

W H
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SUTTON
FOSTER
AWARDS

Celebrating Michigan High School Musical Theatre

SUTTON FOSTER AWARDS
RULES AND GUIDELINES
2023-2024

WHARTON CENTER
INSTITUTE FOR
ARTS & CREATIVITY
SUPPORTED BY MSU FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

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SUTTON FOSTER AWARDS

VISION FOR A YEAR-LONG EDUCATION PROGRAM

The Sutton Foster Awards are a celebration of high school musical theatre across the State of Michigan. A program of Wharton Center for Performing Arts, the Sutton Foster Awards is open to all high schools in the state, regardless of location, budget, or school size.

The year-long program consists of four main components:

1. **Learning Opportunities with Theatre Professionals**

Workshops offered throughout the year help students grow in their theatre craft. Whether students are performers, technicians or on the creative team, these skill-building workshops are designed to offer any/all participants of the school musical production an opportunity to learn. Many workshops will be led by visiting Broadway professionals.

2. **Professional Review**

All participating musicals receive a professional review. A panel of adjudicators, comprised of performing arts educators and professionals, attend each musical and provides feedback on everything from individual performances to technical elements. The scores and review are based on each school's own merit and is not a competition between schools. Teachers and students use the feedback to learn for future productions.

3. **Workshop and Audition Weekends**

All nominees will participate in a Sutton Foster Awards Workshop and Audition Weekend. Students will receive individual vocal coaching with professional voice teachers, learn music and choreography for a production number to be performed during the showcase, and audition for a panel of judges. All of these experiences are meant to help the students grow as performers and prepare them for a career in musical theatre.

4. **Awards Showcase**

The year culminates in a professionally produced Sutton Foster Awards Showcase. In addition to celebrating the schools, the two nominees for the National High School Musical Theater Awards will be revealed. The 2024 Showcase will be held at Wharton Center in East Lansing.

GOALS

1. To recognize, celebrate, honor, and encourage excellence in high school musical theatre performances in the state of Michigan.
2. To support the work of arts educators through a constructive review process.
3. To highlight the importance of arts education in schools.
4. To foster creativity, confidence, and collaboration through the arts.

SUTTON FOSTER AWARDS DIVERSITY EQUITY AND INCLUSION STATEMENT

At Wharton Center, we feel a profound sense of responsibility to the mission from our founders to bring the arts to the entire community and to be a space where people can be their authentic selves. We recognize the arts are a catalyst for connection that can bring forward positive change. We are committed to engaging artists who contribute to the strength of our community, celebrating the lived experiences of every individual, and supporting your access to the transformative power of live performing arts.

“The performing arts are a dimension of culture that, when meaningfully exposed, provide you with a more meaningful existence on this planet.” —Dr. Clifton and Dolores Wharton

The Sutton Foster Awards is committed to the growth, exposure, and advocacy for celebrating high school musical theatre and arts education in Michigan. It is also committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion in concert with your organization and industry practices. We do this in order to make the entire Sutton Foster Awards’ process a welcoming and fulfilling experience for everyone involved, whether on stage, backstage, or in the audience.

Genuine Representation of Culture

As the national conversation about diversity opportunities widens our multicultural competency, two questions have emerged: Whose story is it? Who should tell it? The answers have yet to be completely determined; however, all roles should be cast based on the ethnic or cultural heritage of the character as stipulated by the authors in the text of the script, or the licensing agreement, and should be played by actors who mirror the same cultural background. We urge all high school programs to take an honest look at the community and culture they represent and choose to tell stories that align as such. The only acceptable exception to this is when the authors and/or the licensing agent specifically and clearly state that specific roles that historically were usually played by a specific ethnic character can be played by an actor of any ethnicity.

Growth Through Adjudication

The adjudication process provides a set of goals for directors, designers, technicians, musicians, actors, etc., to support the growth of theatre programs and the values instilled by arts education in general. While awards and recognitions are also determined through this process, we seek to focus on the rubrics to guide both the production and the evaluation process. Please note that while it may not contribute to the overall score, adjudicators may also reflect on the production as it upholds this set of values.

Invitation to Inclusion

To enrich the artistic experience, educational theatre can make room on the stage, around the production team table, and behind the scenes. We also do this by extending an invitation to community members, including the wide variety of races, ethnicities, religions, genders, gender identities, abilities that make up our society.

PARTICIPATION IN THE SUTTON FOSTER AWARDS

To participate, schools submit an application for their fall and/or spring musical. Wharton Center will send a team of adjudicators to attend a performance of your musical. Each school will receive an assessment of their show, meant to support the teacher, school, and students in strengthening their theatre program for future productions. Adjudicators will also nominate a minimum of two individuals for Outstanding Performer in a Leading Role who will be invited to participate in an SFA Workshop and Audition Weekend as well as the Sutton Foster Awards Showcase weekend.

- SFA Workshop and Audition Weekends will occur in Detroit and East Lansing. Nominees will be invited to participate in a Workshop and Audition Weekend based on the location of their participating high school and availability of the nominee.
- Sutton Foster Awards Showcase: A weekend of rehearsals and professional development culminating in a public performance where two participants will be named Sutton Foster Award winners. The Sutton Foster Awards Showcase will be held on Saturday, June 1, 2024, at Wharton Center.

FEEDBACK

Within **four weeks** of your performance, the primary school contact will receive written, detailed feedback on various elements of their show. It is our intent that this feedback be shared with the company of the show.

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

We are committed to the education and growth of all participating performers. Participating schools in the Sutton Foster Awards will have access to multiple opportunities to grow, learn, and connect with a community of peers through a variety of workshops.

ADJUDICATOR QUALIFICATIONS

Wharton Center selects highly qualified performing arts professionals with backgrounds in music, theatre, dance, design, and related fields to serve as adjudicators. Adjudicators attend a mandatory training run by Wharton Center education staff.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Adjudicators will not provide oral critiques following the performance. Adjudicators will not discuss their opinions, evaluations, scores, or feedback with anyone, in any format. Please do not contact adjudicators with questions. Any inquiries should be directed to Wharton Center Institute for Arts & Creativity staff.

SCORING

Adjudicators utilize a detailed rubric to determine scores in elements of Direction, Musical Direction, Choreography, Set Design, Lighting Design, Costume Design, and Hair/Make up Design. Scores are for internal use only and not shared with schools or nominees.

AWARDS

The following awards are given out each year.

- Eight Finalists for Outstanding Performer in a Leading Role
 - \$1,000 cash award
- Recognition for outstanding achievement in Direction, Music Direction, Choreography, Set Design, Lighting Design, and Costume/Makeup Design will be announced during the Sutton Foster Awards Showcase.

IMPORTANT DATES

October 2, 2023 – Registration process opens

November 6, 2023 – Registration process concludes

Ongoing – Nominees for Outstanding Performer in a Leading Role notified January

29, 2024 – Materials due from Fall Nominees

April 22, 2024 – Materials due from Spring Nominees (unless performing at a later date)

May 4–5, 2024 – East Lansing SFA Workshop and Audition Weekend

May 18–19, 2024 – Detroit SFA Workshop and Audition Weekend

May 31 – June 1, 2024 – Sutton Foster Awards Showcase Weekend

PROGRAM CONTACTS

Ben English
SFA Coordinator
517.884.3171

Kelly Stuible-Clark
Senior Education Program Manager
517.884.3166

REGISTRATION

To apply, please complete the Registration Form found on the Wharton Center website. **Registration will open October 2, 2023.**

WAITING LIST

Wharton Center will determine if a waiting list is necessary based on school interest and adjudicator availability. Acceptance into the program will be determined based on the time and date registration was completed.

FEES

A \$225 registration fee per high school production cast is required to participate. Financial assistance is available should the registration fee serve as a barrier to participation. Please contact us to discuss how we can support your school. Once registration and payment have been submitted, a receipt will be issued. Checks should be made payable to Michigan State University. Please send checks to:

Wharton Center Attn.
Ticket Office
750 E. Shaw Ln. East Lansing, MI 48824

Credit card payments are also accepted over the phone by calling Randall Fields at 517.884.3130.

PROCESS FOR SUTTON FOSTER AWARDS PARTICIPATING SCHOOL

- Submit your registration via Acceptd at this link: (Registration will open October 2nd)
- Submit information about your musical via Acceptd during the registration process.
 - A Note on Double Casting
 - If a school double casts one or more roles, the school must select one set of cast members to be adjudicated. Please note on your application which performances have been selected for the adjudication panel. We will not adjudicate multiple students for the same role unless you submit two applications. Please note this requires double the payment if you would like to have both casts adjudicated and considered for awards. Double casting for our definition means that more than one student plays a single role in different performances.
 - Sharing a role in a single performance is not allowed if the role is on the Jimmy Awards Qualifying Roles list. Please contact us if you have questions on this.
- Submit Payment.
- Adjudicators will email or call the primary school contact to reserve two tickets for a performance of their choice.
 - Please communicate in a timely manner with the adjudicator.
 - You will provide 2 complimentary tickets per adjudicator to the performance of their choice.
- Within **four** weeks of your production closing, you will receive feedback from adjudicators as well as nominee information.
 - Please note that schools will be notified of additional Fall nominees by January 11, 2024.
- Schools & parents/guardians of nominees will work together to help nominees facilitate turning in of paperwork for Sutton Foster Awards.

QUALIFYING SHOWS & ROLES

For your student to be eligible to participate in the Jimmy Awards, your student must have participated in the Sutton Foster Awards as a Qualifying Role in a Qualifying Show; see details below.

The National High School Musical Theatre Awards[®] has reviewed the professional standards for identifying the definition of an Approved Musical and a Qualifying Role in an Approved Musical for the purposes of our program. These standards serve as a guide to create a minimum standard and criteria for what defines a Qualifying Role in the category of Best Actor/Actress in an amateur production of an Approved Musical.

1. Definition of an Approved Musical

For the purposes of NHSMTA, an Approved Musical is one that:

- Held performances in a major New York City/Broadway theatre, professional regional, or touring theatre outside of New York City prior to being made available for licensing to the regional, amateur, or school theatre/circuit.
- Was originally conceived and produced for a core audience over eight years of age.
- Is officially available for a performance license by a high school from the licensing entity that manages such licenses on behalf of the rights holder for such musical.
- Is officially licensed from the licensing entity that manages such licenses on behalf of the rights holder for such musical

- Is the standard or school edition/version; The following editions/versions are not eligible: 101 Collection (Middle School Editions), Broadway Junior, G2K (Getting to Know Series), Young Performers Edition, and Young@Part. Concert versions are not permitted.

2. Definition of a Qualifying Role

For the purposes of NHSMTA, a Qualifying Role in an Approved Musical is a role in which the character has a name, provides a vehicle for the actor or actress to demonstrate the ability to deliver the exceptional performance of a solo song, and the ability to interact with other leading and featured performers in scenes and/or songs.

Unless identified as an “Ensemble Cast Musical,” an Approved Musical may have not more than six (6) Qualifying Roles. Such roles do not have to be evenly divided between genders.

For Approved Musicals with both a book and libretto, a Qualifying Role must, at minimum, include:

- At least one solo, featured song
- Appearances in more than one scene with spoken dialogue with other leading or featured performers
- Appearances in both or all acts

For Approved Musicals with a libretto only, a Qualifying Role must, at minimum, include:

- At least one solo, featured song
- At least one song featuring solo lines or dialogue with other leading or featured performers in the same song
- Appearances in both or all acts

3. For the purposes of the NHSMTA program, students are adjudicated in the category corresponding to their gender identification, not the gender of the role that they played. Students identifying as non- binary or gender-fluid may choose to either select the category in which they wish to be adjudicated (regardless of the gender of the role) OR they may be adjudicated based on the gender of the role they played. All casting or script change requests for performances in the NHSMTA program must be approved beforehand. The regional awards program should be prepared to submit proof of approval from the show’s licensing organization.

APPEAL PROCESS

Wharton Center may submit an appeal to the NHSMTA for either a musical or role to be considered an Approved Musical or a Qualifying Role.

UPDATES TO THE LIST OF APPROVED MUSICALS AND QUALIFYING ROLES

Each year, in consultation with the major licensing houses, NHSMTA updates the list of Qualifying Roles and Approved Musical titles made available for high school licensing. As of August 1 each year, no roles will be removed from the Qualifying Roles List for the upcoming program year. However, because appeals are made and approved throughout the year, the list of Qualifying Roles continues to be updated with additions. Your RAP representative should consult this list periodically to ensure that you have the most current list, which will be fully updated for the year by April 15, 2024. There is an internal process by which Regional Awards Programs may submit an appeal for

a show or a role to be added to the list. Contact your local Regional Awards Program for more information. Full list of qualifying shows and roles can be found here:

https://www.jimmyawards.com/media/filer_public/38/62/3862f23d-b22c-4a19-a542-2293c7ccc2b1/qualifying-roles_2023-05-01.pdf

NOMINEE SELECTION

- **New this year: The Jimmy Awards will no longer separate qualifying roles into Best Actor and Best Actress categories.** Students are adjudicated in the category corresponding to their gender identification, not the gender of the role that they played. Students identifying as non-binary or gender-fluid may choose to either select the category in which they wish to be adjudicated (regardless of the gender of the role) OR they may be adjudicated based on the gender of the role they played.
- Adjudicator scores will determine no less than two nominees from each school. Additional performers may be invited based on adjudicator scoring.
 - Adjudicator nominations may not be divided evenly between male-identifying and female-identifying students.

PUBLICITY

All participating schools are asked to mention their involvement with Wharton Center Sutton Foster Awards in their show programs/playbills. This will serve as an endorsement of your school's participation in the program. Please use the following in your programs:

Insert High School Name Here is a participant in the 2023-2024 Sutton Foster Awards, a program of Wharton Center for Performing Arts on the campus of Michigan State University. The 2024 Sutton Foster awards will be held on June 1, 2024. For more information and tickets, visit www.whartoncenter.com.

PROCESS FOR SFA PARTICIPATING NOMINEE

- Nominee will Receive Sutton Foster Award paperwork.
- Nominee will submit full paperwork packet via Acceptd by January 29, 2024 (fall schools), or April 22, 2024 (spring schools unless performing later).
- Nominee will attend ONE of two SFA Workshop and Audition Weekends.
 - May 4–5, 2024, in East Lansing
 - May 17–18, 2024, in Detroit
- Nominee will attend the Sutton Foster Awards Showcase Weekend.
 - Friday May 31, 2024, and Saturday June 1, 2024, at Wharton Center.
- If selected as a Jimmy Awards finalist, nominee will travel to NYC to participate in the Jimmy Awards (June dates TBD).

IF YOU ARE A NOMINEE FOR OUTSTANDING PERFORMER IN A LEADING ROLE

The following materials will be due to Wharton Center by January 29, 2024, from Fall show nominees or April 22, 2024, from Winter/Spring show nominees (unless you have a later performance date).

Nominees for Outstanding Performer in a Leading Role participation packet include:

- Student Application
- Student Youth Protocol Paperwork
- Student Media Release Form

- Student Headshot (high resolution jpg file, 8x10 at 300DPI)
- Student Theatrical Resume
- Student Essay (one-page, double spaced essay describing his/her experience while participating in his/her musical this year)
- Student Bio (no more than 200 words, written in complete sentences and in third person format)
- 45 second or 32 Measure Cut from Nominated Musical (must be a solo selection performed by the nominated performer in the nominated musical, sheet music must have piano and vocal lines)
- Full Song of the Nominee's Choice (must be a solo from another Broadway musical; sheet music must include piano and vocal lines)
- Three (3) production photos highlighting the Nominee in their nominated high school musical performance
 - If submitted to nationals, all submissions become the property of NHSMTA and will not be returned.
 - All footage and photos may be used during the NHSMTA program, including, but not limited to inclusion in press releases, marketing information, website, and The Jimmy™ Awards ceremony.

NOMINEE CONDUCT EXPECTATIONS

All students participating in Sutton Foster Awards related activities, whether at Wharton Center or elsewhere, must abide by the rules and guidelines set forth in the Wharton Center program handbook. This document will be sent to all participants with their nominee paperwork.

SUTTON FOSTER AWARDS WORKSHOP AND AUDITION WEEKENDS

May 4–5, 2024, in East Lansing, and May 18–19, 2024, in Detroit.

- Nominees must attend one Workshop and Audition Weekend in order to be considered for a chance to compete at the Jimmy Awards.
- The Sutton Foster Awards Showcase Weekend will be held May 31 – June 1, 2024, at Wharton Center.

SCORING

- Eight Finalists for the Sutton Foster Awards will be chosen. Finalists will be determined by the score they receive from adjudicators based on their performance in their school's musical, as well as the score they receive from judges at their preliminary workshop and audition weekend.
 - Like the Jimmy Awards, finalists will be announced at the top of the second act of the Sutton Foster Awards Showcase.
- Two participants from the Sutton Foster Awards Showcase will be selected to represent Michigan at the Jimmy Awards.
 - These two nominees will be selected based on:
 - The score they receive from adjudicators from their performance in their school's musical.
 - The score they receive from the judges during the Sutton Foster Awards Workshop and Audition weekend.
 - The score they receive from the judges during the Sutton Foster Awards Showcase

IF YOU ARE A WINNER OF OUTSTANDING PERFORMER IN A LEADING ROLE

- You agree to get any and all requested materials/paperwork to Wharton Center by June 5, 2024.
- You agree to be available to go to NYC for twelve days to attend the NHSMTA (Jimmy Awards) in June.