



2026-27 SPOTLIGHT AWARDS

PARTICIPATION HANDBOOK

PART 2 – COMMUNITY RECOGNITION AND SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

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COMMUNITY TRACK PARTICIPATION – SCHOOLS AND INDIVIDUALS

All participation tracks are also part of the Community Track, with access to all of the elements listed in this packet. However, schools and individual students can register for the Community Track at no cost.

Registration will open August 10.

Schools and/or individual students can register for the Community Track beginning August 10. Registration for community participation will be open through January.

Applications must include the following information to be considered complete:

- For schools – At least 1 adult contact - Theatre Director, full-time faculty member at the school. This contact must have access to phone and email.
- For individual students – In addition to their own contact information, a parent/guardian name, email address and cell number will need to be provided at registration.

Participation Requirements – School Media Release

During the year, Spotlight Awards administrators may photograph/video students, faculty, and others involved with your production or attending events. Please be aware that participation in this program gives full rights and permissions to the Spotlight Awards and Tennessee Performing Arts Center (TPAC) for the use of such video and photos. Each participating school is required to submit a media release signed by a responsible party (principal, media manager, theater director, etc.) within 1 month of their registration date.

Participation Requirements - Other

- The Spotlight Awards program expects all participating schools to acquire the necessary rights and royalties for their performances during the school year.
- Some events may have required waivers, media releases, or other needs for participation that will be detailed in information for those events.
- For schools/individuals interested in the Encore Ensemble, it is required that they engage with us in at least one of our community events prior the Awards Ceremony to be eligible for this element.

Conduct Expectations

All participants are expected to demonstrate respect for the Spotlight Awards goals and values as well as other Spotlight participants throughout the year. Schools are expected to complete all submissions and requirements of the program and to engage with the program throughout the year, whether it is through master class attendance or hosting an event at their school. Directors will sign a contract at orientation outlining the expected conduct and what it means to be in good standing for the program. Schools that do not follow the guidelines or demonstrate respect for the Spotlight Awards program, participants, and goals could be put on probation or removed from participation during the school year, and/or will not be accepted into the program the following year.

Public Relations

During the year TPAC will submit stories and press releases to various sources about our program and participants. After the Awards Ceremony, there will also be several stories and media appearances with our winning students. If you are contacted by any media outlets regarding your participation in the Spotlight Awards or the Jimmy Awards, please promptly let us know. Schools should not speak on behalf of the Spotlight Awards without contacting us first.

LEARNING AND COMMUNITY EVENTS

Community Kickoff Celebration – September 12

All participating schools are invited to celebrate the start of a new season with us. Join us for fun, games, workshops, free headshots and more.

Director Peer Review

The Director Peer Review program is a pathway for schools to invite another school's director to attend a rehearsal and give feedback. Visiting directors serve as another set of eyes to affirm what is working, make suggestions for improvement, etc. Requests for a peer review, scheduling and other details will be worked out between the participating directors and not through the Spotlight Awards administration. *(Interested directors must sign up for this element by September 1 to be included in the contact list for other directors.)*

School Ticket Exchange

The ticket exchange program encourages students and teachers to see other productions and to lend support to their peers. Directors who indicate interest in the ticket exchange will receive a list of other participating schools' production dates and contact information via email. Reservations will be made between schools and not through the Spotlight Awards administration. *(Interested directors must sign up for this element by September 1 to be included in the contact list for other directors.)*

Monthly Events

Each month we provide opportunities for students, teachers, and/or school and community groups to attend fun and engaging events such as Virtual Q&As with TPAC Staff or Broadway performers, Workshops and Master Classes with brilliant artists, Invited Dress Rehearsals and College Visits. Some of these are included in the participation calendar of events, but others may be added along the way. Watch for your monthly email newsletters and @SpotlightAwards on Instagram for information on new additions!



OVERVIEW OF SCHOLARSHIPS AND PERFORMANCE OPPORTUNITIES

These elements are optional and open to all participation tracks. Details for each can be found on the following pages.

Rising Star and Shining Star Scholarships (All participation tracks)

Several nominations and scholarships will be awarded to students based on video audition submissions. The number and type of scholarships provided will vary (may include monetary, and/or free registration to camps and workshops). Rising Star Scholarships are for 9th graders, and Shining Star Scholarships are for Middle School students.

Arts Leadership Scholarships (All participation tracks)

Several nominations and scholarships will be awarded to graduating seniors planning a career in the arts who exhibit the highest level of excellence in their craft and embody leadership skills in their school and community. The number and type of scholarships provided will vary (may include monetary, and/or free registration to camps and workshops).

Impact Award for Outstanding Educators (All participation tracks)

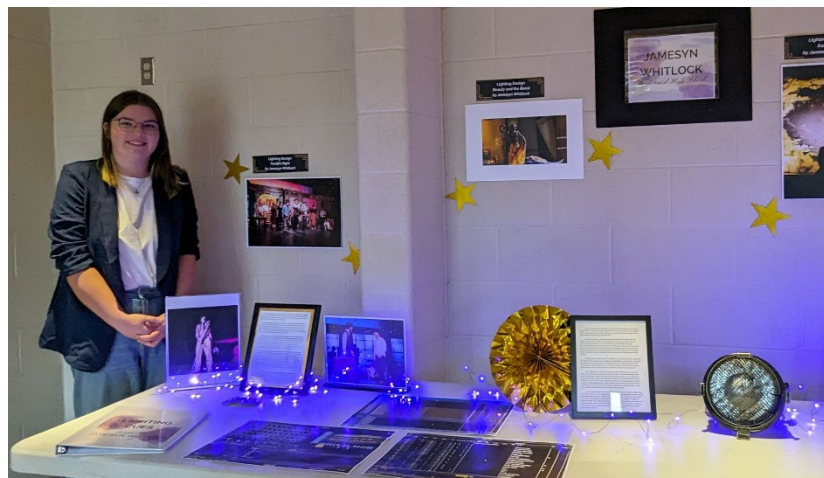
While the primary focus of our program is to celebrate student achievements, adults also make tremendous contributions to school drama programs and make a lasting impact on our industry. The Impact Award is a student-nominated award presented to an adult who leads and/or supports their school's productions. This award provides an avenue to recognize educators who go above and beyond to support the high school musical experience.

Design Symposium Gallery (All participation tracks)

Student Designers' work will be displayed at TSU during the Spring semester at the annual Design Symposium. The Design Symposium is an artistic display of theatrical design (all areas of theatrical design welcome) renderings as well as images and displays of fully realized creations. Interested students can apply for this gallery separately by creating their "Dream Production" designs, or they can submit designs from their school production.

Encore Ensemble (Community and Show Review Tracks)

Community and Show Review track 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 where they will work with professional artists as well as Spotlight alumni. Additional ensemble members from other schools may also be asked to join this amazing community performance.



Jamesyn Whitlock (Centennial High) presenting Lighting Designs at the 2024 Design Symposium.

RISING STAR SCHOLARSHIPS

Several nominations and scholarships will be awarded to students in 9th grade based on video audition submissions. The number and type of scholarships provided will vary (may include monetary, and/or free registration to camps and workshops).

Deadlines and Announcements

Scholarship Applications will open October 15 through December 15. Scholarship recipients (multiple honorees in each category) will be announced in January. Applicants will be notified by email.

Application Details

Students applying will submit the following materials in an online application.

- Media Release (Signed and uploaded into the application)
- Headshot for the nominee uploaded into the application - high-res jpg files (8x10 at 300 DPI)
- Resume for the nominee – one (1) page – uploaded into the application
- Brief written response from the student nominee answering the questions "Why are the arts important to me? What is my favorite thing about being involved in theatre at my school?" (Uploaded into the application)

After submitting the online application, applicants will submit one Audition Video Including:

- Student introduction (Name, School, Grade, selected song tiles/show)
- 1 song from a Broadway musical, Songs should be between 1.5-2 minutes in length

Submission Guidelines

- FIRST – The online application should be submitted, including uploads for Media Release, Headshot, Response and Resume. All Scholarship Applications can be submitted here - <https://forms.gle/f392m1xmxMfvgufV9>
- Before Filming Auditions - Applicants should watch the provided video explaining best practices for submitting self-tape auditions. You will need to sign in with your name and email address for our viewing records.
<https://vimeo.com/tpac/auditiontips?share=copy&fl=sv&fe=ci>
 - Please use a Medium Close-Up frame for your audition video (middle of the chest to just above the top of the head).
 - Frame the shot with your eyes level to the lens, look just off-camera for your eyeline, not looking directly into the camera itself.
- After filming the audition video, please preview the video files to ensure they are correct. If filmed in separate takes, please combine into one video file before submitting.
- Then title the file **PRIOR** to uploading to the request link. Please label all files with RISING STAR - FIRST NAME LAST NAME
- Once your files have been reviewed and titled correctly, videos should be uploaded to the Spotlight secure dropbox request link - <https://www.dropbox.com/request/5e4xE19nioDhmjNJaB7i>

Audition Rubric

Selections will be based on the Audition Rubric found on the Spotlight website.

SHINING STAR SCHOLARSHIPS

Several nominations and scholarships will be awarded to students in 5th-8th grades based on video audition submissions. The number and type of scholarships provided will vary (may include monetary, and/or free registration to camps and workshops). **For the middle school Shining Star Scholarships, school directors are expected to help students gather, video and submit their scholarship application.**

Deadlines and Announcements

Scholarship Applications will open October 15 through December 15. Scholarship recipients (multiple honorees in each category) will be announced in January. Applicants will be notified by email.

Application Details

Students applying will submit the following materials in an online application.

- Media Release (Signed and uploaded into the application)
- Headshot for the nominee uploaded into the application - high-res jpg files (8x10 at 300 DPI)
- Teacher Recommendation Letter – uploaded into the application
- Brief written response from the student nominee answering the questions "Why are the arts important to me? What is my favorite thing about being involved in theatre at my school?" (Uploaded into the application)

After submitting the online application, applicants will submit one Audition Video Including:

- Student introduction (Name, School, Grade, selected song tiles/show)
- 1 song from a Broadway musical, Songs should be between 1-2 minutes in length

Submission Guidelines

- FIRST – The online application should be submitted with a school director, including uploads for Media Release, Headshot, Response and Resume. All Scholarship Applications can be submitted here - <https://forms.gle/f392m1xmxMfvufV9>
- Before Filming Auditions - Applicants should watch the provided video explaining best practices for submitting self-tape auditions. You will need to sign in with your name and email address for our viewing records. <https://vimeo.com/tpac/auditiontips?share=copy&fl=sv&fe=ci>
 - Please use a Medium Close-Up frame for your audition video (middle of the chest to just above the top of the head).
 - Frame the shot with your eyes level to the lens, look just off-camera for your eyeline, not looking directly into the camera itself.
- School directors should film the audition video. After filming, please preview the video files to ensure they are correct. If filmed in separate takes, please combine into one video file before submitting.
- Then title the file **PRIOR** to uploading to the request link. Please label all files with SHINING STAR - FIRST NAME LAST NAME
- Once your files have been reviewed and titled correctly, videos should be uploaded to the Spotlight secure dropbox request link - <https://www.dropbox.com/request/5e4xE19nioDhmjNJb7i>

Audition Rubric

Selections will be based on the Audition Rubric found on the Spotlight website.

ARTS LEADERSHIP SCHOLARSHIP

Several nominations and scholarships will be awarded to graduating seniors planning a career in the arts who exhibit the highest level of excellence in their craft and embody leadership skills in their school and community. The number and type of scholarships provided will vary but may include job shadowing, resume and interview coaching, industry meeting invitations, or could open a pathway to interviews for paid internships or part-time positions at TPAC.

Deadlines and Announcements

Scholarship Applications will open October 15 – December 15. Scholarship recipients (multiple honorees in each category) will be announced in January. Applicants will be notified by email.

Application Details

Students applying will submit an online application including the following materials:

- Media Release (Signed and uploaded into the application)
- Headshot for the nominee (uploaded into the application) – must be high-res jpg files (8"x10 at 300 DPI)
- Resume for the nominee – one (1) page (uploaded into the application)
- Teacher Recommendation letter (uploaded into the application)
- Written Responses in the application to the following questions:
 - What does leadership mean to you?
 - Why is theatre meaningful to you? Why is theatre important in the world today?
 - What are your career goals? How do you hope to bring the arts to others in your life/career?

Submission Guidelines

- All Scholarship Applications can be submitted here - <https://forms.gle/f392m1xmxMfvgufV9>
- Title the file **PRIOR** to uploading to the request link. Please label all files with ARTS LEADER - FIRST NAME LAST NAME



Photo by MA2LA Photography.

IMPACT AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING EDUCATOR

While the primary focus of our program is to celebrate student achievements, adults also make tremendous contributions to school drama programs and make a lasting impact on our industry. The Impact Award is a student-nominated award presented to an adult who leads and/or supports their school's productions. This award provides an avenue to recognize educators who go above and beyond to support the high school musical experience.

Nomination Details

To be considered, a current student or group of students must complete the nomination process. If submitting a nomination as a group of students, please identify one student to serve as the primary contact for the nomination. All nominations must be completed and received by March 31.

Nomination should include:

- 1 page nomination letter written by the nominating student describing how the educator goes above and beyond to make a positive impact on students' experience in their high school.
- Written testimonials from two-three individuals who have worked directly with the nominated educator on one or more school musical production(s). Testimonials may come from, but are not limited to: current high school students, alumni of the school's drama program, production staff, other adults that work on productions with this mentor, school administrators, parents. Each testimonial should be no more than 300 words.

Submission Guidelines

- All letters/testimonials should be submitted together in one email by the primary contact for the nomination. Please do not submit multiple emails from multiple sources.
- Email documents to education@tpac.org with attached PDF files.
- Please list Impact Award Nomination in the subject line and the body of the email should include the name and school of the Educator, and a list of items included as attachments.
- All nominations must be completed and received by March 31.



DESIGN SYMPOSIUM GALLERY

The Design Symposium highlights the creativity of students working in all areas design - lighting design, scenic design, costume design, hair and makeup design, and graphic design/publicity.

Deadlines and Announcements

Design Symposium applications and/or nominations will be open January 25 through February 25.

Applications for Design Symposium

Interested students will apply online and provide digital support materials as indicated below. Applications can be submitted here - <https://forms.gle/f392m1xmxMfvufV9>

Applicants will submit:

Students applying will submit an online application including the following materials:

- Media Release (Signed and uploaded into the application)
- Headshot for the nominee (uploaded into the application) – must be high-res jpg files (8"x10 at 300 DPI)
- At least 1 design rendering (no more than 5) and/or photos of a constructed item
- A 1-page description of each submitted design.
- Gallery submissions can include a fully constructed garment and/or design renderings from either a realized or unrealized "Dream" production.

Other Application Options:

- Dream Production Participation - While many applications will be based on your school production, we invite all designers to apply regardless of opportunities within an actual show. Applications can also utilize designer imagined creations for a "Dream" show they are not actively working on.
- Teacher Nominated Award participants - Nominations for the Outstanding Student Designer and Outstanding Original Design and Creation awards will also be included in the Design Symposium Gallery.

Symposium Gallery Requirements

- Students must arrange transport to Tennessee State University for the installation and to load-out gallery contents. Dates and times will be confirmed before applications open. The gallery will happen sometime between March 18-31.
- Applications include permission for TPAC to use images from the designs in marketing and social media posts.

Kylie Rasmussen's set design display at the Design Symposium.

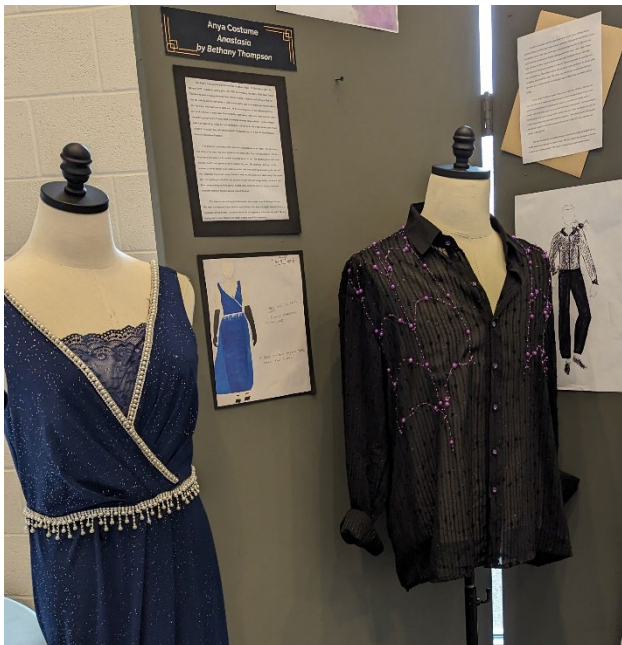
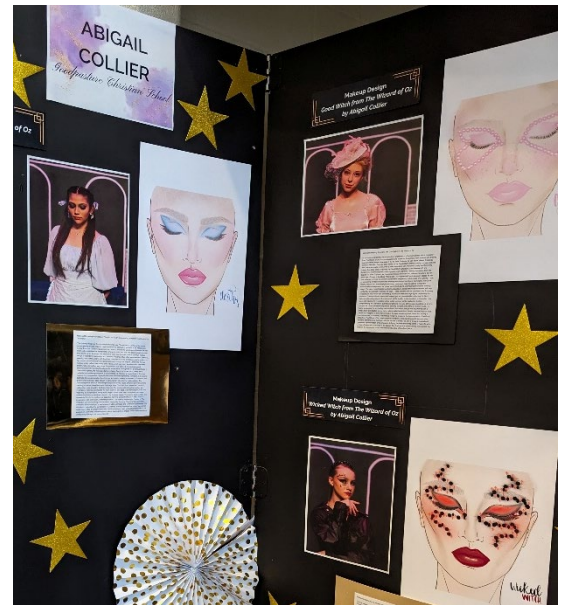


Abby Hendricks' display at the Design Symposium.

DESIGN SYMPOSIUM CATEGORIES AND DISPLAY DETAILS

Design Rendering and Image Displays

- Renderings/images of designs with production photos and other digital information to be printed and displayed on a flat board/wall surface.
- Participants can submit up to 5 design renderings for consideration with a 1-page description of each design including how it fits into the world of the show.
- Design submissions could include design renderings and production photos of the realized designs, mood boards, models, cue sheets or color swatches.
- Participants are responsible for providing high quality images and printed items.



Constructed Item Displays

- Images submitted to show the 3D fully constructed item that would be displayed in person in the gallery on tables or dress forms. Participants are responsible for providing high quality images and renderings to go with these items.
- Students can submit up to 5 photographs showing fully constructed costumes, props or set models.
- Production Photos of the item in use are encouraged when possible.
- These submissions must also include design rendering and 1-page description for each of the constructed items.
- Designers release TPAC and TSU from liability of lost or damaged items that are included in the gallery.

ENCORE ENSEMBLE

Students in the Community and Show Review Tracks are invited to perform at the Spotlight Awards Ceremony on May 16 in the Encore Ensemble. Students in the Encore Ensemble will learn from a professional director/choreographer and music director, as well as work with the amazing talent from past Spotlight participants. Nominations will be announced on April 21 on the @SpotlightAwards Instagram page.

Ensemble Selection

School Community and Show Review Tracks

- Schools in the Community and Show Review Tracks may select 1 student to join the Encore Ensemble.
- Schools must participate in at **least 1 Spotlight event during the school year to nominate** a student for the Encore Ensemble.
- Theatre Directors will nominate a student to participate, at their own discretion.
 - Nominations should include the student name, grade level, and why the teacher feels they should be included in the Ensemble performance.
 - Email nominations by March 31 to education@tpac.org with the Subject – Encore Ensemble Nomination

Individual Community participation

- Students that participate on their own (separate from a school) will be eligible to participate in the Encore Ensemble as well. These students must **participate in at least 1 Spotlight event during the school year (in-person or virtual), and must be available in person for rehearsals.**
- Students that are the only participants from their school can submit a teacher nomination letter for participation. Students who participate individually along with other classmates – A Theater Director or Drama Club sponsor at your school will need to select which student to nominate for participation. Reach out for clarification and specific guidelines in this situation.
 - Nominations should include the student name, grade level, and why the teacher feels they should be included in the Ensemble performance.
 - Email nominations by March 31 to education@tpac.org with the Subject – Encore Ensemble Nomination

Other participants

If space is still available in the ensemble, Adjudication Advocates may nominate additional ensemble performers from a school's Adjudication track show.

Required Informational Meeting

Encore Ensemble members and parent/guardians are asked to attend a virtual informational meeting on the evening of April 23 at 5:00 PM.

Rehearsals and Sound Check

Rehearsals for Encore Ensemble will be held during the evenings of May 5 and 11, with a Technical Rehearsal during the day on May 15. Students not available for rehearsals will not be allowed to perform at the Ceremony.

Ceremony Attendance for Encore Ensemble

Students participating in the Encore Ensemble will be given free admission for themselves, as well as 1 additional seat on hold for purchase.

Photo by Caitlin McNaney for MA2LA Photography.



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