



CATEGORY CRITERIA FOR EXCELLENCE

Georgia High School Musical Theater Awards – Shuler Hensley Awards (SHA) Adjudicators evaluate how each participating high school musical meets or exceeds its potential, utilizing its available resources. Each musical is evaluated and scored against itself for consideration, rather than against all other school productions, charging schools to create the best possible work in their unique circumstance and environment. **The following category criteria provide suggestions and helpful ideas for what Shuler Hensley Awards Adjudicators may consider excellent (8) on the Shuler's Rating Scale.**

Award Eligibility:

The following people are eligible for individual category Awards:

1. High school students, registered at the participating high school, in grades 9-12
2. Faculty members, employed by the participating high school or middle/elementary school, that feeds to the participating high school (full-time or part-time)
3. Only Award Eligible high school students are considered for the five acting Award categories

Note: Guest Artists, parents, volunteers, K-8 students, homeschool students or anyone other than Award Eligible students and faculty, do not qualify for individual category Awards. However, those who are not Award Eligible will be evaluated, scored and included in the overall production value, considered for the Overall Production category.

Direction:

1. Implies a creative collaboration among the director, designers, cast, & production team reflecting a unified artistic vision of the play.
2. Ensures staff, facility, budget, time frame, and crew meet the technical demands of the script.
3. Ensures actors meet the vocal, dance, and emotional range of the script.
4. Reflects an understanding of the musical's dramatic structure, meaning, the author's intent, the setting and cultural background, history, and style
5. Respects the musical theater conventions found within the play, paying *homage* to the past history of an iconic show or evolving a totally original vision which does not distort the musical's meaning.
6. Clearly focuses each scene and beat, and ensures that all acting choices, designs and technical elements contribute to and support that focus.
7. Ensures performers know and follow safe physical, dance and vocal practices
8. Ensures actors are heard easily evaluating and encouraging breath control, articulation, volume.
9. Ensures blocking makes actors clearly visible, entrances and exits contribute to dramatic structure and focus, and actors are not upstaged by sets, props, costumes, or other actors.
10. Fully exploits all areas of stage and set and ensures actors use costumes & props effectively.
11. Supports character development, encouraging big character choices & subtext, helping actors understand focus and identify climactic beats.
12. Ensures characters are playing to and with each other, and not at each other.
13. Ensures ensemble understand their dramatic function as individual actors and as a group.
14. Determines and demands optimum pace of show from actors and all departments.
15. Ensures scene changes are swift, soundless and beautifully staged to serve the musical.
16. Direction ensures performers and departments respect each other's contributions and needs for space and safety.



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Music Direction: The SHA participating school musical qualifies for the Music Direction Award category if using live music, orchEXTRA, or tracks accompaniment.

1. Specific stylistic choices are directed to enhance the period and location of the musical (character voice, accents, dialects, etc.).
2. Actors memorized music and lyrics and understand their meaning.
3. Actors emote and tell the story through the lyric.
4. Actors vocally support and sing the proper notes (staying on pitch), use appropriate rhythm, tempo, phrasing and range of dynamics.
5. Actors articulate and enunciate appropriate diction when singing the lyric so that all audience members (regardless of knowing the musical) are able to understand and interpret the story.
6. Actors use the music to evoke an emotional feeling suitable to interpretation of each scene.
7. Music direction provides a balance and blend (togetherness) of the ensemble.

Orchestra: The SHA participating school musical qualifies for the Orchestra Award category if live music accompanies the performance. Live music includes one pianist to a full orchestra. Schools using tracks do not qualify for the Orchestra Award category. 90% of the participating musical orchestra must include Award Eligible students or faculty. 10% of the participating school musical orchestra may consist of guest musicians (e.g. 1 guest musician per every 10 students/faculty members). Schools that use more than 10% guest musicians do not qualify for the Orchestra Award.

1. Plays in tune and with good intonation.
2. Correct instrumentation and necessary tools to perform (e.g. music stands, chairs, proper lights, sight line...).
3. Plays the music with technical proficiency and the instrumentalists' capabilities were appropriate for the difficulty level of the music.
4. Complements the actors, regarding volume, dynamics, tempos, entrances, etc.
5. Confidently and efficiently led by a conductor.

Choreography:

1. Uses both choreography and song staging/movement enhance the message of the song and overall theme of the musical.
2. Polished - actors dance/move in sync with each other and the music.
3. Clean, memorized, and properly rehearsed.
4. Utilizes patterns and space effectively.
5. Uses patterns that are clean, fresh and rarely repeated (e.g. levels, clumps, circles, diagonal lines, straight lines, straight lines that feed through each other, columns, v's, peel-offs, contagions, etc.).
6. Allows actors to continue to tell the story through dance/movement.
7. Designed for actors to be seen and voices to be heard while dancing/moving.
8. Thoughtfully created to use dance/movement that best accentuates the actors' abilities.
9. Embodies the intended comedic, dramatic or tragic elements of the song/scene.
10. Executed safely (e.g. lifts, pointe work, partner work and/or gymnastics, etc.).



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Ensemble: The SHA participating school musical qualifies for the Ensemble Award category, if 70% of the ensemble are Award Eligible high school students. The remaining 30% may be K-8 students, if registered at a middle or elementary school that feeds to the participating high school. Schools using faculty, guest artists or parents/volunteers in its ensemble do not qualify for the Ensemble Award category.

1. Reflects actors' awareness and willingness to connect to other actors is very apparent.
2. Stays completely immersed in their characters throughout the entire performance.
3. Reveal well-developed characters with obvious goals exhibited throughout the musical.
4. Performs succinct and well-executed dance/movement.
5. Executes precise and musically intended vocal moments.
6. Uses vocal expression that is character appropriate and adds clarity to the scene.
7. Never breaks focus, even during missed lines/cues or mistakes in the music.
8. Eemonstrates an excellent ability to work as a team.

Technical Execution: The Technical Execution Award category considers the quality of technical implementation, flow and execution of the stage crew (set and prop changes) AND technical cues (audio-visual, animation, automation and rigging).

1. Reveals a creative collaboration among the designers and the directors to ensure consistency among all design elements.
2. Integrates smoothly into the production as a whole.
3. Includes a stage manager(s) who calls the show cues smoothly and efficiently.
4. Allows sets and props enter and exit effectively.
5. Allows sets and props to flow seamlessly throughout the performance – set changes are quiet, brief, and not distracting.
6. Indicates cues are called and implemented appropriately.
7. Indicates actors' microphones are cued properly and live when appropriate.
8. Includes successful use of projection (if applicable).
9. Ensures crew is dressed in all black or in costume.

Lighting Design:

1. Reveals a creative collaboration among the designers and the directors to ensure consistency among all design elements.
2. Integrates smoothly into the production as a whole, reinforcing the theme, mood, style, time period and location of the musical.
3. Provides sufficient illumination to see the action taking place and helps focus the audience's attention to the correct stage location where faces and scenery are distinctively lit.
4. Uses effective color palette throughout the production to establish mood, location, time of day, etc.
5. Utilizes the venue's capabilities and resources effectively.
6. Utilizes followspots effectively without causing distraction(if applicable).
7. Design provides creative uses of light (e.g. specials, gobos, streetlight shining through a window, pools of light for specific moments, effective use of color, etc.)
8. Ensures all instruments are appropriately and safely rigged.



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Sound:

1. Reveals creative collaboration among the designers and the directors to ensure design consistency.
2. Integrates smoothly into the production as a whole, reinforcing the theme, mood, style, time period and location of the musical.
3. Executed without distortion and each performer is clearly audible.
4. Achieves an even balance between the music and the actors' microphones to assure an excellent audible experience for the audience.
5. Sound levels are comfortable (not overbearing or too soft).
6. Reflects an orchestra that is amplified and balanced properly, allowing the audience to hear the full complement of the provided instrumentation.
7. Creates a sound performance that is positively unnoticeable (meaning, it was so good you didn't notice that there was a sound system involved).
8. Denotes all instruments are appropriately and safely rigged.

Scenic Design: The SHA participating school musical qualifies for the Scenic Design Award category, if the set is designed by an Award Eligible student/faculty member. Schools that rent more than 30% of their scenery and/or props do not qualify for the Best Scenic Design Award category. Unpaid volunteers may help build and coordinate scenery and props.

1. Reveals creative collaboration among the designers and the directors to ensure design consistency.
2. Integrates smoothly into the production as a whole, reinforcing the theme, mood, style, time period and location of the musical.
3. Contributes to the atmosphere of the production.
4. Offers interesting and varying options and levels for actor movement.
5. Includes contributing/appropriate furniture and/or props.
6. Designed to utilize appropriate materials applicable to the story's needs.
7. Design does not create unnecessary visual or auditory obstruction during performance (for the audience, cast, crew, and orchestra).
8. Backstage areas, changing areas, etc., are out of sight from audience (unless scripted otherwise).
9. Safely and thoughtfully designed, and securely constructed for actors and crew movement.

Costumes: The SHA participating school musical is eligible for the Costumes Award category, if the costumes are designed and/or coordinated by an Award eligible student/faculty member. Schools that rent more than 30% of their costumes do not qualify for the Costumes Award category. Unpaid volunteers may help build/coordinate costumes. Wigs, hats and hair/costume accessories qualify as costumes.

1. Reveals creative collaboration among the designers and the directors to ensure design consistency
2. Favorably complimented by stage make-up and styled hair/wigs.
3. Smoothly integrate into the production as a whole, reinforcing the theme, mood, style, time period and location of the musical.
4. Reflect the characters' intended appearances.
5. Provide a palette of shapes, colors and textures that make an impactful visual statement.
6. Embody a cohesive color palate, originality, and attention to detail.
7. Personify information about character personalities; economic, social, and occupational status; gender and age.
8. Suggest relationships between characters.
9. Well-constructed, move well and do not distract from the performance.
10. Include appropriate accessories (e.g. jewelry, belts, shoes, gloves, wigs and hats).



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Acting: Best Performance Acting Award categories include: Leading Actress, Leading Actor, Supporting Actress, Supporting Actor and Featured Performer. Only Award Eligible high school students are considered for the five acting category Awards.

1. Understands the meaning of the play, his/her character, the director's vision, the setting, style, focus and pace.
2. Creates a thoroughly, consistently, and easily believable character, playing actions not attitudes or emotions.
3. Makes strong and imaginative character choices, invested in the importance of motivation and urgently fights for intentions.
4. Creates the "illusion of the first time."
5. Never breaks focus, even during missed lines/cues or music mistakes.
6. Relates honestly to other actors, actively listening, sharing stage and focus, and exhibiting humanity through vulnerability.
7. Moves and dances with technical skill, takes and shares the stage as directed, and uses costumes and props deftly and pointedly.
8. Moves and dances in character and with sensitivity to the time, place, style, and pace of the piece.
9. Sings and speaks with technical skill, exhibiting diction, phrasing, pitch, articulation, breath control, dialect, timing and pacing.
10. Sings and speaks in character and with sensitivity to the time, place, style, and pace of the piece throughout the production.
11. Demonstrates excellent team work abilities.
12. Approaches the stage with confidence, appearing to enjoy and relish playing.

Overall Production:

The Overall Production category is a comprehensive look at the entire production. This category ties together all other categories and reflects the musical's overall synergy, sync and dynamic. Schools that are not eligible in certain categories due to rentals, guest artists, etc. are still eligible for the Overall Production Award. Four schools will receive honorable mentions in this category, and six schools will receive nominations in this category. All six nominated schools will perform one of their production numbers at the SHA on April 23, 2015.

Show-Stopper (Optional):

The Show-Stopper Award category will recognize a strikingly impressive and ovation worthy musical number within the participating musical. Only production numbers that meet this criteria, will be considered for the Show-Stopper Award. Schools nominated for the Overall Production Award are not eligible for this Award category. Four schools will receive honorable mentions in this category, and six schools will receive nominations in this category. The school with the highest score for the Show-Stopper Award category will perform its Award winning number at the SHA on April 23, 2015.