



2025-2026 SPOTLIGHT AWARDS

PARTICIPATION HANDBOOK

PART 8 – AWARDS CEREMONY DETAILS

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SPOTLIGHT AWARDS CEREMONY AT TPAC

The Spotlight Awards Ceremony is a community celebration of arts education that acknowledges outstanding achievement, growth, and artistry in high school musical theatre and provides an opportunity for students to share their art with each other.

Time and Place

The Spotlight Awards Ceremony will take place May 24, 2026, 3:00-6:30 pm in TPAC's Jackson Hall (505 Deaderick Street, Nashville). Doors will open to the public at 2:00 p.m. *Please note that estimated run times are subject to change and are included in this handbook for planning purposes only.*

Awards Ceremony Attire

The Spotlight Awards is a red-carpet event based on the Tony Awards. The dress for this event is formal. Audience members are encouraged to arrive early to get their picture taken on the red carpet.

Transportation

Buses will be able to drop off and park nearby. Cars will need to find parking in one of the lots downtown but be aware that many lots do have parking costs. Plan ahead for your parking if you are coming in cars – and remind parents of this as well.

Ticketing for Schools

Schools participating in Adjudication will get a small group of free tickets to the Awards Ceremony in the orchestra level. Additional seats can be purchased for tier or balcony seating and will be selected by schools based on availability.

Ticketing for Guests (Friends, Family and the Public)

Tickets are very limited for the Spotlight Awards Ceremony beyond the participating school attendees. This event is specifically designed to allow the students and teachers to celebrate and share art with each other, therefore school group tickets will be confirmed before opening any seats to the public. Tickets can be purchased at www.tpac.org once tickets are on sale in the Spring.

Viewing Room Option (Friends, Family and the Public)

As we celebrate our 10th Anniversary of the Spotlight Awards program, we anticipate larger audience demand for our ceremony. We are currently planning for a viewing option of a live video feed in Polk Theater during the ceremony. No additional details are known at this time as we are still planning for this element. More information will come later.

Award Presentation

The Spotlight Awards will present both school and individual awards for those participating in the School Adjudication track and will acknowledge both students and teachers. Schools will select someone to act as representative for all nominations on stage. The full outline of the ceremony and award presentations will be provided as we get closer to the ceremony.



Photo by MA2LA Photography.

PERFORMANCE NUMBERS DURING THE CEREMONY

School Performances - Outstanding Musical Nominations

The 10 selected nominees in the Outstanding Musical category will perform a 2.5-3-minute production number. (No exceptions will be made over 3 minutes) Performance groups are limited to 50 people. Consider which number best showcases your production and how to remount it on TPAC's stage. TPAC reserves the right to choose which number will be performed.

School Performances - Crowd Pleaser Performances

Other performances may be included each year, such as Crowd-Pleaser selections. Those selected will perform a 2.5-3-minute production number. (No exceptions will be made over 3 minutes) Performance groups are limited to 50 people. Consider which number best showcases your production and how to remount it on TPAC's stage. TPAC reserves the right to choose which number will be performed.

Outstanding Lead Performer Finalists - Solo Performances

The Outstanding Lead Finalists will each perform a solo from their nominated role during the awards ceremony. Solos should be approximately 2 minutes in length, no longer than 2.5 minutes. Due to licensing rights, no medleys or creative interpretations are permitted.

Opening Number - Community Performance

Each year the opening number varies slightly, sometimes performed by our Spotlight Ceremony Host but often including alumni or other community members. Anyone included in this performance will be required to attend rehearsals.



Photo by MA2LA Photography.



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Closing Number - Community Performance

The group of Outstanding Lead Performer Nominees are invited to perform the closing number of the Awards Ceremony. Lead Nominees will rehearse at the Lead Performer Intensive sessions on May 2-3 and on May 22 at TPAC. Nominees who are unable to attend these events will not perform in the ceremony.

Encore Ensemble - Community Performance

All Community and Show Review participants will have the opportunity to include students in the Encore Ensemble performance during the Spotlight Awards Ceremony. Students in the Encore Ensemble will be required to attend rehearsals for this performance. Alumni and additional ensemble members from other schools will also be asked to join this amazing community performance. More details on the Encore Ensemble can be found in Part 2 of the Handbook – Community Recognition and Scholarship Opportunities.

PERFORMANCE DETAILS

Costumes and Props

Costume accessories and hand-held props that can be easily transported and kept by the student in their seat may be utilized to suggest character, time, and place if needed. There are no dressing rooms available for changing into costumes. Directors should consider the formal dress of the evening when preparing for performances. Students may need to add tights to a dress or take off shoes for dance numbers.

Tech Rehearsal and Sound Check

Anyone performing – either a solo or ensemble number – must attend one tech rehearsal on Saturday, May 23. All performance elements will be practiced on Jackson Hall stage in the order of the ceremony timeline. Schools will be notified of their time slots, rehearsal and ceremony performance order by May 1. The tech rehearsal will include an orientation period, a chance for school director(s) to finesse spacing on the stage, a run through of the number with the technical staff and stage manager, and mic check for soloists. Students should arrive fully knowing their music and blocking so that the tech rehearsal can be used for final tweaks.

TPAC event staff reserve the right to remove a school from showcase activity for any missed staging rehearsal. These determinations are at the full discretion of program staff. Under no circumstances will a missed tech rehearsal be excused due to safety considerations related to lights, camera blocking, travel pathways, etc. Anyone not available for this rehearsal time will not be able to perform at the ceremony and will be replaced in the ceremony timeline.



Photo by MA2LA Photography.

Technical Elements

No scenic elements will be allowed for the performance. All performances will take place on a bare stage. A lighting “look” will be created for your performance by a TPAC lighting designer based on information provided by the director on the mood of the scene.

Microphones

Up to 10 handheld mics will be provided to students when they line up backstage Right. These microphones will be returned to a stagehand Stage Left when exiting. There will also be four shotgun microphones on the downstage edge of the stage.

Accompaniment or Tracks

Schools may choose to supply a musical track or provide their own accompanist. A piano will be available on stage (Upstage Left) for your use and will not be moved during the event. School-provided accompanists will need to be present for tech rehearsals and the ceremony (and included in your school ticket count for seating).

Sheet Music and Tracks for Ceremony Performances

Schools performing to tracks during the Spotlight Awards Ceremony will submit digital sheet music (marked with performance needs) **and** digital tracks by May 5. Schools performing with their own accompanist will still submit digital sheet music (marked with performance needs) by May 5. Submission details can be found in Part 4 of the Handbook – Adjudication Track Overview.

PART 1 – SPOTLIGHT AWARDS OVERVIEW AND REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Program Goals and Values

Program Components and Participation Tracks

Registration Guidelines and Participation Requirements

PART 2 – COMMUNITY RECOGNITION AND SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Community Track Participation

Scholarships – Rising Star, Arts Leadership, Impact Award and more

Encore Ensemble Participation

Technical Design Symposium

PART 3 – SHOW REVIEW TRACK

Track Requirements

Artist Review by Adjudicators and Feedback

Review Day Details

PART 4 – ADJUDICATION TRACK OVERVIEW

Adjudicator Overview

Adjudicator Roles and Procedures

Required Events and Submissions

Adjudication Show Day Details

PART 5 – AWARDS AND ELIGIBILITY

Awards Listing

Eligibility Per Award Category

Director Nominated and Selected Award Instructions

Lead Performer Nominee Overview

PART 6 – A GROWTH MINDSET - GIVING AND RECEIVING FEEDBACK

Rubric Overview

Encouraging a Growth Mindset

Preparing Students to Receive Feedback

PART 7 – RUBRICS BY AWARD CATEGORY

PART 8 – SPOTLIGHT AWARDS CEREMONY

General Information and Ticketing

Performances