

**Metro Awards
Participating Schools
Handbook**

Updated July 2024

Dear Participating Schools,

We are thrilled to welcome you to the Metro Awards program and extend our heartfelt thanks for your interest and enthusiasm in participating. Your involvement is vital to the continued success of this cherished initiative, which has been celebrating the extraordinary talent and dedication found in high school musicals across our region for the past 25 years. Although we experienced a brief hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our commitment to recognizing and honoring outstanding high school musical productions is stronger than ever.

The Metro Awards program spans high schools across Bergen, Putnam, Rockland, and Westchester counties, uniting a vibrant and diverse community of performers, directors, and creative teams. Our esteemed judges meticulously and impartially evaluate all elements of each production, including student performances, production aspects, and technical elements. Their scores and written feedback play a crucial role in determining the nominations for the Metro Awards, ensuring that excellence in every form is identified and celebrated.

Each year, the Metro Awards culminate in an exhilarating Tony Award-style ceremony held in June, where all participating schools are invited to come together and celebrate their remarkable achievements. This event is more than an awards ceremony; it is a grand celebration of the incredible talent, hard work, and passion that define our high school theatre community. We are excited to honor your students' dedication and creativity, and to share in the joy and excitement that this special evening brings.

We are also committed to the continuous growth and improvement of the Metro Awards program. We highly value the feedback we receive from participating schools and use it to make meaningful changes that enhance the program each year. Your insights and suggestions are instrumental in helping us evolve and better serve the needs of our community. We are excited to see the program grow and improve with each passing year, making it an even more enriching experience for everyone involved.

Thank you for your unwavering commitment to showcasing and nurturing the talents of these young performers. Your contributions not only make a significant impact on the arts community in our region but also inspire and uplift all who are involved. We are genuinely excited to have each and every school in the region participate and look forward to celebrating your achievements together.

Warm regards,

Danielle Rudess, Jordan Singer, Blake Spence
Artistic Directors and Producers, The Metro Awards

Applying to Participate in the Metro Awards

Schools interested in participating in the Metro Awards program are required to complete a participation application by December 31, 2024. This application is essential for informing the program producers of a school's interest and providing key details about the upcoming production.

The participation survey gathers important information including:

- The title of the show the school will be producing.
- Dates and times of the performances.
- Directions to the performance venue.
- The school's past production history.
- Details about the production budget.
- Any unique challenges the production might face.

This information helps judges understand the context and effort behind each production, though it does not directly impact the scoring.

School staff should take great care and diligence in filling out this survey to ensure that the most accurate and comprehensive information is provided.

Adherence to the December 31 deadline for survey submissions is crucial, as schools failing to meet this deadline will not be able to participate in the program for that season.

Additionally, schools must submit a \$150 participation fee. Payment options include:

- Check: Made out to Helen Hayes Youth Theatre and mailed to Helen Hayes Youth Theatre, PO Box 395, New City, NY 10956
- Venmo: @nancy-rudes
- Zelle: 914-391-5870

An invoice will be provided to all schools upon survey submission. Registration fees must be received before judges are sent to evaluate a show. In case of any payment complications, it is the school's responsibility to contact the Metro producers to resolve the issue promptly.

Prior to Your Show

After registering for the Metro Awards program, you will receive a character breakdown for your show. This document will detail which roles and aspects of your production will be evaluated by the judges. You do not need to do anything with this breakdown; it is simply for your reference.

About a week prior to your performance, you will receive an email from the Metro producers requesting that you set aside tickets for specific performances for the judges. Each school will have two judges assigned to evaluate their show. These judges are permitted to bring one or two guests with them to the performance. Additionally, some of the Metro producers may also attend your show. Therefore, it is advisable to plan for setting aside between 4 to 8 tickets for the Metro production team. Judges and Metro staff will not identify themselves beyond collecting their tickets, ensuring an unbiased evaluation process.

It is important for schools to remember that they will need to submit a recording and three high-quality production photos to the Metro Awards after their show. To meet this requirement, schools should schedule a videographer and photographer as needed. Ensuring these materials are prepared and submitted on time is crucial for the thorough evaluation and celebration of your production.

After Your Show

The week following your show, you will receive a follow-up survey to complete. This survey should be submitted along with a link to a shared Google Drive folder containing your show's recording and three high-quality production photos, emailed to the Metro producers.

The follow-up survey allows schools to recommend nominations in specific categories that are not evaluated by the judges who attended the production but rather by the Metro producers. These categories include: Lobby Display, Student Instrumentalist, and Student Achievement. Any category written about in the survey should have support material submitted in the shared Google Folder to be considered for nomination. Please note that new categories may be added each year.

Your Google Folder is a vital part of your school's evaluation. Your Google Folder should be set up with the following sub-folder for ease of access by the Metro producers:

- Production Video
- Production Photos (at least 3 needed in jpeg format)
- Production Playbill and Graphic (submit a full version of the playbill and the graphic art separately)
- Support Material for Lobby Display (optional)
- Support Material for Student Musician (optional)
- Support Material for Student Achievement (optional)

The link to your Google Folder should be emailed to the Metro producers once complete. The link should stay active until after the awards ceremony. Additional information can be added to the Google Folder as needed up to the date in which the nominations are announced.

The Evaluation Process

The evaluation process for the Metro Awards involves two distinct rounds. The first round is conducted by the judges who attend the shows. These judges make recommendations for elements that should move to the second round. The second round is carried out by the Metro producers and additional industry professionals, who take into consideration the judges' evaluations and the videos of performances submitted by schools.

First Round Evaluations

The judges' evaluations represent the critical first round of high school musical assessments for the Metro Awards. Judges are expected to provide detailed evaluations across several key categories: production elements, artistic elements, and performance elements. Each of these categories is essential in determining the overall quality and impact of a production.

Production elements include costumes, hair and makeup, lighting, and set design. These elements must be evaluated based on their aesthetic appeal and functionality, regardless of whether they were designed by students or professionals and whether the designers are credited in the program. The visual and practical aspects of these elements significantly contribute to the overall theatrical experience and should be carefully considered in the evaluations.

Artistic elements encompass direction, choreography, music direction, and the orchestra. These components should be assessed on their creativity, coherence, and effectiveness in contributing to the storytelling and emotional impact of the show. The orchestra, whether composed primarily of students or professionals, should be evaluated for its musical quality and how well it supports the performance.

Performance elements cover lead performers, supporting performers, featured performers, cameo performers, ensemble groups, chorus, and musical numbers. Each of these elements should be divided into three theatrical categories: acting, singing, and dancing. Students can be nominated for an overall performance based on excellence across multiple categories or for a particular category. Judges should consider how each performer brings their character to life, their vocal abilities, and their skill in dance and movement.

All categories are scored on a scale from 1 (outstanding) to 5 (needs improvement). For any element to advance to the second round of the nomination process, it must receive scores of 1 and 2 and be marked for nomination by the judge. The only categories not scored numerically are the outstanding production number, small group number, and duet categories. For these categories, judges should list the best singular number from the show that fits within each category. Additionally, judges are asked to note any child actors in the show, defined as performers below high school age.

Sample of Round One Evaluation Scores

Sample A

Lighting Design (Judge A)

- Established and maintained mood - 1 (Outstanding)
- Established and maintained time period - 1 (Outstanding)
- Established and maintained location - 2 (Excellent)
- Helped to focus the attention of the audience - 2 (Excellent)
- Well-executed - 3 (Very Good)

Do you recommend the Lighting or a nomination? YES

This judge has not successfully nominated the lighting of this performance for evaluation because despite a recommendation for nomination, the judge did not score lighting with a 1's and 2's.

Sample B

Lighting Design (Judge B)

- Established and maintained mood - 1 (Outstanding)
- Established and maintained time period - 1 (Outstanding)
- Established and maintained location - 2 (Excellent)
- Helped to focus the attention of the audience - 2 (Excellent)
- Well-executed - 2 (Excellent)

Do you recommend the Lighting or a nomination? YES

Lighting Design (Judge C)

- Established and maintained mood - 2 (Excellent)
- Established and maintained time period - 2 (Excellent)
- Established and maintained location - 2 (Excellent)
- Helped to focus the attention of the audience - 3 (Very Good)
- Well-executed - 3 (Very Good)

Do you recommend the Lighting or a nomination? NO

This production's lighting design does not move forward to the second round of the nomination process because only one judge (Judge B) has recommended the lighting for nomination.

Sample C

Lighting Design (Judge D)

- Established and maintained mood - 1 (Outstanding)
- Established and maintained time period - 1 (Outstanding)
- Established and maintained location - 1 (Outstanding)
- Helped to focus the attention of the audience - 2 (Excellent)
- Well-executed - 1 (Outstanding)

Do you recommend the Lighting or a nomination? YES

Lighting Design (Judge E)

- Established and maintained mood - 2 (Excellent)
- Established and maintained time period - 2 (Excellent)
- Established and maintained location - 2 (Excellent)
- Helped to focus the attention of the audience - 1 (Outstanding)
- Well-executed - 1 (Outstanding)

Do you recommend the Lighting or a nomination? YES

This production's lighting design DOES move forward to the second round of the nomination process because both judges have recommended the lighting for nomination.

Sample D -

Lead Performer (Judge F)

Singing:

- Animation and energy - 2 (Excellent)
- Clarity and diction - 2 (Excellent)
- Pitch and tonality - 1 (Outstanding)
- Rhythm - 1 (Outstanding)
- Vocal balance - 1 (Outstanding)
- Balance of harmonic parts - 1 (Outstanding)

Dancing and movement:

- Animation and energy - 2 (Excellent)
- Precision - 2 (Excellent)
- Execution of choreography - 3 (Very Good)
- Expression and artistry- 3 (Very Good)
- Use of space - 3 (Very Good)

Acting:

- Animation and energy - 2 (Excellent)
- Believability - 2 (Excellent)
- Dialog interpretation - 3 (Very Good)
- Dynamics between performers - 3 (Very Good)
- Character consistency - 3 (Very Good)
- Physical pictures maintained - 3 (Very Good)
- Elements of poise and ease on stage - 3 (Very Good)

Would you recommend this performer's acting for nomination? YES

Would you recommend this performer's singing for nomination? NO

Would you recommend this performer's dancing for nomination? NO

This judge has recommended that this performer move to the second nomination round in the outstanding vocalist category. If the other judges' scores match, this student will move to the second nomination round in the outstanding vocalist category.

Sample E -

Lead Performer (Judge G)

Singing:

- Animation and energy - 2 (Excellent)
- Clarity and diction - 2 (Excellent)
- Pitch and tonality - 1 (Outstanding)
- Rhythm - 1 (Outstanding)
- Vocal balance - 1 (Outstanding)
- Balance of harmonic parts - 1 (Outstanding)

Dancing and movement:

- Animation and energy - 2 (Excellent)
- Precision - 2 (Excellent)

Execution of choreography - 2 (Excellent)
Expression and artistry - 2 (Excellent)
Use of space - 2 (Excellent)

Acting:

Animation and energy - 2 (Excellent)
Believability - 2 (Excellent)
Dialog interpretation - 3 (Very Good)
Dynamics between performers - 3 (Very Good)
Character consistency - 3 (Very Good)
Physical pictures maintained - 3 (Very Good)
Elements of poise and ease on stage - 3 (Very Good)

Would you recommend this performer's acting for nomination? YES

Would you recommend this performer's singing for nomination? NO

Would you recommend this performer's dancing for nomination? YES

This judge has recommended that this performer move to the second nomination round in the overall lead performer, outstanding vocalist, and outstanding dancer categories. A student will only be eligible for nomination in one of these categories.

Sample F -

Lead Performer (Judge H)

Singing:

Animation and energy - 2 (Excellent)
Clarity and diction - 2 (Excellent)
Pitch and tonality - 1 (Outstanding)
Rhythm - 1 (Outstanding)
Vocal balance - 1 (Outstanding)
Balance of harmonic parts - 1 (Outstanding)

Dancing and movement:

Animation and energy - 2 (Excellent)
Precision - 2 (Excellent)
Execution of choreography - 2 (Excellent)
Expression and artistry - 2 (Excellent)
Use of space - 2 (Excellent)

Acting:

Animation and energy - 2 (Excellent)
Believability - 2 (Excellent)
Dialog interpretation - 3 (Very Good)
Dynamics between performers - 3 (Very Good)
Character consistency - 3 (Very Good)
Physical pictures maintained - 3 (Very Good)
Elements of poise and ease on stage - 3 (Very Good)

Would you recommend this performer's acting for nomination? YES

Would you recommend this performer's singing for nomination? NO

Would you recommend this performer's dancing for nomination? YES

Lead Performer (Judge I)

Singing:

Animation and energy - 2 (Excellent)
Clarity and diction - 2 (Excellent)
Pitch and tonality - 1 (Outstanding)
Rhythm - 1 (Outstanding)
Vocal balance - 1 (Outstanding)
Balance of harmonic parts - 1 (Outstanding)

Dancing and movement:

Animation and energy - 2 (Excellent)
Precision - 2 (Excellent)
Execution of choreography - 2 (Excellent)
Expression and artistry - 2 (Excellent)
Use of space - 2 (Excellent)

Acting:

Animation and energy - 2 (Excellent)
Believability - 2 (Excellent)
Dialog interpretation - 2 (Excellent)
Dynamics between performers - 2 (Excellent)
Character consistency - 2 (Excellent)
Physical pictures maintained - 2 (Excellent)
Elements of poise and ease on stage - 2 (Excellent)

Would you recommend this performer's acting for nomination? YES

Would you recommend this performer's singing for nomination? YES

Would you recommend this performer's dancing for nomination? YES

Since both judges have recommended both the performer's singing and dancing for nomination, the student will move forward to the second nomination round in both the outstanding vocalist and dancer categories. Additionally, because the student has moved forward in two categories, they will also move forward in the outstanding overall lead performance category.

Second Round Evaluations

The second round of evaluations is conducted by Metro producers and additional industry professionals. This round takes into account the detailed feedback and scores provided by the first-round judges as well as the videos of the performances submitted by the schools. This comprehensive review process ensures that the nominations reflect a fair and thorough assessment of each production's merits.

By combining the insights of the attending judges with the expert analysis of the producers and industry professionals, the Metro Awards strive to recognize and celebrate the finest achievements in high school musical theater. This two-round evaluation process ensures that all aspects of a production are meticulously considered and that excellence is duly honored.

Nominations

Nominations for the Metro Awards are announced in mid-May and streamed live via LOHUD, our social media partner. We encourage students and staff to gather for watch parties to celebrate their production's nominations and share in the excitement together.

We aim to announce seven nominees in the categories of Outstanding Overall Production, Lead Actor and Actress, Supporting Actor and Actress, and Featured and Cameo Performer. In all other categories, we typically announce eight nominees. Due to the number of applications, the Student Critique, Student Achievement, and Child Actor categories may also include additional nominees to recognize a broader range of talent and contributions.

In years where we have multiple eligible nominees, we will gender-specific categories, such as Male and Female Vocalist categories, to ensure a fair and inclusive recognition of talent. Schools nominated for Outstanding Overall Production and students nominated for Lead Actor and Actress are invited to perform at the Metro Awards ceremony, showcasing their exceptional talents to a wider audience.

We understand that the nomination process is inherently subjective, but we strive to ensure that each school's work is valued and celebrated. A comprehensive list of all nominees will be published on social media and the Metro Awards website at the conclusion of the live nominations, allowing the entire community to recognize and honor the achievements of our outstanding high school theater productions.

After Nominations

Ticketing

A day or two after nominations are announced, schools will receive several emails from the Metro Awards production team. One of these emails will address ticketing for the awards ceremony in June. This email will inform schools of their tentative allotted tickets based on the number and types of nominations received.

Included in this email will be a link to a form for schools to fill out if they are requesting additional tickets or if they need to turn down some of their tentative allotment. Schools will have approximately one week to respond to this email and complete the form.

After this period, schools will receive a follow-up email confirming the official total number of tickets the Metro Awards can offer. Schools will then have another week to pay for their official ticket allotment. Payment options include check, Venmo, or Zelle. Any school paying by check must send a copy of the check to the Metro producers prior to mailing the physical check.

- Check: Made out to Helen Hayes Youth Theatre and mailed to Helen Hayes Youth Theatre, PO Box 395, New City, NY 10956
- Venmo: @nancy-rudes
- Zelle: 914-391-5870

If additional tickets become available after the conclusion of this ticketing process, the Metro producers will notify schools via email as soon as possible. Additionally, there may be a handful of tickets available at the door on the evening of the ceremony.

This ticketing process ensures that all participating schools have the opportunity to celebrate their achievements at the Metro Awards ceremony, providing a memorable and exciting experience for all involved.

Ceremony Performances

Schools nominated for Outstanding Overall Production and students nominated for Lead Actor and Actress are invited to perform at the Metro Awards ceremony. This provides a wonderful opportunity to showcase the exceptional talent and hard work of your students to a wider audience.

Shortly after the nominations are announced, the Metro producers will email out detailed plans for these performances. It is important to note that all performances are expected to be in costume to maintain the authenticity and impact of the show.

Lead performers will have a rehearsal scheduled for the weekend prior to the ceremony. This allows them to refine their performance and ensure they are fully prepared. Schools with nominated productions will have their rehearsals scheduled for the day of the ceremony. This ensures that all logistical and technical aspects are addressed, providing a seamless performance experience.

Schools performing at the ceremony are expected to provide their own accompanist. This ensures that the musical accompaniment is tailored to the specific needs and style of each performance, contributing to the overall quality and success of the event.

In addition to individual school performances, we also invite schools to send a student performer to participate in the Metro Awards Opening Number. Shortly after nominations, schools will receive an email with information about selecting a student to be part of this special performance. This can be a nominated student or a non-nominated student.

School-recommended students are asked to learn a brief dance combination and send a video of themselves performing the combination to the Metro producers. Rehearsal for the opening number will also take place on the weekend leading up to the Metro ceremony. Students participating in this opening number must be available to attend this weekend rehearsal to ensure a polished and cohesive performance.

We look forward to these performances being a highlight of the Metro Awards ceremony.

Additional Events and Performances

In the lead-up to the Metro Awards ceremony, additional performance opportunities and events may arise. These can include special showcases, promotional appearances, or community events designed to highlight the talents of our nominated students and schools. To facilitate smooth communication and ease the burden on school production teams, the Metro producers will send out a Google Form requesting contact information for nominated students in all categories.

This form will allow Metro producers to contact the students directly as needed, ensuring they receive timely information about any additional events or performances they may be invited to participate in. By streamlining this communication process, we aim to keep everyone informed and make it easier for students to take full advantage of these exciting opportunities.

We appreciate your cooperation in providing this information and look forward to celebrating the incredible achievements of our high school theater community through these additional events and performances.

The Metro Ceremony

The Metro Awards ceremony will take place on a Monday in early June, marking the culmination of the high school musical theater season. The day of the ceremony will be filled with rehearsals to ensure a smooth and spectacular event.

Rehearsals

All nominees for Outstanding Overall Production will be given a 30-minute window to rehearse on stage. There will also be brief rehearsals for the opening number and the Lead Actor and Actress medleys. Each school nominated for Overall Production will receive a dressing room to use after their rehearsal is concluded. Lead actors and actresses will also have a shared dressing room. Performers can choose to stay in costume for the duration of the day or change into different outfits as needed.

Students needed for rehearsal should bring their own food for dinner, as there are no local restaurants nearby. This preparation is crucial to ensure that everyone stays energized and ready for their performances.

Blue Carpet Event

Prior to the ceremony, the "blue carpet" event will take place in our lobby. This is an exciting opportunity for students and staff to be interviewed by local media. All students from all schools are eligible to participate in the blue carpet event. The lobby will also feature merchandise, concessions, and picture and video sales. We encourage schools to inform students and parents about the lobby activities well in advance.

Ceremony Details

All attendees will need a ticket to enter the theater. Please ensure that all students, staff, and family members are aware of this requirement.

Once the ceremony starts, winners will be called to the stage to accept their awards. We ask that all winners give an acceptance speech that lasts about one minute. After accepting their award, winners will be guided offstage to participate in a brief interview and take pictures before returning to their seats. Performers will be informed during rehearsals how and when they should head to the stage for their performances.

The ceremony itself typically lasts between 2.5 to 3 hours, celebrating the incredible talent and hard work of all participants. We look forward to an evening of joy, recognition, and outstanding performances.

After the Ceremony

In the days following the Metro Awards ceremony, judges' evaluations and feedback will be sent to the production team of each show. These evaluations are designed to provide constructive insights and help schools continue to improve their productions. Please note that the judges' names will be redacted on these forms to ensure impartiality and privacy.

Additionally, production team members may receive emails about final sales of merchandise, photos, and videos from the ceremony. We strongly encourage the production team to share these emails with their students and their families, allowing everyone to take advantage of these keepsakes and commemorate their achievements.

We hope that the feedback and memories from the Metro Awards will inspire and motivate your students and staff for future productions. Thank you for being a part of this wonderful celebration of high school musical theater excellence.