

# ADJUDICATOR HANDBOOK



**2025**

**SHEA'S ARTS ENGAGEMENT  
AND EDUCATION**

## **ABOUT THE SHEA’S WONDER AWARDS**

The Shea’s Wonder Awards is a dynamic initiative designed to celebrate and support the arts in high schools, foster excellence in musical theatre, and provide valuable educational opportunities for students. This program is deeply committed to nurturing young talent, promoting collaboration, and building a strong sense of community within the world of musical theatre.

### **KEY PILLARS**

#### *Access to Arts Education*

- Provide access to high-quality musical theatre education for students in participating high schools.
- Offer workshops, masterclasses, and resources to enhance students’ understanding and appreciation of the performing arts.

#### *Creating Opportunities*

- Recognize outstanding achievement in high school musical theatre through awards, grants, and celebration.
- Create performance and networking opportunities for talented young artists.

#### *Striving for Excellence*

- Set high standards for artistic and technical achievements in high school musical productions.
- Foster an environment where students and educators continuously strive for excellence in their work.

#### *Encouraging Collaboration*

- Emphasize the importance of teamwork and collaboration in the theatre arts.
- Encourage students to work together to create memorable productions.

#### *Building Community*

- Facilitate connections between students, educators, and theatre professionals within the local community.
- Promote a sense of belonging and mutual support among participants.

#### *Developing Relationships*

- Partner with Shea’s Performing Arts Center to offer students unique opportunities to engage with a professional performing arts venue.
- Host award ceremonies and showcase events at Shea’s to highlight the achievements of participating schools.

## **ADJUDICATION OVERVIEW**

Becoming an adjudicator is an impactful way to give back to the arts community of WNY by sharing your time, experience, and knowledge. Using your expertise to provide feedback to the growing community of young theatre artists is a privilege that we hold in a high regard.

### **ADJUDICATOR REQUIREMENTS**

- Attend one (1) performance of each of your assigned schools. Each adjudicator will be assigned to 2-3 schools, based on the availability of the entire group of adjudicators.

- Attend and complete one (1) training session led by the Arts Engagement and Education staff from Shea's Performing Arts Center.
- Complete a full evaluation of each performance that you attend with completed scoring and a brief narrative written for each category.
- Ability to drive OR carpool within 75 miles of Shea's Performing Arts Center.

### **ADJUDICATOR CANDIDATES MUST POSSESS**

- The ability to effectively communicate in writing and evaluate musical theatre production elements and student performance in a constructive manner, maintaining an overall positive tone.
- The ability to quickly and effectively communicate with Arts Education Coordinator, Jake Gear, through all email communication.
- The ability to score fairly and objectively.
- The ability to maintain confidentiality.
- Enthusiasm for high school musical theatre.

### **MEETINGS & IMPORTANT DATES**

Adjudicators are required to attend a training session at Shea's Performing Arts Center. Two separate sessions are provided to accommodate conflicts. A possible "wrap-up" / "post-mortem" session may be offered at the end of the adjudication season to provide feedback on how the season went and if any changes can be made to make next year easier.

Adjudicators are also strongly encouraged to attend the Shea's Wonder Awards ceremony the evening of Saturday, May 17th, 2025, at Shea's Performing Arts Center. Each adjudicator is eligible for one (1) complimentary ticket to the awards ceremony.

### **SCHEDULING**

Arts Education Coordinator, Jake Gear, will create a schedule for all adjudicators based on everyone's availability and conflicts. The adjudication schedule will be communicated through email. You must reply to this email to confirm your attendance for all scheduled adjudication.

### **PRODUCTION INFORMATION FORM**

Approximately 1-2 weeks before you attend a production, you will receive a **Production Information Form**, which will include all of the information regarding the show that you will need prior to adjudicating including the cast list, the run times of the show, instructions for parking, etc. Please read through the show's Production Information Form *prior* to attending the performance.

### **TICKETS**

Each participating high school reserves two (2) complimentary tickets for each adjudicator attending their production. Each school will hold tickets under the name "Shea's Awards Adjudicator" for each adjudicator to pick up at will-call when they arrive at the performance venue. In most cases, seating will be general admission but there are some schools that use reserved seating. Adjudicators should contact Arts Education Coordinator, Jake Gear, with any special needs or requests regarding seating.

## **ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES**

The day of the performance, each adjudicator should arrive at least 15 minutes before curtain, and must remain throughout the duration of the performance. Adjudicators must make their best efforts to maintain anonymity after the performance, **and no oral critique should be provided.**

**If any adjudicator is unable to attend a production they are scheduled to attend, they MUST contact Arts Education Coordinator, Jake Gear, immediately via email ([jgear@sheas.org](mailto:jgear@sheas.org)) or cell phone (716-957-9058) and let him know so he can find a replacement.**

## **COMPENSATION**

This year, we are offering mileage reimbursement for every show that you see! It is based on the amount of miles that you travel to attend a production. Per mile traveled, we will reimburse you \$0.67 (Ex. Traveling 75 miles to attend a production will result in a reimbursement of \$50.25). Please keep track of the amount of miles that you travel throughout the season. You will fill out an expense reimbursement form to receive payment. You must also complete a W-9 form in order to receive payment.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Adjudicators, and any of their guests attending the performance, **must not discuss their opinions, evaluations, scores, or feedback with anyone in any format.** This includes, but is not limited to, students, faculty, and staff from participating high schools, other audience members, colleagues, friends, family, other adjudicators, reviewers, or social media networks. For the protection of the adjudicator, the director, and most importantly, the students; it is essential that any opinions or feedback come through their Shea's Wonder Awards paperwork. Please contact Arts Education Coordinator, Jake Gear, with any questions about confidentiality.

## **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

Adjudicators must agree to uphold the Shea's Wonder Awards conflict of interest policy and should not allow personal preferences or bias to influence evaluations. In accordance with this policy, adjudicators should not evaluate a performance where there is a personal or professional relationship with a participating high school's theatre production. If an adjudicator thinks a conflict of interest might exist, the adjudicator must let Arts Education Coordinator, Jake Gear, know immediately. Definitions and examples of potential conflicts of interest include, but are not limited to:

### ***Professional Conflicts of Interest***

This includes employment, receiving or providing compensation, gifts, financial support, substantial favors, or donations to or from participating high schools. This also includes board connections, organizational partnerships, volunteer work, business ties, financial investments, or any other professional ties that might positively or negatively influence the evaluation.

### ***Personal Conflicts of Interest***

Examples of this type of conflict of interest include alumni status, the involvement of family members, spouses, partners, siblings, parents, children, or any other personal ties that might positively or negatively influence the evaluation.

### **BIAS AND PREFERENCE**

Adjudicators must objectively be considered to have an impartial and unprejudiced view on the production title, the school that the production is performed at, and the cast of the production.

### **EVALUATION GUIDELINES**

Adjudicators will evaluate the overall musical theatre production, the ensemble, performers in leading roles, and performers in Jimmy Award eligible roles. Adjudicator evaluations consist of scores and a written narrative of feedback that will be reviewed by Arts Education Coordinator, Jake Gear, and then provided to the director of each show. Adjudicators are **prohibited** from sharing feedback or scores with schools directly or providing an oral critique following the performance to any person involved. Each adjudicator will be emailed a form to submit their scores and feedback.

**Adjudicator evaluations must be completed within 72 hours of attending the production.**

We highly suggest that you wait until 24 hours have passed to complete the adjudication form in order to effectively process all elements of the production prior to submitting your evaluation.

### **REFERENCE MATERIALS**

The school's Production Information Form features the names of the characters/students being evaluated in any categories, notes on any specific feedback the director might want to be known, and all other details. The school's program/playbill is also very valuable for information on the production that you might be wondering about! We always encourage people to read the director's note if there is one and take it into consideration before evaluating.

### **FEEDBACK**

The purpose of written feedback is to provide each theatre director with detailed notes in the hopes of commending the notable achievements of the production and offering solutions to the aspects where the production can improve. This is an educational tool, not strictly a review or critique. All feedback should include praise **AND** constructive criticism. Please also include examples to support comments and be as detailed as possible. Feedback should not mention or allude to scoring decisions and should not focus on areas that are outside of the student's control, including: design/technical aspects, orchestra, director's artistic decisions, etc.

All adjudicator feedback is compiled and reviewed by Arts Education Coordinator, Jake Gear, before being sent to theatre directors.

**A reminder to avoid any feedback that compares a production or performance to a film, another "famous" actor, another production of the same show, "your production", any other schools you have adjudicated, or any other reference to another adaptation of the material.**

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY PROCEDURES AND POLICIES**

Because of COVID and its lingering effects, school districts may create or change their policies when it comes to audiences, casts, performances, and rehearsals. Likewise, adjudicators may have varying comfort levels with health precautions. The Arts Engagement and Education Department will do its best to keep track of any changes and alert adjudicators of updates.

**THE SHEA'S AE&E DEPARTMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REMOVE ANY ADJUDICATOR FROM THE PROGRAM AT ANY TIME FOR FAILURE TO ABIDE BY THE GUIDELINES LAID OUT IN THIS HANDBOOK.**

## **ADJUDICATED AWARD CATEGORIES**

Outstanding Production of a Musical  
Best Performance by an Actor (Jimmy Awards Nominee)  
Best Performance by an Actress (Jimmy Awards Nominee)  
Outstanding Leading Performances  
Outstanding Collective Ensemble Performance  
Outstanding Dance Execution  
Outstanding Collective Vocal Performance  
Outstanding Student-Led Orchestral Performance  
Outstanding Lighting Design and Execution  
Outstanding Scenic Design and Execution  
Outstanding Costume Design and Execution  
Outstanding Hair & Make-up Design and Execution  
Outstanding Direction  
Outstanding Musical Direction  
Outstanding Choreography  
The Showstopper Award

## **HOW DO I FILL OUT THE ADJUDICATION FORM?**

Adjudicators are required to submit their scores within 72 hours of seeing a performance. You will receive the link to the adjudication form in the same email from Jake Gear that includes the Production Information Form 1-2 weeks prior to the production. If you cannot find the link, you can email Jake Gear to receive it again.

## **EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO KNOW\***

***\*but were afraid to ask***

### **Before Seeing a Show**

- Adjudicators are given two (2) free tickets to performances they attend. You are encouraged to bring a notebook or clipboard to take notes throughout the performance. Please do not bring a guest that would distract you from adjudicating.

- Please make sure that you have the directions to the school in advance. The address and any special instructions are available in the Production Information Form. Please arrive at least 15 minutes before the show. Late arrivals can skew scoring.
- Report to the box office and introduce yourself as an adjudicator. The attendant will have your tickets ready for you.

### While at the Show

- Before the show begins, take the time to look over the rubric/scoring evaluation to see who and what you are adjudicating. Make note of the actors you are to look for, and other aspects of the production you will adjudicate. If you notice any significant name changes or last-minute substitutes for any reason, please make a note of that, and continue to adjudicate the performance.
- **Enjoy Act 1!** Make mental (or written) notes as you are watching, and do not commit yourself to any final judgment until the conclusion of the performance. Feel free to take extra notes during intermission, **but do not give any scores until after the entire performance has concluded.**

### After the Show

- Do not offer advice or critique about any aspect of the production in person, to anyone around you, or on social media. Do this in the narrative feedback section of the evaluation.
- Submit your completed evaluation within 72 hours of seeing the designated performance. We highly recommend you to complete your evaluation the day after attending the performance in order to allow yourself to fully absorb the material.
- Use the rubric to make your score assignments
- **All shows must be adjudicated on their own merits.** Are you being too critical? Remember high school productions can be just as good as any shows that are out there, but are you considering all aspects of the show fairly and are you judging based on what you saw onstage or **what you personally think is good?**
- Every theatre director is prepared to receive feedback, and we encourage constructive advice and accolades when completing the evaluation.

### Warm and Cool Feedback

The language for “warm” feedback and “cool” feedback includes:

#### **Warm Feedback**

“I really like how you...”  
 “You did a great job at...”  
 “It was clear that you worked hard on...”  
 “It was really interesting when you...”

#### **Cool Feedback**

“You may want to consider...”  
 “I noticed that you... It may be more useful to...”  
 “Have you thought about...”  
 “It was unclear to me when you...”

## **NOT-SO-GREAT FEEDBACK EXAMPLES**

Not so great feedback could be **entirely too long** and **overly descriptive**, or on the opposite end of the spectrum, **only one or two sentences** that does not help with the improvement of the production. Make sure to not be **overly negative**, remember that these are high schoolers. Also, keep in mind that **being overly positive while offering no constructive feedback can sometimes do more harm than good**. Consider how the school may feel when they don't get an award nomination if you only offer highly positive compliments with zero critique but your score does not reflect that same opinion.

### **Examples of Not-So-Great Feedback**

1. "It was fine. Just about what I would expect from a high school. It was all serviceable and there were only a few costume pieces that I found distractingly modern, but not enough to keep my attention for long. I will say that it didn't seem like there was much thought put into the design but it worked."
2. "The collective vocal performance was engaging and moving."
3. "I didn't notice much in particular in this area, but that wasn't necessarily a bad thing for me."
4. "They were not the most talented ensemble I've seen or heard, but at least they were 150% dedicated."
5. "What Scenic design? Honestly- there was almost no set. There were backdrops and a couple moveable pieces. It seemed the bare minimum you could use to accomplish this show and I wish I would have seen more. With such a HUGE beautiful space, I would have loved to see it utilized more."



## **GREAT FEEDBACK EXAMPLES**

Great feedback for each category consists of **3-5 strong sentences** that **balances praise** of the effort put into this element while also **providing constructive feedback** that would be useful to the directing team in order to grow the program. Including **too much feedback could end up being harmful** and not useful in the long run. Keep it to a few sentences, hitting on the main points and using your expertise to **offer accessible solutions**. It will also make your job a little bit easier to not feel like you need to write an essay about each category. Only submitting one or two short sentences that lacks information is not good either. **Find the balance!**

### **Examples of Great Feedback**

1. "Overall, the Collective Vocal Performance had a lot of strong moments. In addition to the lead performances, the harmonies that occurred during the duets were well executed and demonstrated the students' strong ability to listen to each other while singing. There were some company numbers where it seemed like some of the ensemble was uncertain of the lyrics, and therefore more confident ensemble members sang out to help support them. For example, during the finale number, some of the company got ahead of the rest. However, a great display of the cast's teamwork and support was watching the ensemble check-in with each other on stage and make the proper adjustments to end the show strong!"
2. "The hair & makeup supported the costume design very effectively. Nothing was distracting or out of place and they all complimented the design choices for the characters quite well. I did not notice any wigs, but I enjoyed seeing variation in the different hair styles. Almost no character had the same hairstyle which was great!"
3. "I really loved the choreography throughout because the group formations kept evolving and that's rare in a high school. My note would be--go back through the steps and see how to motivate them as behavior particular to the storytelling as often as possible so it feels inevitable rather than decorative!"
4. "The lighting design itself was good, but often scenes would begin in darkness, or there would be severely late called cues. Unfortunately I think this pulled the lighting down for me a bit, but overall it is a good design. Good use was made of segmenting the large stage and set to move from scene to scene quickly, and using the front section of the house as well."
5. "The lighting design complimented the overall vision and style of the show. The execution of the lighting by the operator unfortunately struggled during moments of the performance. Many times, it seemed like the board operator didn't know when songs were over and the audience waited 10-20 seconds while the cast stood there frozen before the lights went down slowly. You may want to consider having the director sitting with the board operator during performances and telling the operator "go" with each cue. You could also set timings for the cues (for instance, "This cue is a "zero count," meaning it goes to a blackout in "zero seconds" (quickly)." or "This cue should fade to black in 5 seconds." This would greatly help the flow of the show!"

## **QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU EVALUATE**

### **What was your overall opinion of the entire production?**

- a. Was the major idea of the story developed?
- b. What was the style of the production?
- c. Did the elements (production and performance) maintain consistency with the style?
- d. Would you recommend this show to your friends?

### **What did you think of the direction?**

- a. Did the production seem to have a consistent vision?
- b. Did the director compose the stage pictures to give additional meaning to the moments?
- c. Was the pace of the show appropriate and compelling?
- d. Did the staging make good use of the entire space?
- e. Was there variety in the movements of the show?
- f. Did all the elements have a consistent message?

### **What did you think of the scenic design?**

- a. Did the environment of the set support the production?
- b. Did it seem appropriate to the style or time period of the musical?
- c. Did it make you react to the show in a specific way?
- d. Was it successful at creating an environment for the characters?
- e. How well were color, line, mass, and texture used?
- f. Did the scenery provide a logical and suitable setting for the action?
- g. Did the color, style, and layout create an effective environment?
- h. Were the scenic changes handled efficiently without disrupting the action of the production?

### **What did you think of the lighting design?**

- a. Was the lighting effective in moving the attention of the audience to the action?
- b. Was there appropriate visibility?
- c. Was the lighting effective in changing locations and moods?
- d. Were there any exceptional effects?
- e. Did the lighting tell a story or did it simply support the overall design of the show?

### **What did you think of the ensemble?**

- a. Did the actors work well on stage with other performers?
- b. Did any actor stand out to the detriment of the other actors?
- c. Did members of the ensemble make their own artistic choices?

### **What did you think of the individual acting?**

- a. Is the performer believable as their character?
- b. Was the performer clear vocally, physically, and in terms of what their character wanted from others on stage?
- c. Did the performer move and use their body to convey the character?
- d. Did the performer have good stage presence, energy, and poise?
- e. Did the performer fulfill the demands of a specific time period or dialect?

## **CONTACTS**

Below is the contact information for the members of our department in order of who you should contact in an emergency or situation that you need to inform us of. Your first point of contact will always be Jake Gear, followed by Victoria, and so on. Email is always preferred but you may call our cell phones for emergencies and time sensitive issues.

### **Jake Gear**

Arts Education Coordinator

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