



CATEGORY CRITERIA FOR EXCELLENCE

Georgia High School Musical Theatre Awards – aka *Shuler Hensley Awards* adjudicators evaluate how each participating high school and 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 on the judging Criteria Rubric. This is a companion document meant to support and provide transparency to the adjudication process.**

Award Eligibility:

The following people are eligible for individual category Awards:

1. High school students, officially registered at their participating high school, in grades 9-12
2. Faculty members, employed by the participating high school or middle/elementary school, that feeds into 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 or anyone other than Award Eligible students and faculty mentioned above, **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:

The 2022 Shuler Hensley Awards participating school musical qualifies for the Direction Award category if the director is a faculty member, employed by the participating high school or middle/elementary school, that feeds into the participating high school (full-time or part-time) or is a high school student(s), officially registered at the participating high school, in grades 9-12. Schools using a professional/guest/parent director are not eligible.

**See the Submission Guidelines for Participation in the 2021-22 Shulers document for more detailed information for this reimagined category.*

Criteria for adjudicating excellence in the category of Direction is demonstrated through the director's ability:

1. to showcase a creative collaboration among the director(s), designers, cast, and production team reflecting a unified artistic vision of the play;
2. to ensure staff, facility, budget, time frame, and crew meet the technical demands of the script;
3. to ensure actors meet the vocal, dance, and emotional range of the script;
4. to reflect an understanding of the musical's dramatic structure, meaning, the author's intent, the setting and cultural background, history, and style of the script;
5. to respect the musical theatre 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. to clearly focus each scene and beat, and ensure that all acting choices, designs and technical elements contribute to and support that focus;
7. to ensure performers know and follow safe physical, dance and vocal practices;

8. to ensure actors are heard easily evaluating and encouraging breath control, articulation, volume;
9. to ensure blocking, even within a virtual space, makes actors clearly visible, entrances and exits contribute to dramatic structure and focus, and actors are not upstaged by other actors and/or elements;
10. to fully exploit all areas of your virtual and/or actual stage and set and ensures actors use costumes & props effectively;
11. to support character development, encouraging big character choices and subtext, helping actors understand focus and identify climactic beats;
12. to ensure characters are playing to and with each other, and not at each other;
13. to ensure the ensemble understands their dramatic function as individual actors and as a group;
14. to determine and demand the optimum pace of show from actors and all departments;
15. to ensure scene changes are swift, soundless and beautifully staged to serve the musical; and
16. to provide direction that ensures performers and departments respect each other's contributions and needs for space and safety.

Music Direction:

The Shuler Hensley Awards participating school musical qualifies for the Music Direction Award category if using live music, orchEXTRA, or tracks accompaniment. Music Direction focuses on the vocal music direction and overall presentation and blend of the production's music elements. **Schools using a professional/guest artist/parent/volunteer musical director are not eligible for an award in this category.**

**See the Submission Guidelines for Participation in the 2022 Shulers document for more detailed information for this reimagined category.*

Criteria for adjudicating excellence in the category of Musical Direction is demonstrated through the music director's ability:

1. to make specific stylistic choices that directly enhance the period and location of the musical (character, voice, accents, dialects, etc.);
2. to support the actor's ability to memorize music and lyrics and understand their meaning;
3. to support the actor's ability to emote and tell the story through the lyric(s);
4. to support the actor's ability to vocally support and sing the proper notes (staying on pitch), use appropriate rhythm, tempo, phrasing and range of dynamics;
5. to support the actor's ability to 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. to support the actor's ability to use the music to evoke an emotional feeling suitable to interpretation of each scene; and
7. to ensure that the music direction provides a balance and blend (togetherness) of the ensemble.

Orchestra:

The Shuler Hensley Awards 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. Up to 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.

**See the Submission Guidelines for Participation in the 2021-22 Shulers document for more detailed information for this reimagined category.*

Criteria for adjudicating excellence in the category of Orchestra is demonstrated through the orchestra's ability:

1. to play in tune and with good intonation;
2. to correct instrumentation and necessary tools to perform (e.g. music stands, chairs, proper lights, sightline, etc.);

3. to play the music with technical proficiency and to ensure that the instrumentalists' capabilities are appropriate for the difficulty level of the music;
4. to complement the actors, regarding volume, dynamics, tempos, entrances, etc.; and
5. to confidently and efficiently be led by a conductor.

Choreography:

The 2022 Shuler Hensley Awards participating school musical qualifies for the Choreography Award category if the choreographer(s) is a faculty member, employed by the participating high school or middle/elementary school, that feeds into the participating high school (full-time or part-time) or is a high school student(s), officially registered at the participating high school, in grades 9-12.

**See the Submission Guidelines for Participation in the 2021-22 Shulers document for more detailed information for this reimagined category.*

Criteria for adjudicating excellence in the category of Choreography is demonstrated through the choreographer's ability:

1. to use both choreography and song staging/movement to enhance the message of the song and overall theme of the musical;
2. to polish a cast's choreography/movement (where appropriate) to be in sync with each other and the music;
3. to ensure that all choreography is clean, memorized, and properly rehearsed;
4. to utilize patterns and space effectively;
5. to utilize 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. to create choreography that allows actors to continue to tell the story through dance/movement;

7. to ensure that all choreography is designed for actors to be seen and voices to be heard while dancing/moving;

8. to craft dance/movement that best accentuates the actors' abilities;

9. to create choreography that embodies the intended comedic, dramatic or tragic elements of the song/scene; and

10. to ensure that all choreography/movement is executed safely (l.e.g. lifts, pointe work, partner work and/or gymnastics, etc.).

Ensemble:

The 2022 Shuler Hensley Awards 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 into the participating high school. Schools using faculty, guest artists or parents/volunteers in its ensemble do not qualify for the Ensemble Award category.

**E.g: A school producing The Wizard of Oz may use 6 elementary/middle school students as munchkins, if there are at least 20 high school students in the full ensemble.*

Criteria for adjudicating excellence in the category of Ensemble is demonstrated through ensemble's ability:

1. to execute an awareness and willingness to connect to other actors that they are sharing the stage with;

2. to stay completely immersed in their characters throughout the entire performance;

3. to reveal well-developed characters with obvious goals exhibited throughout the musical;

4. to perform succinct and well-executed dance/movement;

5. to execute precise and musically intended vocal moments;

6. to use vocal expression that is character appropriate and adds clarity to the scene;

7. to never break focus, even during missed lines/cues or mistakes in the music; and
8. to execute an ability to work consistently as a team.

Technical Execution:

The 2022 Shuler Hensley Awards participating school musical qualifies for the Technical Execution Award if the technical implementation, flow, and execution of the stage crew's responsibilities (set and prop changes) and technical cues (audio-visual, animation, automation, and rigging) is coordinated by an eligible 9-12 grade student and/or faculty member.

**See the Submission Guidelines for Participation in the 2021-22 Shulers document for more detailed information for this reimagined category.*

Criteria for adjudicating excellence in the category of Technical Execution is demonstrated through the artist's ability:

1. to reveal creative collaboration among the designers and the director(s) to ensure design consistency;
2. to integrate smoothly into the production as a whole;
3. to showcase a stage manager (or team of stage managers) who calls the show cues smoothly and efficiently;
4. to allow set pieces and props to enter and exit the stage effectively;
5. to allow set pieces and props to flow seamlessly throughout the performance (set changes are quiet, brief, and not distracting);
6. to indicate that cues are called and implemented appropriately;
7. to indicate that actors' microphones are cued properly and live when appropriate;
8. to include successful use of projection, if applicable; and
9. To ensure that the crew is dressed in all black or in costume.

Lighting Design:

The 2022 Shuler Hensley Awards participating school musical qualifies for the Lighting Design Award category if the lighting is designed and coordinated by an eligible 9-12 grade student or faculty member.

**See the Submission Guidelines for Participation in the 2021-22 Shulers document for more detailed information for this reimagined category.*

Criteria for adjudicating excellence in the category of Sound is demonstrated through the designer's ability:

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

Sound:

The 2022 Shuler Hensley Awards participating school musical qualifies for the Sound Award category if the sound is designed and coordinated by an eligible 9-12 grade student or faculty member.

**See the Submission Guidelines for Participation in the 2021-22 Shulers document for more detailed information for this reimagined category.*

Criteria for adjudicating excellence in the category of Sound is demonstrated through the designer's ability:

1. to reveal creative collaboration among the designers and the director(s) to ensure design consistency;
2. to integrate their design smoothly into the production as a whole, reinforcing the theme, mood, style, time period, and location of the musical;
3. to ensure that each performer is clearly audible;
4. to achieve an even balance between the music and the actors' microphones to assure an excellent audible experience for the audience;
5. to ensure that sound levels are comfortable (not overbearing or too soft);
6. to reflect an orchestra that is amplified and balanced properly, allowing the audience to hear the full complement of the provided instrumentation;
7. to create a sound performance that is positively unnoticeable (meaning it was so good you didn't notice there was a sound system involved); and
8. to ensure that all instruments are appropriately and safely rigged.

Scenic Design:

The 2022 Shuler Hensley Awards participating school musical qualifies for the Scenic Design Award category if the scenic design is designed and coordinated by an eligible 9-12 grade student or faculty member. Schools that rent more than 30% of their scenery and/or props are not eligible for this category. Schools using a professional/guest/parent scenic designer are not eligible for this category.

**See the Submission Guidelines for Participation in the 2021-22 Shulers document for more detailed information for this reimagined category.*

Criteria for adjudicating excellence in the category of Scenic Design is demonstrated through the designer's ability:

1. to reveal creative collaboration among the designers and the director(s) to ensure design consistency;
2. to integrate their design smoothly into the production as a whole, reinforcing the theme, mood, style, time period, and location of the musical;
3. to contribute to the atmosphere of the production;
4. to provide a palette of shapes, and textures that make an impactful visual statement;
5. to embody a cohesive color palette, originality, and attention to detail;
6. to offer interesting and varying options and levels for actor movement;
7. to include contributing/appropriate furniture and/or props;
8. to utilize appropriate materials applicable to the story's needs; and
9. to safely and thoughtfully design a set that is securely constructed for actors and crew movement.

Costumes:

The Shuler Hensley Awards participating school musical is eligible for the Costumes Award category if the costumes are designed and coordinated by an eligible 9-12 grade student or faculty member. Schools that rent more than 30% of their costumes are not eligible for this category. Schools using a professional/guest/parent costume designer are not eligible. Wigs, hats, and hair accessories qualify as costumes.

**See the Submission Guidelines for Participation in the 2021-22 Shulers document for more detailed information for this reimagined category.*

Criteria for adjudicating excellence in the category of Costume Design is demonstrated through the designer's ability:

1. to reveal creative collaboration among the designers and the director(s) to ensure design consistency;

2. to favorably compliment their costume design with thoughtfully designed hair/wigs;
3. to smoothly integrate their design into the production as a whole, reinforcing the theme, mood, style, time period and location of the musical;
4. to reflect the characters' intended appearances;
5. to provide a palette of shapes, colors and textures that make an impactful visual statement;
6. to embody a cohesive color palette, originality, and attention to detail;
7. to personify information about character personalities (economic, social, and occupational status, gender and age, etc.);
8. to be able suggest relationships between characters; and
9. to Include appropriately designed accessories (e.g. jewelry, belts, shoes, gloves, wigs and hats).

Acting:

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

**See the Submission Guidelines for Participation in the 2021-22 Shulers document for more detailed information for this reimagined category.*

Criteria for adjudicating excellence in the category(s) of Performance is demonstrated through the performer's ability:

1. to understand the meaning of the play, their character, the director's vision, the setting, style, focus and pace;
2. to create a thoroughly, consistently, and easily believable character, playing actions not attitudes or emotions;

3. to make strong and imaginative character choices, invested in the importance of motivation and urgently fights for intentions;
4. to create the "illusion of the first time" via their performance;
5. to consistently hold focus (nevering breaking character), even during missed lines/cues or music mistakes;
6. to relate honestly to other actors, actively listening, sharing stage and focus, and exhibiting humanity through vulnerability;
7. to move/dance with technical skill, taking and sharing their virtual and/or actual stage as directed;
8. to move/dance in character and with sensitivity to the time, place, style, and pace of the piece;
9. to consistently sing and speak with technical skill, exhibiting diction, phrasing, pitch, articulation, breath control, dialect, timing and pacing appropriate to the musical production and character with sensitivity to the time, place, style, and pace of the piece;
10. to exhibit excellent team work abilities; and
11. to approach the virtual and/or actual stage with confidence, appearing to enjoy and relish performing.

Overall Production:

The Overall Production category is a comprehensive look at the entire production. This category ties together all other adjudicated categories and reflects the musical's overall synergy and accomplishment. 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 should be prepared to virtually perform one of their production numbers at the 2022 Shuler Hensley Awards should this be possible.

Juried Awards:

In addition to the award categories listed above, all Shuler Hensley Awards participating schools will be considered for the Shuler Showstopper and Shuler Spotlight Awards. These are special juried awards that are determined by the Shuler Advisory Committee.

The Shuler Showstopper Award honors a standout musical performance or theatrical moment in a specific production. All participating schools are eligible for this award except for those nominated for Overall Production. The recipient of the Shuler Showstopper Award will perform the award-winning number at the awards ceremony.

The Shuler Spotlight Award is given to a school that demonstrates a singular, unique, ensemble moment of excellence in musical theatre worthy of being recognized separately from the other adjudicated categories.

Revised: July 2021