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Shea's Performing Arts Center Announces High Schools & Adjudicators for Shea's Wonder Awards

20 Schools Eligible for Awards & Grants, Top Performers Will Head to National Awards Program

Shea's Performing Arts Center is pleased to announce the twenty high schools selected to participate in the 2024-25 Shea's Wonder Awards, a program designed to celebrate and support the arts in high schools, foster excellence in musical theatre, and provide valuable educational opportunities to students.

The program, led by Shea's Arts Engagement & Education Department, will include hundreds of students from 20 schools spanning 5 Western New York counties, including: Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, Niagara. In addition to the competition, participating schools will receive unique workshop experiences and performing arts training. Participating schools are eligible to receive grants, and the top two individual performers have the opportunity participate in the National High School Musical Awards program, The Jimmy Awards, scheduled for June 23, 2025 in New York City.

The schools selected to participate this year include:

**Cheektowaga Central High School
Cleveland Hill USFD
East Aurora High School
Fillmore Central School
Holland High School**

**Jamestown High School
Kenmore West High School
Letchworth Central High School
Mount St. Mary Academy
Nardin Academy
Randolph Jr./Sr. High School
Royalton Hartland High School
Southwestern Central High School
St. Francis High School
St. Joseph's Collegiate Institute
Starpoint High School
Sweet Home Central High School
Tonawanda High School
West Seneca West Senior High School
Westfield Academy and Central School**

The musical production at each school will be evaluated by some of the 35 adjudicators volunteering this year to review the performances. The 2024-25 Shea's Wonder Awards adjudicators include: Andrea Letcher, Annalise Casciano, Carol Beckley, Clara Tan, Danielle Green, Diane Jones, Elwyn Roll, Eric J. Van Pyrz, Gabriella McKinley, Heather Arcand, Jacqueline Gould, James Beaudry, Jay Marks, Jeannine VanWey, Jennifer Horton, Jennifer Mysliwy, Jill Anderson, John Vines, Kathleen Dunne, Lana Sugarman, Leah Berst, Linda Lombardo Appleby, Lissette DeJesús, Lucinda Karnstedt, Meagan Millar, Melissa Kate Miller, Moriah Armstrong, Nathan Andrew Miller, Nicholas Czaplicki, Nicolette Navarro, Rhiannon Needham, Rita Sirianni, Robin Bishop, Stephen Schapero, and Zoe Goñez.

Last year, over 1,300 students from 20 Western New York high schools participated in the high school musical awards program, doubling participation from the previous year.

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Attached: Adjudicator Bios

Shea's Wonder Awards 2024-25 Adjudicator Bios

Andrea Letcher: Andrea holds an MA in Administration from Niagara University. She is currently a middle school Spanish teacher, she has been an educator at Niagara Wheatfield Central School District for over 23 years. She has served as the Drama Director and Costumer for the Middle School and the High School productions for over 20 years. She is also a Professional Costumer in Buffalo having worked at D'Youville Kavinoky Theater for the past 5 years, earning an Artie nomination for Costume Design for Kavinoky's 2022 production of Rock of Ages. She also served as an adjudicator for last year's program and is thrilled to be returning.

Annalise Casciano: Annalise has been performing since she was in the 6th grade. She minored in theatre in college and continued to perform throughout Buffalo in both community and professional theaters. In 2021, she founded her own theatre company in Orchard Park, The Room Theatre Company, where she teaches singing, dancing, and acting classes to students ages 3-18, as well as produce/direct musicals and plays. In addition, she also co-directs and choreographs musicals at a local elementary school.

Carol Beckley: Carol attended FIT for Interior Design, received a B.F.A. in Theater Design from Ithaca College and an M.F.A. in Stage Design, magna cum laude, from Southern Methodist University. She has over 35 years of theater, TV, and film experience as set designer, costume designer, production designer, director and consultant. Additionally, she also has 30 years of experience as a college-level theater educator. Carol is the current Chair of the Theater department at Buffalo State University as well as a student and organization advisor. Don't miss Buffalo State's Theater season of Antigone by Jean Anouilh and Ride the Cyclone by Jacob Richmond and Brooke Maxwell.
<https://theater.buffalostate.edu/casting-hall>.

Clara Tan: Clara is a classically trained performer with over a decade of experience spanning opera to musical theatre. She is an alumna of AMDA and LASALLE College of the Arts. Recent Credits: Mike, Mermaid Hour, Moonbox Productions; Charlie Cowell, The Music Man, Curtain Up Productions; Teri, Fursona non Grata, First Look Buffalo; Richard Dauntless, Ruddigore, Opera-Lytes; Dr. William Hire, Secret Soldiers, Theatre of Youth; Kait, KAIT, Hear Me Out Productions; Jon, tick, tick... BOOM!, Red Chair Productions; Bobby, Company, The Musicians' Society. In her previous lives, she was a theatre critic, journalist, truck driver, and everything imaginable in between. Follow her @actual_clara on Twitter and Instagram.

Danielle Green: Danielle is a professional actress and educator in Buffalo, NY. She has a BA in Music Performance with a concentration in Jazz from Villa Maria College and has performed in shows at professional theaters all across Buffalo. Some of her favorite credits include Carrie in Blackberry Daze of Summer (Paul Robeson Theatre, Nominated for Lead Actress in a Musical at the Artie Awards), Irene in Three Sistahs (Paul Robeson Theatre), Mama Euralie in Once on this Island (Shea's 710 Theatre), Church Lady #2 in The Color Purple (Shea's 710 Theatre/Second Generation Theatre/Ujima Co Inc.), Shirley Chisholm in It Was a Wonderful Life (Forest Lawn Holiday Theatre), and Velma in Crowns (MusicalFare Theatre). Outside of performing, she is the Vocal Director at Westminster Community Charter School's musical productions.

Diane Jones: Diane (she/they) is a freelance artist living in Buffalo. Art and storytelling are the threads that have tied her work together through the decades. Diane is an active prop master at many Buffalo theaters, as well as a graphic designer, playwright, screenwriter, and producer. She also works in film art departments as a member of IATSE 52 and USA 829. A mental health advocate, she strives towards inclusivity and diversity in her work. Her past has included working with high school drama clubs as a photographer, program designer and prop master. For many years Diane volunteered with Actionplay in NYC, attending monthly sessions, while providing props and set pieces for each year's devised musical theater production. "Actionplay's program is an inclusive improvisational music and theatre residency for autistic, neurodivergent, and disabled teens and adults."

Elwyn Roll: Elwyn is a graduate of Pioneer High School and proud alumni of Crane School of Music at SUNY Potsdam ('75). He began his teaching career in 1978 teaching for all levels from kindergarten through high school. During his teaching career, he directed 30 musicals as well as assisted with designing scenery, costumes, and lights alongside his students. After a nearly 40-year career, he retired in 2018 and is proud to give back to the community as an advocate of arts in education. He believes that through theatre, students are able to use their creativity, expand their appreciation for various genres, develop personal relationships with each other, and feel able to express themselves openly and freely.

Eric J. Van Pyrz: Eric is an experienced music director, lighting designer, and pit conductor who has worked in both community and professional theater. He has served as the music director for numerous productions such as 9 to 5, Pirates of Penzance, and Go Dog Go! His experience spans various roles, including keyboard programming and accompaniment for schools and regional theaters. He is currently a staff accompanist at the Community Music School of Buffalo, where he plays for recitals, directs workshops, and runs master classes. Eric holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Technical Theater & Design and a Bachelor of Science in Computer Science from the University at Buffalo. His technical expertise includes stage management, lighting design, and database design. With a deep understanding of both performance and technical elements of theater, Eric is passionate about mentoring and supporting young artists.

Gabriella McKinley: Gabriella graduated with honors from Buffalo State University as the President's Medal for Outstanding Undergraduate Student recipient and commencement speaker. Gabriella received her B.A. in Theater, minor in Legal Studies, and was awarded the Dean's Award for Excellence in Theater. Throughout her undergraduate career, Gabriella studied story-based kinesthetic learning with application throughout Buffalo schools. She has been featured in shows locally at Ujima Company Inc, Shakespeare in Delaware Park, the Kavinoky Theater, Shea's 710, MusicalFare Theater, and Road Less Traveled Productions. She recently won an ARTIE Award for her role of "Celie" in Ujima Co. Inc., Second Generation Theater, and Shea's 710's production of The Color Purple and was nominated twice before for her performances as "Toni Stone" in Ujima Co. Inc.'s Toni Stone and "Guinevere" in MusicalFare's Camelot. Gabriella is a proud Ujima Company Member where she also serves as the Program Director curating programming that engages and uplifts underserved and underrepresented communities, particularly communities of color. She is a firm believer in the power of Ujima and storytelling to change lives and communities.

Heather Arcand: Heather is a graduate of Buffalo State University holding a Bachelor's Degree in Theatre ('03). She has 8 years of entertainment experience at Disney, having worked on multiple parades and holiday shows. She has also directed children's theater productions and assisted in costuming and props for Lancaster Middle School's musical productions. Heather has also served on the Board of Directors for the Wekiva River Players Junior Theatre. Her background in these fields has broadened her understanding, skills, and techniques in the process of teaching. She is thrilled to be serving as an adjudicator for the Shea's Wonder Awards this year. "Always be a storyteller, theatre has the power to change lives!"

Jacqueline Gould: Jackie has been a Director, Choreographer, Vocal and Drama Coach for the past 25 years for both High School and Elementary School productions in several area WNY School Districts, including Hamburg Central Schools, where she is a full-time music teacher. She is an alumni of SUNY Fredonia holding three music degrees, including a Masters in Vocal Performance. Musical theater has been a big part of her family, with two of Jackie's children now majoring in theatrical arts in college. She has also acted as a Teaching Artist at Shea's, serving as the Choreographer for Shea's summer camp this past July. She is so excited to be returning as an adjudicator for the second year in a row. She believes that this program is so valuable to the students of Western New York.

James Beaudry: James is a proud member of SDC, the union of professional stage directors and choreographers. He has worked on over 200 professional productions as a director, choreographer, performer, producer, and company manager, and been nominated multiple times for Chicago's Jeff Awards. He served as Artistic Director at Timber Lake Playhouse and the Clinton Showboat Theatre and spent three seasons on the senior staff of New York Stage and Film. In 2021, he was lead project manager on the Broadway League's partnership with MobileHealth for Broadway's reopening after being

closed for 17 months. Now a professor in the Department of Theatre and Dance for the University at Buffalo, favorite projects include The Connector (workshop), The Notebook (workshop), Alice By Heart (workshop), Jason & Ben (world premiere), Mark Twain's Blues (world premiere), Heathers (Chicago premiere), Murder Ballad (Chicago premiere), regional productions of Chicago, Cats, West Side Story, Meet John Doe, To Master The Art, Pride & Prejudice, The Light In The Piazza, Evita, Titanic, Spamalot, Sunset Boulevard, The Wedding Singer, Footloose, and The 39 Steps. MFA in Dance Performance & Choreography; Acting and Directing training at the Lee Strasberg Theatre and Film Institute, NYC.

Jay Marks: Jay is a member of Local 10 and is a regional lighting designer and tech director. He is the current Production Manager at Asbury Hall, Head Flyman at the Riviera Theater, Resident Lighting Designer at O'Connell & Company, and Technical Director at Mount St. Mary's Academy. He has also previously served as the Lighting and Sound Supervisor for the University of Iowa, a Master Electrician at Dallas Theatre Center, and has toured in lighting tech positions for The Rolling Stones, American Idol, Glee, and TSO. Jay believes that creative support for the behind-the-scenes areas need an eye for detail and encouragement for students interested in those areas and is excited to provide that as an adjudicator for the Shea's Wonder Awards.

Jeannine Vanwey: Jeannine has been a Music Teacher for 26 years. She has directed over 20 musicals and has been on the production staff for many more. As a pianist, Jeannine has accompanied many musical productions, performed with the Orchard Park Symphony Orchestra, is a church music director, musician and enthusiastic supporter of the arts. She loves seeing casts bring a story to life in a musical on stage. She believes that musicals provide a safe space for young people to express themselves. She loves seeing students come to life on stage and watching individuals become one united cast together and is thrilled to be returning as an adjudicator for a second year.

Jennifer Horton: Jennifer Horton is a musical theater performer who has recently returned to the stage in several local productions, including as the Narrator in Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat at the Lancaster Opera House and Rona Peretti in The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee with Rocking Horse Productions. Jen especially enjoys sharing her love of theater with her children and has performed on stage with them in several productions, including It's a Wonderful Life with Springville Center for the Arts, The Sound of Music at Lancaster Opera House, and James and the Giant Peach with Aurora Players. Other memorable roles include Lucy in You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown and Laurey in Oklahoma! She believes that her recent experiences in the theatre community have broadened her understanding of storytelling. She is honored to be returning as an adjudicator for a second year and be a part of nurturing young talent and providing constructive feedback that can ultimately guide artistic growth. Delving into creativity and recognizing hard work is an opportunity she truly values.

Jennifer Mysliwy: Jennifer is a passionate arts coordinator, educator, and performer with over 30 years of experience on stage. She has performed for audiences nationally, regionally, and on local stages. Jen has dedicated over 20 years to sharing her love of performance with students of all ages and abilities. Her teaching methods blend traditional techniques with contemporary practices, creating an engaging and inclusive learning environment where students of all ages can explore their artistic voices and embrace the joy of self-expression. Jen is also a passionate advocate for arts accessibility and strives to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to experience and participate in the arts, both in and out of the classroom. As an adjudicator, she is excited to provide constructive feedback, encouragement, and recognition to these talented young performers. She wants them to know that chasing a career in the arts isn't just a dream, it's something they can absolutely achieve and that it can be incredibly rewarding. It's so exciting to witness our community's talented individuals as they find their own paths to success in the arts.

Jill Anderson: Jill is a graduate of the University at Buffalo with a BFA in Music Theatre and a minor in education. In the following years she earned her M.S Ed in Theatre Education from Niagara University, where she has recently been hired as an Adjunct Professor in the Theatre Education department. Beyond performing in musicals and Shakespeare dramas, Jill has directed and/or choreographed over two dozen productions, some winning awards from TANYS and Broadway World. She was also a nominee for the Tony Award's Theatre Educator of the Year. She is currently the Theatre, Dance, and Choral Director at Buffalo Academy of the Sacred Heart. She has also taught singing lessons at Matt's Music, dance classes at Adell's School of Dance and is a teaching artist through Second Generation Theatre. She believes, as an adjudicator, her background in performance and classroom education gives her an exciting opportunity to help grow the community of theatre education.

John Vines: John was born and raised in NYC with a desire to act from a young age. He studied musical theatre at Hunter College and learned under his longtime acting coach who was connected to The Actor's Studio. Since moving to Buffalo, he has worked with numerous professional theatre companies such as Subversive Theatre, Paul Robeson Theatre, and Road Less Traveled Productions. He is thrilled to be joining the Shea's Wonder Awards as an adjudicator this year to have a positive impact on the lives of young theatre artists. He hopes that sharing his insight will help them grow, continue to study, and become grounded in their craft.

Kathleen Dunne: Kathleen is a classically trained vocalist, with a Bachelor's in Music Education from SUNY Buffalo State University with a minor in Theater. She currently works in the Buffalo Public Schools as a K-6 vocal/general music teacher and is the Music Director, Co-Director & Producer of the St. Christopher's Bound for Broadway program. She has also music directed at Buffalo State University, Cardinal O'Hara High School Summer Camps, and at Shea's Sing Your Story camp as well as their 2024 awards ceremony performances. She previously worked in the entertainment department at

Fantasy Island Amusement Park, performing in a variety of different acting, song, and dance shows. She has been teaching private lessons at Matt's Music since 2019, with students ranging from ages 4-60! She is thrilled to be returning as an adjudicator for a second year. She believes that the Shea's Wonder Awards is a fantastic opportunity for high school students and educators to elevate and take their productions beyond their own schools and communities. She loves giving feedback based on her theatre experience and is passionate about encouraging and uplifting our local teachers and students, keeping their love of theatre strong.

Lana Sugarman: Lana (she/her) is an actor, director, and educator. Originally from Canada, Lana has performed professionally for the past 20 years on stages across North America. She holds an MFA in Acting from Kent State University, and currently serves as Clinical Assistant Professor of Theatre at the University at Buffalo where she is one of the resident Intimacy Directors. Lana is a certified teacher of the Michael Chekhov Technique through the Great Lakes Michael Chekhov Consortium, and a proud member of Seat of the Pants, an ensemble-based, process-driven theatre company based in Northeast Ohio. She is represented by Docherty Talent Agency. Recent directing credits: *Three Sisters*: Ruhl (UB), *Ken Ludwig's Moriarty* (Assistant Director, Cleveland Play House,) *Enemy of the People*, *Nothing to See Here* (Rubber City Theatre), *These Shining Lives*, *As You Like It* (Malone University) Recent acting credits: *Glinda in The Land of Oz* (World Premiere Musical, Dobama Theatre), *Carol in Hurricane Diane* (Dobama), *Mary Brenham in Our Country's Good* (Seat of the Pants), *Puck in A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Shakespeare at the Castle) <http://lanasugarman.com>.

Leah Berst: Leah Berst is a local theatre professional with 10 years of experience in the community as an actor, singer, and teacher with a BFA in Music Theatre from SUNY Buffalo (2017). Previously, she was the Performing Arts Director for the Orchard Park Recreation Department and is now affiliated with Second Generation Theatre Academy as a performing arts teacher. Leah has appeared in a number of local productions including *THE LIGHT FANTASTIC* (Grace) and *MURDER BALLAD* (Narrator) at Road Less Traveled Theatre, *TICK, TICK...BOOM!* (Susan) at Second Generation Theatre, *TELL ME ON A SUNDAY* (Emma) at Musically Theatre, and *Starring Buffalo's RENT!* (Maureen) among others. Leah also has film experience in both features and commercials as well as through voice over work. She is a two-time Artie Award Nominee for Best Actress in a Musical (*TELL ME ON A SUNDAY*) and Best Supporting Actress in a Musical (*TICK, TICK...BOOM!*) and was also nominated for Best Actress at the Buffalo 48hr Film Festival for *Making Amends*. Leah strongly believes in cultivating an inspiring environment for young people in the arts and looks forward to encouraging and celebrating the wonderful work of our community's arts programs.

Linda Lombardo Appleby: Linda has worked in theatre both regionally and professionally as a music director for the past 50 years and formerly on the Board of Directors for Ujima Theatre Company. She has a B.S. in Music Education from Rosary Hill College and a M.A. in Student Personnel Administration from Buffalo State University. She has over 50 years of

experience as a music educator in Niagara Falls and Buffalo Public Schools in addition to music directing theatrical productions throughout WNY. Linda has been an Adjunct Music Professor at Villa Maria College since 2012 and has also been the Secretary of the Historic Colored Musicians Club since 2009. She has received numerous awards throughout her career such as Who's Who of American Teachers, the BeauFleur Legacy Award, the Trailblazer Award for Excellence in Education, 2015 Buffalo Music Hall of Fame, and many more. She loves working with the youth and encouraging the next generation of theatre artists.

Lisette DeJesús: Lisette DeJesús is a theater performer and teaching artist in Buffalo, NY, holding a Bachelor's in Theatre from Buffalo State University. Most recently she has taught at Theater of Youth and Arts for Learning, receiving Teaching Artist certification. Her most recent performance credits include RLTP's All My Sons (Ann Deever), MusicalFare's Twelfth Night The Musical (Mariah), All For One's Murder On The Orient Express (Countess Andreyani), ICTC's Great Expectations (Estella) and Kavinoky Theatre's Pride & Prejudice (Jane). This is her second year as an adjudicator, and she is thrilled to be returning. She attributes this program to reinvigorating her love for the arts.

Lucinda Karnstedt: Lucinda holds a Bachelor's degree in Interdisciplinary Fine Arts from Brockport and is a certified K-12 Art teacher in New York State. She started her theatrical work as an actress and a dancer. She now has over 30 years of experience working in educational theatre including as the Choreographer, Costume Designer/Director, and Stage Manager for Eden High School's musical productions. She has also served as the Choreographer and Director for school productions and church programs in three states. She has witnessed the value of this program to area high schools as a former adjudicator and educator for a participating school and she is thrilled to give back as an adjudicator for the Shea's Wonder Awards.

Meagan Millar: Meagan holds a BFA in Theatre Performance from Niagara University and 2 Master's degrees in education with certification to teach Theatre for grades K-12. She has performed in tours around the US as an actor and been involved with many shows locally as well. She is the co-founder of Open Door Productions, a theatre company whose mission is to bridge the gap between professionals and students. Meagan also teaches Theatre in the Niagara Falls City School District where she created a scaffolded program linking elementary and prep level Theatre programs with the existing high school program, creating a seamless full-time pathway for Theatre Arts Education. As a theatre teacher, she always tells her students to see as many shows as possible because you can learn so much from being an observer. Now as an adjudicator, she is looking forward to taking her own advice and learning from the community around her while using her expertise to help the students grow.

Melissa Kate Miller: Melissa holds a BFA in Musical Theatre from SUNY Fredonia and has spent her adult life utilizing her education as a performer, literary artist, and business owner. She co-founded a theatre company in Manhattan, and after introducing multiple

new works on the East Coast, transitioned to a music career as a singer and songwriter with multiple groups and her own original projects. She is also a nationally credentialed teaching artist with Young Audiences National and Arts for Learning WNY. Melissa has taught thousands of young people over the last 20 years in the art of theatre, improvisation, and creative writing. She believes in the arts as a way to engage young people and adults alike to foster new experiences and to inspire growth as empathetic human beings for personal, social, and civil empowerment. Melissa is so excited to offer her experience and voice to identifying, celebrating, and supporting the young artists who are in their critical phase of self-empowerment.

Moriah Armstrong: Moriah has been working in theatre for 20 years, primarily as an actor, director, and stage manager with experience in costuming, lighting, scenic, and prop design. She graduated from University at Buffalo with a BFA in Theatre Performance in 2023 after earning her Associate's Degree in Drama and Dramatics/Theatre Arts from College of Central Florida. During her time in Florida, she served as an adjudicator for the International Thespian Society and this past summer, she worked for Shea's Arts Engagement and Education as a Teaching Artist for their summer musical theatre intensive. She is absolutely thrilled to be an adjudicator for this year's Shea's Wonder Awards!

Nathan Andrew Miller: Nathan has been acting and directing in Western New York for the last 10 years and was honored to be an adjudicator for last year's program. He graduated from Niagara University with a Bachelor's in English and a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Theatre in 2014. Nate began his career working for the Pennsylvania Renaissance Faire and made his post-university professional debut in Buffalo at Irish Classical Theatre. In addition to ICTC, Nate has worked with numerous companies such as Alleyway Theatre, New Phoenix Theatre, Kenan Center, and the Lancaster Opera House, where he also directs. He briefly owned his own theatre company, Pared Down Productions, where he served as Artistic Director in addition to performing and directing. Nate is also a proud member of ARTA, the association of regional theatre artists in WNY. Last year, he was in constant awe of the dedication and passion of everyone involved, from students and adults in the schools to his fellow adjudicators to the incredible team at Shea's. He is thrilled to be returning for a second year as an adjudicator for this wonderful program.

Nicholas Czaplicki: Nicholas is a Western New York native and is the Program Coordinator and a member of the voice faculty at Community Music School of Buffalo. He earned a Bachelor of Music in Music Education with a concentration in voice/choral music from SUNY Fredonia. Nick grew up with a love of music and has studied all genres of music including at the Rock n Roll Hall of Fame Summer Teacher Institute in Cleveland, Ohio. Nick has also performed in many local productions such as She Loves Me (Georg Nowack), The Music Man (Marcellus Washburn), The Pirates of Penzance (Sargeant of Police), and more. When he was a student in Western New York, he knew the importance of performance arts through the programs that were available to him, and he credits those programs with shaping him into the person he is today. Nick feels it is important to give

back to the community and support the theatre programs in our schools across Western New York. New York.

Nicolette Navarro: Nicolette (she/her) is a seasoned director, intimacy director, and educator with extensive experience in both Buffalo, NY, and New York City. She currently serves as the Artistic Director of Bellissima Productions in Buffalo, NY, and is a classroom educator in Lockport, NY, teaching English and directing their musical productions. Nicolette holds an MS in Differentiated Education and a BA in Education & Theatre from Canisius University. As a proud recipient of the Intimacy in Practice Grant, she is passionate about advancing the field of intimacy direction and is dedicated to establishing standard practices for this vital work in educational and professional theatre throughout Western New York and beyond. She is deeply committed to integrating consent-based practices in her rehearsals and classrooms, empowering artists to embrace collaboration and joy in the creative process. Her work in intimacy direction ensures the creation of authentic and compelling storytelling on stage. Nicolette served as an adjudicator for last year's program and is thrilled to be making a return for her second consecutive year.

Rhiannon Needham: Rhiannon holds a BA in Theatre from Buffalo State University, an MBA in Business Administration, Management, and Operations from Medaille University, an MA in Psychology from Medaille University, and is currently finishing her Doctorate in Clinical Psychology from Capella University. With a number of years of experience as a college professor, she has dedicated her career to guiding students through the intricacies of higher education. Her academic journey includes a rich background in stage management, acting, and technical support. Beyond the classroom, she has actively participated in high school and collegiate theatre productions, in various roles as a performer, assistant director, stage manager, and more. As an avid theater consumer with multiple perspectives, she fosters a deep appreciation for the arts and is committed to staying deeply engaged with the evolving landscape of local theatre at all levels. Rhiannon is passionate about fostering young talent and supporting the growth of students in the performing arts. With her passion, she is always eager to contribute to the development of aspiring artists. She is so thrilled to be serving as an adjudicator for the Shea's Wonder Awards and cannot wait to celebrate the hard work and creativity of students and inspire them to pursue their artistic passions with confidence.

Rita Sirianni: Rita (she/her) currently serves as the Executive Assistant at Shea's Performing Arts Center. She has worked in a variety of roles at numerous theatre companies throughout the country such as the Kimmel Cultural Campus (Philadelphia, PA), Walnut Street Theatre (Philadelphia, PA), Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center (Waterford, CT), Hangar Theatre (Ithaca, NY), and locally at Shakespeare in Delaware Park and the Lancaster Opera House. Rita studied Theatre and Movement with the Moscow Art Theatre School and National Theatre Institute. She also earned her BA in Theatre and English with a concentration in Dramaturgy at Case Western Reserve University. Rita served as an adjudicator for last year's program and is thrilled to be making her return! She loved her

time celebrating so many great productions, theatre practitioners, and young artists and is looking forward to another wonderful season.

Robin Bishop: Robin holds a BA in Theatre and Dance from University at Buffalo, studying under the genius Lynne Kurdziel Formato. Since then, she has spent the last 20+ years using the art of dance to work with the special needs community. In 2007, Robin founded Danceability, a dance studio in Buffalo, NY, that offers individualized dance, fitness, and movement programs for children and adults in the special needs community. She has also pursued a degree in Human Services, is a licensed Master of Social Work and studied dance movement therapy. Robin has also performed in numerous musical theatre productions throughout high school, college, and in professional productions throughout Western New York. She is thrilled to be serving as an adjudicator for this year's Shea's Wonder Awards and looks forward to using her expertise to support the next generation of young artists.

Stephen Schapero: Stephen (they/them) is a director, music director, performer and theatre administrator currently based in Buffalo. Previously living in Brooklyn, NY, Stephen was the founder and creative director of Brooklyn theatre club, through which they produced immersive, sometimes drunken, musical theatre experiences. Some of their favorite productions have included: Sweeney Todd, A New Brain, Merrily We Roll Along, High School Musical, and Cabaret. Stephen's voice can also be heard as part of The Civilians' Michael Friedman Recording Project. Some of Stephen's non-theatrical passions include astrology, tarot, and exploring the natural beauty of Western NY. Stephen is thrilled to be lending their talents and skills to the Buffalo theatre community.

Zoe Goñez: Zoe is a recent graduate of Buffalo State University, earning her BA in Theater with a minor in Television and Film Arts, graduating with the President's Medal for Outstanding Undergraduate Student and the Dean's Award for Excellence. During undergrad, she served as the President of Casting Hall Productions and was involved in productions as an actor, director, & stage manager. Some credits include: Medea (Medea), Teach (Female Emerson), On the Verge (Assistant Director), and Pippin (Assistant Stage Manager). Zoe also has served as a Teaching Artist for numerous programs at Shea's for two years. Being a Teaching Artist affirmed her love for teaching theatre to young students and opening up a larger avenue for them to navigate as they embark on their journeys as artists. This season, she will be making her professional acting debut at Bellissima Productions, starring in Brilliant Works of Art and Invincible Ones. As someone that did not participate in theatre until late high school and wishes she could go back to start sooner, she believes that the next best option is in teaching, guiding, and mentoring young theatre students to help them hone and value their craft while acquiring the pride and confidence to call themselves artists; which is why she is so thrilled to serve as an adjudicator for this year's Shea's Wonder Awards!

