

S T A R L I G H T
Blue Star
◆ A W A R D S ◆

2025-2026 Rules and Guidelines

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Presented by Starlight the Blue Star Awards are generously supported by an anonymous donor with support from Jeff Ayers, The Jeannette & Jerome Cohen Philanthropic Fund of the Jewish Community Foundation of Greater Kansas City (participation sponsors for The Jimmy Awards), Southwest Airlines (travel sponsor for The Jimmy Awards), and Starlight's community engagement program benefactors.

Section 1 – Participant Eligibility

The Blue Star Awards celebrate outstanding achievement in high school musical theatre across the Kansas City region. Schools may participate via two paths:

Path #1 (Adjudicated Productions) – Full participation with eligibility for all award categories.

Path #2 (Student-Submitted Categories Only) – Participation, without adjudicated productions, in all student-submitted categories (excluding The Jimmy Awards – Actor/Actress category).

A. Participation Eligibility:

Path #1 (adjudicated production)

- Public or private high school located within a driving distance of 60 miles from Starlight Theatre
- Participating schools from previous seasons are exempt from the mileage limit.
- \$100 registration fee due by December 1, 2025
- Musical must be performed between October 20, 2025-March 8, 2026
- Musical must be a published musical, operetta or revue from a licensing house or in the public domain, an original musical theatre piece, or a compilation of materials with proper permissions by the creators.
- Include Blue Star Awards logo copy in show program (provided after registration confirmation)
- Have a teacher or administrator complete all required forms

Path #2 (student-submitted categories only)

- Must be a 9-12 grade student attending a school (private, public, homeschool) within a driving distance of 80 miles from Starlight Theatre
- No registration fee required.
- Register through the Starlight website for participation by December 8.
- Registration can be made by a school representative on behalf of their students or by an individual student.
- If it is a student registering, they must include a teacher, coach, or parent/guardian contact on the registration.
- Once registered, it is on the student to submit in a category for consideration.
- Students attending Path #1 participating schools are already eligible in these categories and do not need to submit a Path #2 registration.

Section 2 – Key Dates

PARTICIPATION DEADLINES	
Friday, October 3	Deadline to submit Student Council applications
Monday, December 8	Deadline to sign up for Dream Production Award, Student Reporter, and Path #2 Participation
Monday, January 26	Deadline for Rising Star Scholarships (sophomore, junior, senior), Technical Contribution Award, Creative Contribution Award, and Student Reporter Submissions
Friday, January 30	Deadline to RSVP for Ceremony Ensemble and National High School Musical Theatre Awards (The Jimmy Awards) auditions
AUDITION DATES (held at Starlight Theatre)	
Thursday, February 5	Ceremony Ensemble Auditions; 4:30 p.m. (50 spots available)
Saturday, February 7	NHSMTA Auditions; 10:00 a.m. (35 spots available)
Tuesday, February 17	NHSMTA Auditions; 4:30 p.m. (35 spots available), Ceremony Ensemble Virtual Path submissions due
Saturday, February 21	Ceremony Ensemble Auditions; 10:00 a.m. (50 spots available)
Sunday, February 22	NHSMTA Auditions; 2:00 p.m. (35 spots available)
INFO SESSIONS	
Monday, January 19	Musical Theatre Audition Workshop at Starlight; 4:30 p.m.
Tuesday, January 27	NHSMTA/The Jimmy Awards Zoom Info Session; 4:00 p.m. (Zoom information available on the program webpage)

Section 3 – Participant Benefits

A. **Adjudicator Commentary**

Starlight will provide Path #1 schools with adjudicated productions a summary report of adjudicator comments. These reports are intended to give teachers educational feedback to share with their students and to consider for future productions.

B. **Noncompetitive Offerings**

Students in grades 10-12 are eligible to serve as members of the Blue Star Awards Student Council. Details and application information will be shared with teachers and posted on our website. Starlight may also host workshops and events during the 2025-2026 season. These noncompetitive offerings are not mandatory but will be offered at a free or reduced cost to students.

C. **Blue Star Teen Ensemble**

When Starlight self-produces a show requiring a teen ensemble, all Blue Star Awards participating students are one of the select pools allowed to audition.

Section 4 – Categories

A. Adjudicated Production Categories (Only Path #1)

Blue Star Awards are presented, based on the adjudication/nomination process and tiered by production budget (one award per budget tier), in the following categories: Outstanding Orchestra, Outstanding Costume Design, Outstanding Scenic Design, Outstanding Hair and Makeup Design, Outstanding Lighting Design, Outstanding Technical Crew, Outstanding Ensemble, Outstanding Performer in a Featured Role, Outstanding Performer in a Supporting Role, Outstanding Performer in a Lead Role, Outstanding Overall Production

B. Eligibility Restrictions (Only Path #1)

- Only high school students are eligible to receive nominations and awards.
- If adults are used for lead or supporting roles, the production will not be eligible for Outstanding Overall Production.
- If more than 5% of the ensemble is composed of adults, the production will not be eligible for Outstanding Overall Production.
- For the Outstanding Ensemble category, if any adults perform as ensemble members, the school will not be considered.
- Determination of eligibility will be based on information provided by the school in the Production Information Form.
- For the Outstanding Orchestra category, only schools composed of 75% or more student musicians will be eligible.
- For Outstanding Scenic Design and Outstanding Costume Design categories, schools that rent 50% or more of their sets or costumes will be ineligible.
- For all technical categories, if more than 25% of the work was done by adults, the school will not be eligible for the applicable category.

C. Budget Tiers (Only Path #1)

All production categories are divided into two tiers based upon the overall budgets submitted by the schools. Budget tiers are defined annually by evenly dividing the schools into higher (Tier II) or lower (Tier I) tiers by the budgets provided on the Production Information Form. Schools will have the opportunity to provide an updated budget in the spring, prior to the tiering process.

D. The Jimmy Awards – Actor and Actress (Only Path #1)

Starlight plans to participate in the 2026 National High School Musical Theatre Awards (NHSMTA), also known as The Jimmy Awards. Any student who was cast and performed a qualifying role in their adjudicated high school production (based upon the annual NHSMTA qualifying roles list) is eligible to audition for this category. Students submitting in this category **CANNOT** audition for The Jimmy Awards – Student Reporter category. By auditioning for this category, students commit to attend rehearsals in April/May, perform in a character medley during the Blue Star Awards Ceremony, and be available to attend NHSMTA in New York City. Six finalists will be announced in this category. All six finalists will receive a \$500 monetary award. A full list of dates will be included in the audition notice.

1. To be considered for this category, students must RSVP by **January 30, 2026**. Auditions will include:

- One-minute or less cut of a song from their school role
 - One-minute or less cut of a Broadway solo
2. Following a required April/May rehearsal process, the six nominees will audition again for adjudicators. Two winners and two alternates will be determined from this audition. In the second audition, students will perform a group character medley and two contrasting one-minute Broadway solos. Starlight's creative team will determine the songs for the character medley. Students will receive guidance in selecting the one-minute Broadway solo songs.

E. Community Impact Award (Only Path #1)

1. This award recognizes a high school musical theatre program that found a way/s to connect to their community, whether through productions or troupe initiatives. The winner receives a trophy and \$1,000 monetary award to utilize within their department. The application will be emailed to teachers in the spring. **This application process must be initiated by a teacher.**
2. To be considered for an award, the following must be submitted by **March 3, 2026**:
 - a one- to two-page summary of your community engagement initiative, including examples of cast/crew/troupe participation;
 - additional supplemental materials; and
 - one to four photos from the project.

F. Blue Star Awards Ceremony Ensemble (Path #1 and Path #2)

Open auditions will be held at Starlight for students who would like to be considered in this category. The audition will consist of performing a one-minute cut of a musical theatre song and participating in a dance call. Starlight's creative team will select nominees to participate in a production number at the May ceremony. By auditioning, students commit to attend listed rehearsals in April/May and perform in the Blue Star Awards Ceremony. Four nominees will receive \$400 monetary awards based off their auditions. Students must perform in the Ceremony to be eligible for these awards. A full list of dates will be included in the audition notice.

G. Creative Contribution Award (Path #1 and Path #2)

1. This award recognizes students who contributed in the areas of direction, music direction and/or choreography (either at their schools or other venues). The winner receives a trophy and \$400 monetary award. Students at all high school grade levels may be considered. **This application process should be initiated by a student.**
2. To qualify, the student/s had to have taken full responsibility for directing one or more scenes, teaching and working with performers/musicians in learning one or more songs, and/or creating and teaching the choreography for one or more songs.
3. To be considered for the award, the following must be submitted by **January 26, 2026**:
 - Creative Contribution Award Application;
 - a one-page essay written by the student/s;
 - a statement of 500 words or less from the recommending teacher/advisor that provides details about the student's/students' contributions and why they feel the student/s should be considered for the award; and
 - electronic portfolio of support materials pertaining to the student's area(s) of expertise

4. Multiple students may be considered together for this award; however, no more than three students who worked equally on the same aspect/s will be considered in tandem. Should multiple students be considered together and win, each will receive a trophy, but will split the \$400 monetary award.

H. Technical Contribution Award (Path #1 and Path #2)

1. This award recognizes students who have given their time and talent in a backstage capacity (i.e. stage manager, crew head, board operator, etc.) or design field (i.e. lighting, scenic, costume, etc.). The winner receives a trophy and \$400 monetary award. Students at all high school grade levels may be considered. **This application process should be initiated by a student.**
2. To be considered for an award, the following must be submitted by **January 26, 2026**:
 - Technical Contribution Award Application;
 - a statement of 500 words or less from the recommending teacher/advisor that provides details about the student's/students' contributions and why they feel the student/s should be considered for the award;
 - a one-page essay written by the student/s; and
 - electronic portfolio of support materials pertaining to the student's area(s) of expertise.
3. Multiple students may be considered together for this award; however, no more than three students who worked equally on the same aspect/s will be considered in tandem. Should multiple students be considered together and win, each will receive a trophy, but will split the \$500 monetary award.

I. Rising Star Scholarships (Path #1 and Path #2)

1. Rising Star Scholarships are awarded to high school students who made outstanding contributions to their high school's musical theatre program. **This application process should be initiated by a student.**
2. These scholarships will now be awarded across multiple grade levels:
 - One \$400 Sophomore Rising Star Scholarship
 - One \$500 Junior Rising Star Scholarship
 - One \$1,500 Senior Rising Star Scholarship
3. To be considered for a scholarship, the following must be submitted by **January 26, 2026**:
 - Rising Star Scholarship Application;
 - a résumé of work, volunteer and theatrical activities;
 - a student essay of 500 words or less; and
 - a statement of 500 words or less from a recommending teacher/advisor that provides details about the student's contributions and why they feel the student should be considered for the award.

J. Dream Production Award (Path #1 and Path #2)

1. Any participating student is eligible in this category. In December, after the registration deadline, a musical will be announced on the Blue Star Awards Facebook Group page. Students will have three weeks to complete a design/creative brief, artist statement and initial design/creative work for this dream production. The winner receives a trophy and \$400 monetary award.
2. This award highlights the creativity of students working in the areas of lighting design, costume design, scenic design, hair and makeup design, graphic design/publicity, direction, and/or choreography. A student may only participate in one focus area.

3. Students must register for this category by **December 8, 2025**. A registration link will be available on Starlight's website.

K. The Jimmy Awards – Student Reporter (Path #1 and Path #2)

1. Starlight plans to participate in the 2026 National High School Musical Theatre Awards (NHSMTA), also known as The Jimmy Awards. This award recognizes students who have an interest in journalism, film, and other related categories. Students submitting in this category **CANNOT** audition for The Jimmy Awards – Actor and Actress category. Two winners receive a \$400 monetary award. Students at all high school grade levels may be considered. **This application process should be initiated by a student.**
2. Students must register for this category by **December 8, 2025**. A registration link will be available on Starlight's website.
3. The recipients will work directly with the Blue Star Awards team to be part of Starlight's coverage of the nominations and Blue Star Awards Ceremony. Both students will be submitted as applicants for the student reporter search conducted by the National High School Musical Theatre Awards. Dates for the 2026 National High School Musical Theatre Awards, aka The Jimmy Awards, will be available on Starlight's website when they are released. Students applying for this category will need to be available to attend NHSMTA in New York City, should they be selected at the national level.

Section 5 – Production Adjudication

A. Three adjudicators attend each registered production and complete a comprehensive written response, which includes commentary that is later provided to each participating school.

1. When scheduling adjudicators, Starlight works to ensure adjudicators are not sent to the same school two years in a row.
2. Starlight asks adjudicators to recuse themselves from a school if they have a personal relationship with the leadership of the school's musical (or other school employee). If they were hired by a school to serve in a creative/supervisory role for the theatre and/or if they have a child who attends a participating school, adjudicators recuse themselves from that entire school district.

B. Adjudicator Tickets

Schools must reserve six tickets (two per adjudicator) at no cost during their show's run. Once adjudicators are assigned for each show, Starlight's Community Engagement Department will contact coordinating teachers to request that tickets be set aside at Will Call for adjudicators to pick up at the assigned performance/s.

C. High-Volume Weekends

The highest volume of productions takes place during November. With this in mind, the following November guidelines are in place:

1. In the order that their intent to participate forms are received, the first 10 schools returning to the program from the prior year will automatically be accommodated with adjudicator scheduling for each week of November so long as their form was received by the deadline date. Returning schools that do not submit the form by the deadline date forego their priority status.
2. For new schools, plus returning schools that did not meet the form deadline but wish to register, whose performances fall in these high-volume weeks over and above the first 10 productions mentioned

above, Starlight will make every effort to accommodate their productions depending on the final layout of the full scheduling.

3. Schools over and above the first 10 whose productions fall in these weeks that *cannot be accommodated* after every attempt is made will be contacted by Starlight's Community Engagement Manager to request one of the following to ensure participation:
 - that an additional performance that can be adjudicated be added, or
 - that access be granted to adjudicators to attend another performance that will take place but was not included in the submitted production schedule listing (i.e. an all-school matinee performance, a "friends and family" performance, etc.)
4. Schools that cannot be accommodated by the above steps will have the option to participate in Path #2 of the program.

D. Double Casting

If a school has or plans to double cast one or more roles in their production, the coordinating teacher must notify Starlight's Community Engagement Department at the time of registration. The school must select one set of cast members to be adjudicated and inform Starlight regarding which dates and times the selected cast will perform. Multiple students may not be adjudicated for the same role for the production/Path #1 categories. If a school fails to notify Starlight of double casting, the cast seen by two of the three adjudicators will be the cast in consideration for the production/Path #1 categories. However, any student who was cast and performed a qualifying NHSMTA role can audition for The Jimmy Awards category.

E. Evaluation Areas

Adjudicators consider a multitude of areas when evaluating each Blue Star Awards category. The following pages contain the areas they are asked to evaluate per category.

Technical Categories

Orchestra - Consider balance with stage performers, balance between orchestral parts, pitch and tonality, appropriate tempi, rhythm, execution

Scenic Design - Consider creation of mood, clarity of time period, clarity of location, ease of movement, safety and sturdiness, functionality, finished appearance, size appropriateness, well-executed

Lighting Design - Consider creation of mood, clarity of time period, clarity of location, how it focused audience attention, execution

Costume Design - Consider creation of mood, clarity of time period, clarity of location, creation of character, provided full range of motion, execution (fit, neatness, attention to detail, etc.)

Hair and Makeup Design - Consider creation of mood, clarity of time period, clarity of location, creation of character, execution (fit, neatness, attention to detail, etc.)

Outstanding Technical Crew (includes the below areas)

Lighting Crew - Consider handling of design elements, execution of cues, ability to maintain the world of the play, completion of tasks without distraction, smooth transitions.

Sound Crew - Consider handling of design elements, execution of cues, ability to maintain the world of the play, accuracy of cues, balance between performers and orchestra, balance between performers, clarity of sound

Set Crew - Consider handling of design elements, ability to maintain the world of the play, speed and efficiency, completion of tasks without distraction, smooth transitions

Costume Crew - Consider handling of design elements, ability to maintain the world of the play, speed and efficiency, completion of tasks without distraction, accuracy of performers' looks

Hair and Makeup Crew - Consider preshow application, handling of design elements, ability to maintain the world of the play, speed and efficiency, completion of tasks without distraction, accuracy of performers' looks

Performance Categories

Adjudicators consider the following for each of the performance categories (Lead, Supporting, Featured, Ensemble):

Acting - Consider energy, believability, relationship to others, character consistency, stage presence, motivation of movement

Singing - Consider pitch and tonality, rhythm, diction, phrasing and interpretation, expression, artistry
-Adjudicators additionally consider "Balance of harmonic parts" for the Ensemble category

Dancing - Consider precision, animation and energy, execution of movement, expression, artistry

Section 6 – Nominations

A. Blue Star Awards Nomination Committee

1. Starlight convenes a Nomination Committee of selected adjudicators to review and evaluate adjudicator feedback. Starlight provides oversight but makes no contribution to decisions made by the committee. Starlight strives to have a blend of new and returning committee members each year.
2. Section 5 above lists the areas adjudicators evaluate. Nomination Committee Members are provided the adjudicator evaluations, which include:
 - Scoring
 - Commentary

- Optional flag for nomination consideration
 - Additional comments/production notes
3. During the Nomination Committee deliberations, originality of production concepts, design/performance elements, and staging, as well as overall student involvement with technical elements, may be taken into account during the process.
 4. Starlight establishes a system of review that requires all Nomination Committee members to consider students or elements (depending on the category) in a specific order. They start with students/elements receiving three flags for nomination (one per adjudicator) from top cumulative score down; those with two flags for nomination follow, again starting with the top cumulative score. The process continues until committee members have reviewed an established number of entrants in a given category. Following this required review, members then have an opportunity to “elevate” work that may not have made the scoring/flagging threshold but which they feel should be in the mix. This step is in place due to the subjective nature of scoring artistic work. Committee members are always reminded that if they saw a show, their opinions are already present as one of the three commentaries provided to all committee members.
 5. Once a category has been reviewed, Nomination Committee members privately complete a top-pick sheet, ranking their personal preferred entries in a given category from 1 to 8 (with 1 being their top choice). Starlight then assigns a numeric component to each place (1st place gets 8 points, 2nd place gets 7 points...). The students/elements receiving the eight highest cumulative totals in a category become the nominees.
 6. Once nominees are determined in all categories, Nomination Committee members receive a final ballot of all categories. Nominees are listed in alphabetical order on the ballot *without* the cumulative point totals they previously received. On this final ballot, members privately vote for their top choice in each category; majority vote wins the category. In the case of a tie, the nominee with the highest cumulative point total from the top-pick scoring heading into the final ballot is declared the winner. If the tied nominees also tied in the previous cumulative point total, they will both be declared winners in that category.

B. Receiving Nominations

1. When the review process is complete, official nominations are made and announced to all schools and the general public in late April/early May.
2. Schools that earned nominations will receive banners listing nominations received and a nomination packet including all necessary Blue Star Awards Ceremony information. Path #2 students will not receive banners, but will be provided all necessary Blue Star Awards Ceremony information via email.
3. For Overall Production nominees, the schools will be contacted by Starlight with requirements and teachers will be asked to attend an informational videoconferencing call.

Section 7 – Ceremony

- A. The 2026 Blue Star Awards Ceremony will be held at Starlight Theatre on the evening of Thursday, May 21, 2026.** The ceremony date is always dependent upon Starlight’s annual production calendar.
- B. Admission and Seating**
- The Ceremony is free and open to the public.
 - The Ceremony will be a ticketed event with reserved seats.
 - A limited number of \$20 premium seats are sold, with proceeds going to support the Blue Star Awards program.
 - Tickets will be available in the spring.
 - Schools nominated for Outstanding Overall Production are reserved seating equal to the number of participating students listed on the school’s Production Information Form.
- C. The Jimmy Award Finalists**
- The six finalists will perform a character medley in the Ceremony.
 - Starlight’s creative team will select the songs for the medley.
 - Finalists are required to participate in rehearsals for the medley.
- D. Outstanding Overall Production Nominees**
- All schools nominated for Outstanding Overall Production (4 nominees per tier) are asked to perform one musical number from their production.
 - Starlight’s Community Engagement Department will select which ensemble song will be performed.
 - For schools securing rights through Concord Theatricals, you may request to keep your materials through May after your show’s run has ended. You will alert them you are participating in the Blue Star Awards, have the potential of being an Outstanding Overall Production nominee, and will need the music for rehearsing and performing. For the Blue Star Awards Ceremony song, we would need a copy of your song’s music from the conductor, keyboard, drums, and bass scores.
 - Performing schools may not make special lighting or scenic requests.
 - No students are permitted to perform in/from Starlight’s audience seating.
 - Performers are required to wear footwear when performing on the Starlight stage.
 - All performers are required to attend a rehearsal at Starlight prior to the ceremony. Rehearsal schedules are distributed when nominations are announced.
- E. Blue Star Awards Ceremony Ensemble Nominees**
- Ceremony Ensemble nominees will perform in the Ceremony.
 - Nominees are required to participate in rehearsals for the medley. If nominees cannot attend final dress rehearsal, they cannot perform in the Ceremony.