

NEWS



Kansas City
Starlight
Theatre

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STARLIGHT THEATRE SPONSORS BLUE STAR AWARD WINNERS TO COMPETE IN NEW YORK CITY

Lead actor, actress honorees will vie for four-year scholarships to NYU's Tisch School of the Arts

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – Two local winners in Starlight Theatre's 2009 Blue Star Awards competition depart this week on a five-day journey to New York City, where they'll participate in the first annual National High School Musical Theater Awards. Johnson Countians Samantha Steinmetz, 18, and Keegan Rice, 17, are among 32 teens who will compete for The Jimmy Award for Best Performance by an Actress and Best Performance by an Actor.

And, when the two national winners are announced at a June 29 ceremony at New York University's Skirball Center for the Performing Arts, they'll grab more than the spotlight that evening. They'll each receive a four-year scholarship opportunity from the esteemed Department of Drama at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts.

Niederlander Presentations, Inc. and Pittsburgh CLO are co-producers and founding partners of the first National High School Musical Theater Awards. The Jimmy Awards, sponsored by NYU's

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Department of Drama, are named in honor of legendary Broadway theater owner and producer James M. Nederlander.

“New York University’s sponsorship of the National High School Musical Theater Awards reflects the importance and growing popularity of the amateur musical theater movement in high schools around the country,” said Van Kaplan, executive producer of Pittsburgh CLO and co-producer of the National High School Musical Theater Awards.

Starlight Theatre is sponsoring the local participants, who earned their place in the national competition when they took home top honors in Starlight’s Blue Star Awards program last month. At the May 21 Blue Star ceremony, Steinmetz won the 2009 Blue Star Award for “Outstanding Actress in a Leading Role” for her performance as Dorothy Brock in Blue Valley High School’s production of *42nd Street*. Steinmetz graduated from Blue Valley in May. “When I was Dorothy, I forgot all of my insecurities and I loved myself,” Steinmetz wrote in her NHSMTA nomination essay. “I learned to trust myself. And, most importantly, I learned how to believe in myself.”

Rice won the Blue Star Award for “Outstanding Actor in a Leading Role” for his performance as Ren in Shawnee Mission West High School’s production of *Footloose*. “I would much rather live in a world where people are prone to break out in song and dance, where the plot is always pre-defined and repeatable, and conflicts are expressed openly and passionately,” Rice, who just completed his junior year, explained in his nomination essay.

Steinmetz, Rice and 30 other teen performers from across the nation will participate in musical theater rehearsals, master classes, private coaching and interviews with theater professionals at the NYU campus in the days leading up to The Jimmy Awards.

“High school musical theater is often the first point of incubation for the performers of tomorrow,” said Kent Gash, director of the Tisch School of the Arts’ Studio on Broadway: Music Theatre and Acting. “We in musical theater here at Tisch School of the Arts are eager to celebrate the work of these talented young people and are delighted to be able to encourage arts education and the development of the nation’s best and brightest young performers through supporting The Jimmys!”

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Starlight Theatre is one of 16 regional theatres with high school musical theatre award programs that are participating in the first NHSMTA competition. The other participants are Casa Mañana, Fort Worth, Texas; Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre, Atlanta; FCLO Music Theatre, Fullerton, Calif.; Helen Hayes Youth Theatre, Nyack, N.Y.; Hershey Theatre, Hershey, Pa.; McCoy Rigby Entertainment, La Mirada, Calif.; Music Theatre of Wichita, Wichita, Kan.; North Carolina Theatre, Raleigh, N.C.; North Shore Music Theatre, Beverly, Mass.; Paper Mill Playhouse, Millburn, N.J.; Pittsburgh CLO, Pittsburgh; Rochester Broadway Theatre League, Rochester, N.Y.; The Old Globe, San Diego; The Spirit of Broadway Theater, Norwich, Conn.; and Theatre Under the Stars, Houston.

NOTE: NYU scholarship recommendations will be made by the Tisch School of the Arts faculty and all recommended students must meet all of the school's admission criteria.

STARLIGHT THEATRE BLUE STAR AWARDS

Patterned after Broadway's Tony Awards®, Starlight's Blue Star Awards recognize exceptional achievement in musical theatre at the high school level. During the 2009-09 school year, 44 Kansas City area high schools producing 48 musicals participated in Blue Star. The educational awards program, which will enter its eighth year this fall, is sponsored by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas City. The complete list of 2009 Blue Star Award recipients is below:

Outstanding Overall Production

Lee's Summit North High School *Les Misérables*

Outstanding Direction by a Teacher

Shawnee Mission North High School Maureen Davis, *Sweeney Todd*

Outstanding Musical Direction

Lee's Summit North High School *Les Misérables*

Outstanding Choreography & Staging

Harrisonville High School *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*

Outstanding Orchestra

Olathe North High School *Brigadoon*

Outstanding Scenic Design, Tier I

Grandview High School *Willy Wonka, Jr.*

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Outstanding Scenic Design, Tier II

Central High School *The King and I*

Outstanding Lighting Design

Lee's Summit West High School *Footloose*

Outstanding Technical Crew

Lee's Summit West High School *Footloose* Set Crew

Outstanding Costume Design

Central High School *The King and I*

Outstanding Hair and Makeup Design

Shawnee Mission North High School *Sweeney Todd*

Outstanding Graphic Design

Raymore-Peculiar High School *The Scarlet Pimpernel*

Outstanding Lobby Design

The Barstow School *Rent*

Outstanding Chorus

Paola High School *A Year with Frog and Toad*

Outstanding Actress in a Leading Role

Blue Valley High School Samantha Steinmetz as Dorothy Brock
42nd Street

Outstanding Actor in a Leading Role

Shawnee Mission West High School Keegan Rice as Ren
Footloose

Outstanding Actress in a Supporting Role

St. James Academy Julia Griffin as Miss Hannigan
Annie

Outstanding Actor in a Supporting Role

The Barstow School Blake Karsten Beaver as Angel Schunard
Rent

Outstanding Featured Performance

Shawnee Mission South High School Evan Michael Haas as Tobias Ragg
Sweeney Todd

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Outstanding Character Performance

Shawnee Mission West High School

David Gomez as Willard
Footloose

Outstanding Ensemble Member

Olathe South High School

Hannah Kallenbach as Silly Girl #3
Beauty and the Beast

Outstanding Group Ensemble

Central High School

Uncle Thomas Ensemble
The King and I

Outstanding Technical Achievement

Shawnee Mission Northwest High School
Raymore-Peculiar High School

Samantha Kendrick
Devin Connelly

Rising Star Scholarship Recipients

Grandview High School
Piper High School

Megan Herrera
Kent Reynolds

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