announced via livestream and email
May 4, 2026:	Student Ticket Requests due Nominee Acceptance Forms due
May 2026:	Nominee Information Meeting (Zoom)
May 15, 2026:	Rehearsal for all performing groups with the band
May 16, 2026:	Educational workshops at Clarence Brown Theatre Rehearsal for all performing students with the band, on-stage
May 17, 2025:	Rehearsal at the Tennessee Theatre (all nominees and performing students) before the Awards Ceremony

AWARD CATEGORIES

Award Categories

The following categories will be awarded at the Marquee Awards Ceremony on May 17, 2026. Some categories are awarded to the school, while others are awarded to individual performers and/or crew members.

Performance Awards

- ✿ Outstanding Ensemble/Chorus
- ✿ Outstanding Choreography Execution
- ✿ Outstanding Overall Musical
- ✿ Outstanding Lead Actor
- ✿ Outstanding Lead Actress
- ✿ Outstanding Featured Actor
- ✿ Outstanding Featured Actress

Nominees in these categories will be determined based on the criteria and scoring system detailed later in this packet. For Outstanding Featured Actor and Actress, teachers will submit one role in each category to be adjudicated when submitting their Performance Details Form. A list of roles to choose from will be provided, and the role should have at least one solo number in the production.

Student Design Awards

- ✿ Outstanding Scenic Design (can include entire production or individual elements of the set)
- ✿ Outstanding Lighting Design
- ✿ Outstanding Scenic Artistry
- ✿ Outstanding Poster Design
- ✿ Outstanding Prop Design
- ✿ Outstanding Costume Design
- ✿ Outstanding Choreography Design

Nominees in these categories will submit materials of their designs, which will then be adjudicated based on the criteria and scoring system detailed later in this packet.

Student Reporter

The Marquee Awards will invite one (1) Student Reporter from each participating Adjudicated School to participate in activities throughout the school year. This provides a chance to expand connections into local schools' journalism, film, and other related departments. Student Reporters work directly with the Tennessee Theatre Digital team which allows them to receive an insider look at the digital marketing strategy of Marquee Awards coverage while gaining insight into the field as a whole. More information can be found on Page 12.

All-Star Cast & Crew Members

Nominees in each of these categories will be submitted by teachers or other students working on their productions and cannot be students who are already finalists for Outstanding Lead Actor or Actress. One student from each participating school will be recognized in each category.

Inspiring Teacher

Nominees in this category will be submitted by students working on their productions and should be teachers involved with their school's theater program, such as Music Director, Director, Drama Teacher, etc. Nominees must be a staff member at their school. One teacher will be recognized, and the winner will be announced at the live Awards Ceremony.

JUDGING CRITERIA & DEFINITIONS

Outstanding Lead Actor & Actress, Outstanding Featured Actor & Actress

Definitions

With the understanding that the judges are experts in different areas of the theater, we are providing brief explanations of the judging criteria:

Acting

☉ **Natural Ability:** Instinctive talent and using sensitivity in creating an imaginary environment.

☉ **Characterization:** Ability to make choices that remain true to the character and maintaining throughout the show, develops a strong relationship with other characters.

Vocal

☉ **Diction/Vocal Production:** Performances are vocally appropriate, consistent, and easy to hear and understand.

☉ **Musicianship:** Execution of notes and rhythms, ability to sing on pitch and demonstrate a range of volume and emotion.

☉ **Characterization:** Ability to make choices that remain true to the character in song or spoken word.

Movement

☉ **Technique:** Skill and execution of the movement, the ability to perform the choreography cleanly and in sync with the others.

☉ **Characterization:** Appropriate movement and energy for the particular character, scene, or show.

Scoring Method

- 0 – 3 Fair - Rarely
- 4 – 6 Good - Sometimes
- 7 – 9 Excellent - Often
- 10 Superior - Always

JUDGING CRITERIA & DEFINITIONS

Outstanding Ensemble/Chorus, Choreography Execution & Overall Musical

Definitions

With the understanding that the judges are experts in different areas of the theater, we are providing brief explanations of the judging criteria:

Overall Ensemble: The ability for performers to consistently sing and act as one cohesive unit while also showing individual characters. Actively engages, enhances world of the play and drives story.

Choreography: Narrative, creative, style, characterization, level of difficulty, and execution.

Set Design: The level of style, structure, and use of space.

Costume Design: The ability for costumes to be thoughtful and relevant to the story.

Lighting Design: The use of color, atmosphere, time, and cueing.

Overall Presentation: Overall presentation of technical execution and musical direction. Cohesiveness and vocal capabilities of ensemble. Ease of set changes, limited distractions, timing, and execution of cues. Quality of every aspect of the performance. Interpretation, casting, use of space, consistency, artistic vision, clarity of story.

Suggested Additional Comments:

- ☉ What did you enjoy most?
- ☉ What were the strongest points?
- ☉ What could be improved?
- ☉ What was creative or exciting?

Scoring Method

- 0 - 3 Fair - Rarely
- 4 - 6 Good - Sometimes
- 7 - 9 Excellent - Often
- 10 Superior - Always

JUDGING CRITERIA & DEFINITIONS

Student Design

Definitions

With the understanding that the judges are experts in different areas of the theater, we are providing brief explanations of the judging criteria:

Natural Ability: Student(s) can elaborate an idea, theme, or personal interpretation to a point of realization, and shows the ability to apply artistic processes involved in designing.

Ingenuity: Design element displays creative new ideas, techniques, and is not a clear copy of previous productions.

Design Details: The design captures the essence of the musical by including details that accurately reflect the period, culture, or theme.

Reflection: Student(s) answer reflective questions on portfolio applications with intelligence, detail, and clear passion.

For Set, Props and Costuming Only:

Technique: Skills and techniques are applied at a high level of proficiency (ie. sewing, set construction, painting techniques).

For Choreography Only:

Technique: Skills and execution of the movement, displays a clear understanding of musicality, the ability to design complex and creative choreography that serves show.

Characterization: Appropriate movement was designed for the character(s), scene, or show.

Scoring Method

- 0 - 3 Fair - Rarely
- 4 - 6 Good - Sometimes
- 7 - 9 Excellent - Often
- 10 Superior - Always

JUDGING CRITERIA

Student Reporter

Overview

The Marquee Awards will invite five (5) Student Reporter nominees from participating Adjudicated Schools to cover 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 Tennessee Theatre Digital team which allows them to receive an insider look at the digital marketing strategy of Marquee Awards coverage while gaining insight into the field as a whole.

At the Marquee Awards Ceremony on May 17, 2025, two Student Reporter winners will be announced, who will be eligible to participate in the nationwide Jimmy Awards Student Reporter search.

All Student Reporter applicants (1 per participating school) will have the opportunity to participate in activities throughout the 2025-26 school year.

Participation

During the school year, Student Reporter will:

- ✿ Manage their school's Instagram takeover on the Marquee Awards' account
- ✿ Send Reel/TikTok content for us to post featuring their school
- ✿ Send interviews with nominees and teachers leading up to the Awards Ceremony
- ✿ Provide show announce graphic for our Instagram account

During the ceremony, the five nominees will:

- ✿ Conduct interviews during workshops (students and teachers)
- ✿ Run Instagram and TikTok content day of the ceremony, working with our team
- ✿ Conduct red carpet interviews pre-show on ceremony day

Application

Make a video in the style of an Instagram Reel/TikTok video showcasing your ideas for how to share nominee experiences on the day of the ceremony. Then, write a sample caption to accompany your Reel/TikTok video.

Please ensure your video submission meets the following guidelines:

- ✿ The video should include at least one unedited segment of at least 20 seconds in length with the applicant speaking directly to camera.
- ✿ The video must not include any performance footage; the content of the videos is otherwise up to the applicant.
- ✿ Any pre-recorded music used must be royalty-free
- ✿ Submissions must meet the requirements for an Instagram Reel/TikTok video with an aspect ratio between 1.91:1 and 9:16 and minimum resolution of 720 pixels.

We want to see your personality shine in this video! Show us how you would use your unique perspective to build interest in and awareness of the Marquee Awards. This is an opportunity to showcase your creativity and skills in event coverage, visual storytelling, video editing, videography, photography, and/or social media.

JUDGING CRITERIA

Student Reporter

Selection Process

All students who apply (1 per school) will be selected to participate in Student Reporter activities throughout the 2025-26 school year.

Up to five (5) candidates will be chosen based on their submission as nominees, who will participate in Marquee Awards Ceremony activities on May 16 and 17, 2026, and two (2) will ultimately be chosen as Marquee Awards Student Reporter winners based on qualitative assessments and quantitative metrics explained further below.

The five (5) nominees will be chosen based on their initial application, applicant's camera presence, creativity, adherence to the stated guidelines, communication with Marquee Awards staff throughout the school year, and other similar criteria. Nominees will be announced on April 27 with all other awards categories.

To determine the two (2) winners, the Reel/TikTok submitted with each nominees' application will be posted on Marquee Awards channels and video analytics will be reviewed, which includes, but is not limited to:

- ✿ The number of unique users who saw the applicants' page
- ✿ The number of times the applicants' page was seen as a total count
- ✿ The number of impressions of the applicant's post in a News Feed
- ✿ The number of unique users who clicked anywhere in the applicant's post
- ✿ The total number of clicks in the applicant's post
- ✿ Both the total count and number of unique users who have given negative feedback to the applicant's post
- ✿ Both the total count and number of unique users who have liked the applicant's Page
- ✿ The number of people who clicked on the post because they liked the applicant's post
- ✿ The number of people who liked the applicant's page and clicked on the applicant's post
- ✿ Both the total count and number of unique users who watched 95% of the applicant's video (excluding paid promotion)
- ✿ Both the total count and unique users who watched the video for 3 seconds (excluding paid promotion), and the length of the video.

Student Reporters will be required to sign a media release.

FINALIST AUDITIONS

On Wednesday, April 29 we will be holding finalist auditions. These auditions will be for the Outstanding Lead Actor and Actress finalists, of which there will be two from each school (one in the Actor category and one in the Actress category). Finalists will be determined based on adjudicator scores. In the event of a tie, multiple students from the same school may be asked to participate. Teachers will be notified of the finalists from their school on Monday, April 27, following the final performances that adjudicators attend on April 24. With this email, you will also be sent a form that each finalist must complete.

While students are not auditioning, there will be brief interviews with finalists with the team from Rustic Roots Creative. These interviews will be used in nominee videos during the ceremony, as well as in promotional materials for the Marquee Awards in the future.

In order to determine final nominees in the Outstanding Lead Actor and Actress categories, scores from the on-site adjudication of the student's production will be combined with scores from the finalist auditions. In order to prepare students for the Jimmy Awards and careers as performers, the finalist audition score will be weighted at 60%, while the other 40% will be the student's performance score.

The Process

In front of a panel of judges, students will perform 32 bars of a song from their eligible role with an accompanist, as well as participate in a dance call that has been used in the past for the Jimmy Awards. The dance call will be taught on-site during the auditions. Students are expected to bring their own copy of their sheet music for the accompanist. These will be closed auditions. No parents, teachers or other students will be permitted in the audition room. Students will randomly be assigned numbers to determine the audition order.

Schedule

5:30-8pm - Vocal auditions

8-8:15pm - BREAK

8:15-8:45pm - Dance call

Attire

Please have students wear something that they can move comfortably and feel confident in. There is no dress code.

FINALIST AUDITION CRITERIA & DEFINITIONS

VOCAL CALL

Definitions

With the understanding that the judges are experts in different areas of the theater, we are providing brief explanations of the judging criteria:

Technique

🎵 **Diction & Vocal Production:** Performances are vocally appropriate, consistent, and easy to hear and understand.

🎵 **Musicianship:** Execution of notes and rhythms, ability to sing on pitch and demonstrate a range of volume and emotion.

Scoring Method

Excellent (10): Demonstrates precise and flawless execution of vocal elements, with noticeable flexibility and control.

Good (4-6): Displays solid execution with minor technical imperfections and some flexibility.

Fair (0-3): Shows basic execution but lacks consistency, with little flexibility.

Artistry & Style

🎵 **Characterization:** Ability to make choices that remain true to character in song or spoken word.

Scoring Method

Excellent (10): Demonstrates a well-rounded and nuanced artistic interpretation.

Good (4-6): Generally solid artistic interpretation with some room for improvement.

Fair (0-3): Adequate artistic interpretation, lacks consistency.

FINALIST AUDITION CRITERIA & DEFINITIONS

DANCE CALL

Definitions

With the understanding that the judges are experts in different areas of the theater, we are providing brief explanations of the judging criteria:

Technique

🎯 **Execution:** The ability to perform dance movements with precision and accuracy, paying attention to proper form and alignment.

🎯 **Flexibility & Control:** The extent to which a dancer can move their joints through a full range of motion, showcasing flexibility and fluidity in movement.

Scoring Method

Excellent (10): Demonstrates precise and flawless execution of dance movements, with noticeable flexibility and control.

Good (4-6): Displays solid execution with minor technical imperfections and some flexibility.

Fair (0-3): Shows basic execution but lacks consistency, with little flexibility.

Artistry & Style

🎯 **Emotional Connection/Stage Presence:** Performances are vocally appropriate, consistent, and easy to hear and understand.

🎯 **Musicality:** Execution of notes and rhythms, ability to sing on pitch and demonstrate a range of volume and emotion.

Scoring Method

Excellent (10): Expresses a strong emotional connection to the music and theme, with seamless musicality.

Good (4-6): Demonstrates some emotional connection with occasional lapses and an understanding of musicality,

Fair (0-3): Struggles to convey consistent emotion throughout the performance, with little to no musicality.