

2025-2026 TWA Grant Application

Contact Information

Organization Name:	<u>University of Texas Foundation for the benefit of Texas Performing Arts (TPA)</u>
Contact Title:	<u>Executive Director</u>
Contact Name:	<u>Sheri DeSpain</u>
Address:	<u>9011 Mountain Ridge Dr., Suite 150</u>
City:	<u>Austin</u>
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TWA Sponsor:	<u>Karen Rove</u>
TWA Sponsor Email:	<u>karen@apps.rove.com</u>

Artistic Significance & Project Innovation and Creativity: (Question 3)

Organization's Mission:

Texas Performing Arts creates, presents & connects people with performance. TPA fosters the next generation of arts professionals & patrons through arts access and education for students of all ages.

Name of Project/Program to be Funded:

Heller Awards for Young Artists (HAYAs)

Project Description:

TPA's HAYAs program supports and promotes Central Texas high school musical theater through workshops, training, and an annual event that celebrates student achievement.

Project Purpose: What are the goals of the project/program?

UT Foundation submits this application on behalf of TPA. HAYAs goals are to build community, celebrate achievement, and increase educational opportunities for high school musical theater students across Central TX with individualized workshops, high-quality tech training & support, & access to the top theatrical org in the region. Only the HAYAs engages high school musical theater programs in 7 counties in a year-long program culminating in an awards ceremony at Bass Concert Hall.

Is this program offered at a cost to children? If there is a fee for this program, please enter the cost in numerical dollar amount per child to enroll.

No, this is a free opportunity for all children participating.

What is the expected number of children to be directly served by project/program?

3000

What is the age range of children served by this project/program?

Grades 9-12

Identify the artistic discipline(s) included in this project/program: Check all that apply.

Dance, Music, Musical Theatre, Theatre, Theatre Set-Design, Visual Arts

Project Innovation and Creativity: (Question 4)

Describe how this program provides arts access for children.

The HAYAs provide access to technical training, mentorship, peer support, awards recognition, and scholarships to high school musical theater students from 43 schools across 7 counties. In addition, TPA provides participating teachers with musical theater workshops, technical theater grants, and professional development to increase student success.

Explain what makes this program/project innovative. Program/Project innovation differs for each community. If your program is a traditional arts experience but is unique to your community, please specify. If your program is innovative, relative to traditional arts offerings in your community, please specify.

HAYAs are the only high school musical theater awards program in Central TX and are part of a national network of similar programs. Unlike any other program, HAYAs is year-long & multi-touch, with TPA providing workshops, trainings & rehearsals that culminate in performances and an awards ceremony. Unique to HAYAs are teacher training, grants, and support to ensure maximum impact in schools.

What type or level of arts experience do children have as a result of your program? Please select one.

Student Artists: Children observe, are introduced to, and engage in the arts, and practice the artistic process first hand by creating visual and/or performing arts of their own.

Is this a new program? If the answer is NO, how long has the program been in existence?

The program has existed for 10 years, but was held at the Long Center. 2025-2026 is the first year it is at TPA.

Organizational Management and Capability: (Question 5)

The organization has the following human capital. Check all that apply.

Board, Staff, Project Manager/Director, Volunteers

Describe your organization's staffing structure.

Number of full-time employees	67
Number of part-time employees	100
Number of volunteers	99

Describe the qualifications and experience of the individuals who will provide this programming and work directly with children.

The individuals who work directly with the children are their teachers hired by the school. Each high school has variously qualified teachers and some do not have a teacher dedicated solely to theater. For example, one school has the physical education teacher leading musical theater productions. TPA staff work with the teachers to provide support, training, and mentorship. To provide top-tier training directly to students, TPA is partnering with Impact Arts. Ginger Morris, Co-Founder and Executive Artistic Director of Impact Arts, is a choreographer who will coach the students in rehearsals and help produce the awards ceremony with student performances. TPA's professionally trained education team communicates with teachers and schools and plans all programming surrounded HAYAs. They include: Tim Rogers, Director of Education & Engagement, has worked in arts administration for over 12 years, including leading national working groups on the topic of Student Engagement in the performing arts, as well as starting and managing the Sound in Sculpture concert series. Rogers completed a Master of Education Policy Studies from the University of Maryland, College Park and a Master of Music in Composition from the University of Texas at Austin. Dr. Eric Vera, Education Program Manager, is an experienced theatre arts director, educator, stage manager, and performer. Vera was Assistant Professor in Theatre at the University of Arkansas teaching classes in script analysis, theatre history, and both theatre/musical theatre appreciation, and served as Executive Artistic Director of his hometown community theatre for several years. Aubrey Felty, Education & Engagement Program Coordinator, is an interdisciplinary arts educator and administrator. After receiving a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Theatre Education and minor in Family and Human Development from Utah State University, Felty also completed a teaching artist fellowship at Metro Theater Company in St. Louis, MO.

Race and Ethnicity

Describe the race proportion of your:	Staff	Board
African American	0	
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	
Asian	0	
Black or African American	0	

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0	
White	0	
Two or More Races	0	
Other	100	100

Describe the ethnicity of your:	Staff	Board
Hispanic/Latino	20	20
Not Hispanic/Latino	80	80

Outside Support: (Question 5 continued)

List community partners supporting the program:

TPA community partners that support HAYAs are the following: HEB, Tiff's Treats, Olden Lighting, Strong Events, Impact Arts, Participating School Districts: Austin ISD, Bastrop ISD, Belton ISD, Del Valle ISD, Dripping Springs ISD, Eanes ISD, Elgin ISD, Georgetown ISD, Hays ISD, Hutto ISD, Killeen ISD, Lake Travis ISD, Leander ISD, Lockhart ISD, Manor ISD, Marble Falls ISD, Pflugerville ISD, Round Rock ISD, San Marcos CISD

Organizational Funding: (Question 5 continued)

Has the organization received a TWA Grant in the past? If so, which years?

Yes, 2008

Budget at a Glance

Total Organization Budget Amount	31889000
Total Program/Project Budget	536236
TWA Grant Request	30000
Grant request's percentage of total organization budget. Cannot exceed 25%.	0.09

If awarded the full grant request, what amount of TWA funding would support the following categories? Please provide a numerical dollar amount for each area.

Staffing/Salaries	0
Operational Expenses	30000
Supplies and Materials	0
Facilities (Rent/Mortgage)	0
Technology Equipment	0
Instructional Resources and Curriculum	0

Student Transportation Fees	0
Other: Please specify	0

Attachments Included

1. Organization's current year budget.
2. Organization's final/actual budget for the previous year.
3. Program/project budget

Other sources of revenue (\$2,000 or more) for the project/program: Provide a list of sponsors, grants, etc., and include dollar amounts.

Ticket Sales – \$90,000 Concessions – \$5,326 Merchandise Sales – \$5,000 Texas Women for the Arts (requested) – \$30,000 Individual donations \$200,000 Endowment funds – \$100,000 Corporate Sponsors – \$100,000

Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation: (Question 5 continued)

Program Implementation (if new) or Operational Plan: How will/is this project/program administered? Limit 1500 characters including spaces. Please include details such as where the program will be hosted, how children will be enrolled, how students gain access to this program, if transportation is needed or provided, and how the program will be administered.

The HAYAs is a program of Texas Performing Arts. Schools opt in to participate in HAYAs program for the academic year by submitting their high school musical production in September and October. Theater teachers from those schools receive training to ensure each student has equal access to top-tier instruction. Students participating in their school’s musical theater program are involved with TPA-supported programming for the academic year at no cost. Students receive mentorship, trainings, community building, and professional development centered on the performing arts through programming provided by TPA. The program culminates in a red-carpet awards ceremony in May at Bass Concert Hall, TPA’s 3,000-seat theater on UT Austin’s campus. TPA manages an adjudication process involving 48 community judges. Students nominated for an award perform at the ceremony. Student winners of 19 categories are announced, as well as the 2 students TPA will sponsor to compete in the National Awards Ceremony in New York City in June. This year-long program focuses on students’ access to artistic mentorship, a regional peer community, and state-of-the-art technical theater training and tools. As the largest university-based performing arts program in the region and home to Broadway in Austin, TPA is the best-positioned arts organization to eliminate barriers to the arts for underserved students and provide access to the national Broadway network.

Evaluation Plan: How will you evaluate the success of this program? Limit 500 characters including spaces.

Success of the HAYAs will be measured through adjudicated scoring—the more competitive schools, the more successful students are across Central Texas and the country. Success is also measured by the number of participating schools, number of students and teachers attending TPA musical theater workshops & professional development clinics, number of schools utilizing TPA technology. TPA will also survey the students & evaluate teacher and student evaluations of programming.

Program/Project Timeline: Provide a detailed timeline to implement this program. If you choose to upload a file to answer this question please type, "Project Timeline attached" in the box below. TWA grant funds must be spent between June 1 - May 31. Limit 800 characters including spaces.

Project Timeline attached

Program/Project Timeline: Optional File Upload.

2%20-%20HAYAs%20-%20Timeline%20-%20FINAL.pdf

Impact: (Question 6)

Demographic Information of Children Served

Demographic description of the children served by this project/program: Check all that apply.

Title I

Low Socioeconomic

Low arts access

Children served represent cultural diversity

What percentage of children served by this program are considered at-risk? The term at-risk is used to identify students or groups of students who statistically have a higher probability of failing academically or dropping out of school.

33

What percentage of the children served by this program are economically disadvantaged?

33

Describe the community served by this program: Check all that apply.

Rural, Urban, Suburban, Inner City, Fringe, Major Metro Area, City- Large, City- Midsize, City- Small, Town, Distant

Project Need: What need(s) does this project/program fulfill? Limit 200 characters including spaces

High school theater students, particularly at Title I and rural schools, lack resources, mentorship, community, and professional and educational opportunities to become successful student artists.

Describe the race percentage of the student population served by the program. Please enter a numerical percentage for each. Percentages must add up to 100%.

American Indian or Alaska Native	0
Asian	8
Black or African American	10
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0
White	33
Two or More Races	6
Other	43

What percentage of the children served by this program are Hispanic/Latino? Enter a numerical response totaling 100%.

Hispanic/Latino	43
Not Hispanic/Latino	57

Optional Content Provided

Is there anything else that should be considered about this project/program? (Optional)

University of Texas Foundation submits this application on behalf of TPA. University of Texas Foundation is given as the organization name and contact information due to 501(c)3 status; all other information in the application is that of TPA including organization budget and organization board and staff. TPA provides some of the best and most affordable K-12 educational programming in the state of Texas, with schools as far as San Antonio, Temple, and College Station attending our education programming. Heller Awards for Young Artists (HAYA) is now a program of Texas Performing Arts (TPA). Beginning with the 2025-26 season, the home of Broadway in Austin will host the Heller Awards ceremony at Bass Concert Hall. The HAYAs are a highly anticipated annual event that recognizes the outstanding achievements of high school musical theater students and educators in the Greater Austin area. Founded by the Long Center, TPA, and Zach Theater, the program was presented by the Long Center from 2014 to 2025. Focused on promoting the values of arts education, collaboration, and creativity, the Heller Awards continue to evolve as the needs of students and teachers change. Since starting with

19 schools participating in the first annual ceremony, the program has grown to engage over 40 schools in 2025/26, reaching over 20,000 students and educators throughout the school year. Bringing the HAYAs to TPA presents new opportunities for children across Central Texas to access the professional arts and high-quality resources. As the largest university-based performing arts center in the country and the regional presenter for touring Broadway productions, TPA provides one of the largest avenues for high school students to find community in the performing arts. Our success in previous years, wide outreach, and student-focused vision have led to TPA's strong visibility across Central Texas and the country. Through this program, TPA will elevate high school performing arts in all schools. TPA provides all students the same access to skills and technology required to have a highly successful musical theater production. Through individualized theater workshops, high-quality technology, professional development, and access to the top theatrical organization in the region. HAYAs allows all music theater students to feel success in a region where the professional arts are not celebrated. TPA's acquisition of the HAYAs represents an opportunity to expand access to rural and Title I schools that did not exist before. TPA is dedicated to providing increased opportunity and access for students and teachers, evidenced by our expansion into Bell County in 2025/26 and the inclusion of technical training, school grants, and student scholarships in the program's inaugural year at TPA. With this expansion comes increased need for funding and support. TPA does not receive central funding from the University of Texas. Therefore, support from Texas Women for the Arts is essential in enabling TPA to provide equal access to arts education, mentorship, and recognition to all students in Central Texas – no matter their background or school district. We look forward to providing increased access and inspiration to the next generations of young people with your support. Thank you for your consideration.



The University of Texas Foundation accepts gifts on behalf of UT Austin for funding organizations that require grantees to have a 501(c)3 determination. UT Austin is a state agency and tax deductible under 170(c)1.

The University of Texas Foundation is submitting the following application on behalf of University of Texas at Austin Texas Performing Arts.



Department of the Treasury
Internal Revenue Service
Tax Exempt and Government Entities
PO Box 2508
Cincinnati, OH 45201

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS FOUNDATION
9011 MOUNTAIN RIDGE DR STE 150
AUSTIN, TX 78759

Date: October 3, 2022
Employer ID number: 74-1587488
Form 990 required: 990, Yes
Person to contact: Name: Ms. Chung
ID number: 0777227

Dear Sir or Madam:

We're responding to your request dated June 08, 2022, about your tax-exempt status.

We issued you a determination letter in January 1968, recognizing you as tax-exempt under Internal Revenue Code (IRC) Section 501(c)(3).

We also show you're not a private foundation as defined under IRC Section 509(a) because you're described in IRC Sections 509(a)(1) and 170(b)(1)(A)(iv).

Donors can deduct contributions they make to you as provided in IRC Section 170. You're also qualified to receive tax-deductible bequests, legacies, devises, transfers, or gifts under IRC Sections 2055, 2106, and 2522.

In the heading, we indicated whether you must file an annual information return. If you're required to file a return, you must file one of the following by the 15th day of the 5th month after the end of your annual accounting period.

- Form 990, Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax
- Form 990-EZ, Short Form Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax
- Form 990-N, Electronic Notice (e-Postcard) for Tax-Exempt Organizations Not Required to File Form 990 or Form 990EZ
- Form 990-PF, Return of Private Foundation or Section 4947(a)(1) Trust Treated as Private Foundation

According to IRC Section 6033(j), if you don't file a required annual information return or notice for 3 consecutive years, we'll revoke your tax-exempt status on the due date of the 3rd required return or notice.

You can get IRS forms or publications you need from our website at www.irs.gov/forms-pubs or by calling 800-TAX-FORM (800-829-3676).

If you have questions, call 877-829-5500 between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., local time, Monday through Friday (Alaska and Hawaii follow Pacific time).

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Stephen A. Martin
Director, Exempt Organizations
Rulings and Agreements

**Texas Performing Arts
Statement of Activities
As of August 31, 2025**

	<u>Unrestricted</u>	<u>Restricted</u>	<u>Total</u>
Operating Activities			
Public Support and Other Revenue			
Gifts and Grants	\$ 1,447,667	\$ 7,464,073	\$ 8,911,740
Academic Wages and Other Central Funds	\$ -	\$ 1,491,685	\$ 1,491,685
Distributions from Endowments	\$ 710,261	\$ 848,195	\$ 1,558,456
Total Support	\$ 2,157,928	\$ 9,803,952	\$ 11,961,880
Earned Revenue			
Performances	\$ 19,059,659	\$ -	\$ 19,059,659
Subscriptions Sold by Others	\$ 10,645,440	\$ -	\$ 10,645,440
Other Program Services	\$ 713,521	\$ -	\$ 713,521
Total Earned Revenue	\$ 30,418,620	\$ -	\$ 30,418,620
Total Revenue	\$ 32,576,548	\$ 9,803,952	\$ 42,380,500
Expenses			
Program Services	\$ 17,900,319	\$ 2,024,676	\$ 19,924,995
Subscription Series Expense by Others	\$ 10,645,440	\$ -	\$ 10,645,440
Development	\$ 1,261,732	\$ -	\$ 1,261,732
Management and Administration	\$ 1,785,278	\$ -	\$ 1,785,278
Total Expenses	\$ 31,592,768	\$ 2,024,676	\$ 33,617,444
Change in Net Assets from Operations	\$ 983,780	\$ 7,779,276	\$ 8,763,056
Non-Operating Activities			
Amortization Expense	\$ (428,236)	\$ -	\$ (428,236)
Uncollectable Pledges Expense	\$ (80,000)	\$ -	\$ (80,000)
Total Non-Operating Activities	\$ (508,236)	\$ -	\$ (508,236)
Change in Net Assets	\$ 475,544	\$ 7,779,276	\$ 8,254,820

Texas Performing Arts
Statement of Financial Position
As of August 31, 2025

	<u>Unrestricted</u>	<u>Restricted</u>	<u>Total</u>
Assets			
Current Assets			
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$ 14,661,441	\$ 2,903,307	\$ 17,564,748
Pledges Receivable	\$ 1,160,521	\$ 7,549,534	\$ 8,710,055
Earned Revenue Receivable	\$ 216,555	\$ -	\$ 216,555
Prepaid Expenses	\$ 123,627	\$ -	\$ 123,627
Total Current Assets	<u>\$ 16,162,144</u>	<u>\$ 10,452,841</u>	<u>\$ 26,614,985</u>
Other Assets			
Endowments	\$ 20,717,695	\$ 20,811,269	\$ 41,528,964
Property and Equipment	\$ 896,632	\$ -	\$ 896,632
Accumulated Depreciation	\$ (834,682)	\$ -	\$ (834,682)
Construction in Progress	\$ 384,144	\$ -	\$ 384,144
Leasehold Improvements	\$ 8,000,854	\$ -	\$ 8,000,854
Less Accumulated Amortization	\$ (6,231,831)	\$ -	\$ (6,231,831)
Total Other Assets	<u>\$ 22,932,812</u>	<u>\$ 20,811,269</u>	<u>\$ 43,744,081</u>
Total Assets	<u>\$ 39,094,957</u>	<u>\$ 31,264,110</u>	<u>\$ 70,359,067</u>
Liabilities and Net Assets			
Liabilities			
Current Liabilities			
Notes Payable	\$ 358,333	\$ -	\$ 358,333
Accounts Payable	\$ 205,182	\$ -	\$ 205,182
Unearned Revenue	\$ 6,642,998	\$ -	\$ 6,642,998
Total Current Liabilities	<u>\$ 7,206,512</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 7,206,512</u>
Long Term Liabilities			
Notes Payable (net)	\$ 5,083,334	\$ -	\$ 5,083,334
Total Long Term Liabilities	<u>\$ 5,083,334</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 5,083,334</u>
Total Liabilities	<u>\$ 12,289,846</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 12,289,846</u>
Net Assets			
Endowments	\$ 20,717,695	\$ 20,811,269	\$ 41,528,964
Retained Earnings	\$ 5,611,871	\$ 2,673,565	\$ 8,285,436
Current Year Net Earnings	\$ 475,544	\$ 7,779,276	\$ 8,254,820
Total Net Assets	<u>\$ 26,805,110</u>	<u>\$ 31,264,110</u>	<u>\$ 58,069,220</u>
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	<u>\$ 39,094,957</u>	<u>\$ 31,264,110</u>	<u>\$ 70,359,067</u>

Texas Performing Arts
FY 26 Operating Budget
As of Sept 5, 2025

	<u>FY 26 Budget</u>
Operating Activities	
Public Support and Other Revenue	
Gifts and Grants	\$ 3,248,000
Academic Wages and Other Central Funds	\$ 1,268,931
Distributions and Endowments	\$ 700,000
Total Support	\$ 5,216,931
Earned Revenue	
Performances	\$ 16,267,550
Subscriptions Sold by Others	\$ 9,000,000
Other Program Services	\$ 1,404,962
Total Earned Revenue	\$ 26,672,512
Total Revenue	\$ <u>31,889,442</u>
Expenses	
Program Services	\$ 15,434,866
Subscriptions Series Expense by Others	\$ 9,000,000
Development	\$ 1,255,541
Management and Administration	\$ 3,050,973
Total Expenses	\$ <u>28,741,380</u>
Change In Net Assets From Operations	\$ 3,148,062
Non-Operating Activities	
Depreciation and Amoritization Expense	\$ (449,932)
Contingency 8.5%	\$ (2,698,130)
Total Net Assets	\$ (3,148,062)
Change In Net Assets	\$ <u>-</u>

**Texas Performing Arts
26/27 HAYAs Program Budget**

EXPENSES

Production Costs	\$ 40,000.00	equipment, costumes, lighting, audio; TWA grant funds to support this budget line
Artist fees	\$ 160,000.00	workshop guests
Contracted Stage Labor	\$ 50,000.00	
Orchestra	\$ 20,000.00	
Temporary labor	\$ 10,000.00	front of house, production
Equipment rentals	\$ 15,500.00	
Workshop program fees	\$ 23,500.00	supplies, artist honorarium
Background checks	\$ 500.00	
Security	\$ 2,000.00	
Custodial	\$ 6,000.00	
Photographer	\$ 10,000.00	
Parking	\$ 1,750.00	
Advertising	\$ 5,000.00	
Credit Card fees	\$ 2,240.00	
Ticket fees	\$ 6,600.00	
Hospitality	\$ 30,000.00	
Indirect Costs	\$ 153,236.00	Staff time, management, administrative - UT standard overhead rate of 40%
TOTAL	\$ 536,326.00	

INCOME

Ticket Sales	\$ 96,000.00
Concessions	\$ 5,326.00
Merchandise Sales	\$ 5,000.00
Grants	\$ 30,000.00
Individual donations	\$ 200,000.00
Endowment funds	\$ 100,000.00
Corporate sponsors	\$ 100,000.00
Operating funds	
TOTAL	\$ 536,326.00

Heller Awards for Young Artists

Full 26/27 Season Timeline (Aug–May)



AUGUST

- School Outreach Begins
 - Confirm adjudicator roster
-

SEPTEMBER

- Adjudicator orientations
 - Deadline for schools to submit show dates
-

OCTOBER – FEBRUARY

- School performances
 - Two teacher workshops (1 Oct, 1 Jan)
 - Production team begins early awards ceremony preparations
-

FEBRUARY

- **Feb 15:** Last day for shows to be adjudicated – judges compile scores
 - **Feb 20–21:** Adjudicator Retreat
 - Nominations announced
-

MARCH – APRIL

- Students rehearse production for May ceremony and receive mentorship for awards performances
 - **Apr 25:** Adjudicators finalize all award winners
-

MAY – Celebrating Student Success

- **May 1–2:** Final studio rehearsals
 - **May 4–5:** Full evening rehearsals
 - **May 6: All-day tech & dress rehearsals + Evening Ceremony at Bass Concert Hall**
-

POST-SHOW

- **May:** debrief and iterate improvements
- **June:** Jimmy Awards in New York City – the Broadway League’s National High School Musical Theatre Awards that recognizes exceptional student performers in acting, singing, and dance, while highlighting the critical importance of theatre education in schools. TPA sponsors two HAYAs winners to attend the Jimmy’s each year.
- **Jun–Aug:** begin implementing changes for the following season



Additional Materials

The University of Texas Foundation accepts gifts on behalf of UT Austin for funding organizations that require grantees to have a 501(c)3 determination. UT Austin is a state agency and tax deductible under 170(c)1.

The University of Texas Foundation is submitting the following application on behalf of University of Texas at Austin Texas Performing Arts.



Heller Awards for Young Artists at Texas Performing Arts

About Texas Performing Arts

Texas Performing Arts (TPA) transforms lives through creativity, learning, and live performance. As part of the state's flagship university, education is at the core of what we do. TPA's performing arts programming is unparalleled in the region in presenting world-class artistic experiences that reflect the widest range of cultures, backgrounds, and creative practices.

TPA is the home of Broadway in Austin and the region's premiere presenter of musical theater. Every year, TPA welcomes more than 380,000 audience members and engages over 20,000 students in arts education and access programs each year. TPA is uniquely positioned to transform the arts opportunities available to students of all ages throughout Central Texas. We do not receive any funding from UT Austin and rely on philanthropic support for our education and engagement programs.

About the Heller Awards for Young Artists

The Heller Awards for Young Artists (HAYAs) recognizes the best high school musical theater talent in the greater Austin area through a Tony Award®-style ceremony. The HAYAs are produced in collaboration with Impact Arts and were presented at the Long Center from 2014-2025. In 2025, the HAYAs celebrated 37 participating schools; 18 districts; 14 Title I schools; and over 3,000 student participants. As of 2026, the HAYAs are a permanent program of Texas Performing Arts.



Vision for Impact

To ensure the highest impact with high school musical theater students, we envision the HAYAs as part of a musical theater education ecosystem for high school and college students, with TPA as the hub. This is an opportunity to bring together Austin's musical theater talent, TPA's Broadway prowess and leadership, and Texas' excellence in education to make a transformative impact.



Funding Priorities

Establish a \$5 million endowment to secure long-term funding.

- **Ensure** stable, long-term funding for the program's ongoing operations.
- **Enable** expansion to increase equal access and participation for all Central Texas students, particularly from rural or Title I schools.
- **Invest** in performing arts educators to enable teachers to gain the skills and techniques necessary to deliver high-quality musical theater instruction.
- **Empower teachers** with professional development workshops that include hands-on experience and continuing education credits.
- **Celebrate excellence** by recognizing outstanding educators with service awards and fostering a culture that prioritizes arts education.

Expand access for students to live performing arts experiences and nurture the next generation of performers and arts professionals.

- **Sponsor** the brightest high school musical theater talent from Central Texas to compete on the national stage through the Jimmy Awards in New York City.
- Provide **transformative experiences** for students through year-round opportunities such as master classes, workshops, and live performances.
- **Fund the next generation of artists** through scholarships that support education and training.



2025 Jimmy Awards

This year's Jimmy Awards nominees, Raegan Gonzales and Walker Wallace, were selected to represent Austin at the National High School Musical Theatre Awards (the Jimmy Awards) on June 23rd at the Minskoff Theatre in New York City. Raegan and Walker spent over a week in New York City to explore, learn, and make their debut on a Broadway stage.

In New York City, Raegan and Walker attended a week-long series of rehearsals, workshops, and experiences. On the first day of rehearsals, each student was paired with a coach to help them with their audition for the ceremony's performances. Raegan was coached by Desi Oakley (former understudy for *Wicked's* Elphaba) and Walker was paired with EJ Zimmerman (from *Les Misérables* and *Avenue Q*). Raegan and Walker were both selected to perform in the feature group and worked with dancers Janet Dacal (the original Sofia Diaz from *New York, New York*) and Julia Murney (former Elphaba from *Wicked*) to perfect their solo choreography.



During their time in New York, Raegan and Walker built new relationships with Broadway professionals and peers from across the country. After rehearsals each evening, the nominees had dedicated discussions with Broadway directors, and choreographers like Dan Knechtges, Luis Salgado, and Theo Lencicki, plus special guest, Tone from Rich+Tone of *MJ the Musical*.

One of the highlights of the week was a visit to Times Square for a special dinner at Carmine's. There, the nominees were surprised by five cast members from *MJ the Musical*. After dinner, the Jimmy Award nominees walked out to see their faces in lights in the middle of Times Square! The nominees also attended *MJ the Musical* where they got to experience the energy in a Broadway theater for the first time.

Their experience culminated in the Jimmy Awards ceremony on June 23, hosted by Josh Groban at the iconic Minskoff Theater. Through this incredible experience, Walker and Raegan not only learned more about working as professionals in musical theatre but also made new connections among colleagues they will see in the future.

After returning home, Raegan and Walker shared with us how important this experience was:

My favorite part about being at the Jimmys was meeting everyone and seeing how insanely talented and hardworking they all were. This whole experience is going to help me in the future because it's taught me how important it is to work with others and really consider how they might be feeling. – Raegan Gonzales

I'm grateful to have been chosen to represent the Central Texas Area and I'm so thankful for this once in a lifetime opportunity to be a part of such a prestigious and uplifting program. – Walker Wallace

Raegan and Walker were selected from the Heller Awards for Young Artists program. In 2025, the HAYAs celebrated 37 participating schools, 18 districts, 14 Title I schools, and over 3,000 student participants. In 2026, Texas Performing Arts is excited to welcome the HAYAs to the Bass Concert Hall stage to continue to support and develop talented musical theater students in the Central Texas area. Mark your calendar for the HAYAs on May 6, 2026, at Bass Concert Hall and the Jimmy's on June 22, 2026, in NYC at the Minskoff Theatre!





FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Images and Interviews Available Upon Request

HELLER AWARDS FOR YOUNG ARTISTS TO TAKE BASS CONCERT HALL STAGE FOR THE FIRST TIME ON MAY 6, 2026

(Austin, TX)—**Heller Awards for Young Artists (HAYA)** is now a program of **Texas Performing Arts (TPA)**. Beginning with the 2025-26 Season, the home of Broadway in Austin will host the Heller Awards ceremony at Bass Concert Hall. This season’s event is scheduled for **May 6, 2026**.

The HAYAs are a highly anticipated annual event that recognizes the outstanding achievements of high school musical theater students and educators in the Greater Austin area. Founded by the Long Center, TPA, and Zach Theater, the program was presented by the Long Center from 2014 to 2025. Ginger Morris, Executive Artistic Director of Impact Arts, has served as the Producing Director of the program since its inception.

Focused on promoting the values of arts education, collaboration, and creativity, the Heller Awards continue to evolve as the needs of students and teachers change. Since starting with 19 schools participating in the first annual ceremony, then affectionately known as the Greater Austin High School Musical Theatre Awards (GAHSMTA), the program has grown to feature 37 schools in 2025, reaching over 20,000 students and educators.

Taking on the Heller Awards is part of TPA’s multi-year expansion to maximize its educational impact. To help ensure the long-term viability of its educational programs, TPA has raised more than \$1M in new funding to support the transition and ongoing operations of the HAYAs. The Heller Awards are named for Andrew and Mary Ann Heller, whose initial gift established an endowment fund to support a portion of the program costs.

Bob Bursey, the Executive & Artistic Director of **Texas Performing Arts**, noted that, “As the home of Broadway in Austin and as part of the University of Texas, the Heller Awards align perfectly with our passions for musical theater and education.” He continued, “We’re excited to welcome our region’s most talented high school theater students to the Bass Concert Hall stage for the first time in 2026.”

Modeled after the Tony Awards®, the HAYAs honor the entire high school musical experience, on and off the stage. Awards are presented in 19 categories such as best production, lead and

supporting performers, and technical design. 37 high schools participated in the 2025 awards, from Travis and five surrounding counties.

The 2026 HAYA ceremony will take place on Wednesday, May 6 at TPA's Bass Concert Hall. The larger venue will allow for increased attendance and engage participating students with other educational opportunities offered by Texas Performing Arts and the College of Fine Arts at UT Austin.

At Texas Performing Arts, the Heller Awards will be produced in association with **Impact Arts**, and Impact Arts Founder and Executive Director **Ginger Morris** will continue to play a key role in the program.

"The move to Bass Concert Hall marks a powerful next chapter for the Heller Awards for Young Artists. This program is about creating extraordinary opportunities for young performers — and there's no stage more inspiring than Bass. It's where national Broadway tours perform and where many of our alumni now work professionally. For students, standing on that same stage is both affirming and aspirational," said Morris. "I'm honored that Texas Performing Arts has entrusted Impact Arts to continue producing the HAYAs, and we're excited to support the vision under the leadership of Bob Bursey, whose commitment to excellence is shaping the future of the arts in Austin and beyond. Together, we're building a powerful bridge between education and the professional stage — one that honors teachers, uplifts students, and strengthens our community."

The HAYAs will be integrated into the next phase of TPA's education program expansion, which will serve more than 30,000 K-12 students across Central Texas in 2025-2026. New offerings include Austin's first-ever daytime school performance of a nationally touring Broadway show, a musical theater performance for every 5th grader in the Austin Independent School District, and additional school-day performances of acclaimed touring artists. With TPA's expanded programming for Austin area youth and Impact Arts' mission to train the next generation of young artists, the HAYAs moving to TPA extends their ongoing collaboration.

Since 2022, TPA has hosted Impact Arts' Summer Stock Austin, creating more avenues for young theater artists to hone their craft through performances at TPA's McCullough Theater each summer. This partnership expanded in 2023 when the HAYAs became a Regional Awards Program (RAP) for the National High School Musical Theatre Awards® (popularly known as The Jimmy Awards®) through TPA's membership in the Broadway League. As part of this collaboration, Impact Arts has worked closely with TPA to provide training and administrative support for Jimmy Awards preparation.

Presented by the Broadway League Foundation, the Jimmys represent the highest level of achievement in high school musical theatre, recognizing individual artistry in vocal performance, dance, and acting while underscoring the importance of theatre arts education in schools. Over the past three years, six students—Langston Lee, Kyra Carr, Ava Moak, Jamias Hughes, Raegan Gonzales and Walker Wallace—have represented the HAYAs at the Jimmy's in New York City. In 2023, Lee, a student from Rouse High School, won the prestigious award for Best Performance by an Actor, further solidifying the HAYAs as a nationally significant platform for nurturing young talent.

The Heller Awards for Young Artists at Texas Performing Arts is presented by H-E-B and H-E-B Tournament of Champions.

Support for the Heller Awards for Young Artists is provided by H-E-B and H-E-B Tournament of Champions, the Heller Awards for Young Artists Endowment, the Cipione Family Foundation, and Heller Awards for Young Artists Executive Producers Andrew and Mary Ann Heller, Bettye Nowlin, Heather Petkovsek, Marc and Carolyn Seriff, and an anonymous donor.

Support for Austin's participation in the Jimmy Awards and the Heller Awards for Young Artists is provided by H-E-B and H-E-B Tournament of Champions, the Heller Awards for Young Artists Endowment, Andrew and Mary Ann Heller, Mila McCutchen, Bettye Nowlin, Heather Petkovsek, Marc and Carolyn Seriff, and an anonymous donor.

ABOUT THE HELLER AWARDS FOR YOUNG ARTISTS

The Heller Awards for Young Artists (HAYA) was founded by the Long Center for the Performing Arts, Texas Performing Arts, and the Zach Theater. The program was presented and produced by the Long Center from 2014 to 2025. Since its inception, the Heller Awards for Young Artists have impacted over 20,000 students and educators from over 30 high schools by providing resources and key support systems for musical theatre programs. In addition to the awards ceremony, this year-round program celebrates the achievements of exceptional students and provides professional training, mentorship, performance opportunities, industry networking, and community building for thousands of young artists across Central Texas. More information including participation on the Heller Awards can be found at impactarts.org/heller-awards.

ABOUT TEXAS PERFORMING ARTS

[Texas Performing Arts](https://www.texasperformingarts.org) (TPA) enriches life in Austin and beyond through creativity, learning and live performance. As the University of Texas at Austin's performing arts center, TPA presents more than 200 performances and welcomes nearly 400,000 audience members each year. TPA's venues include Austin's largest theatre, Bass Concert Hall, and other venues on the UT campus. TPA presents Broadway in Austin; the Texas Welcomes series of touring artists; and a curated season of performing arts from around the globe. As part of UT's College of Fine Arts, TPA engages thousands of university students and introduces 16,000 K-12 students across Central Texas to the arts each year. Since 2020, [Bob Bursey](#) has held the position of Executive & Artistic Director. He is a Tony Award-winning performing arts executive, member of the Broadway League's Intra-Industry Committee, and Tony Award voter.

ABOUT IMPACT ARTS

Impact Arts is a 501c3 nonprofit cultivating the next generation of artists and leaders through Summer Stock Austin, Texas Arts Project, Digital Learning Series, In-School Workshops, Teacher Workshops, and Private Lesson Studio all under the organization. Created by Ginger Morris, Victor Villalobos and Donelvan Thigpen, Impact Arts is committed to lifelong learning fostering empathy, creativity, and critical thinking through theatre and film programs propelling young artists to the next level in their careers. Uniquely empowering youth by producing professional quality productions, Impact Arts aims to be a leader in inclusive educational programs that use arts to unite people creating a lasting impact. Visit impactarts.org for more information.

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HELLER AWARDS FOR YOUNG ARTISTS MOVING FROM THE LONG CENTER TO TEXAS PERFORMING ARTS

\$1M raised to ensure the long-term future of the program as part of Texas Performing Arts education program expansion that will serve more than 30,000 K-12 students annually

February 11, 2025—Texas Performing Arts (TPA) and the Long Center for the Performing Arts today announce the **Heller Awards for Young Artists (HAYAs)** will become a program of TPA beginning in the 2025-2026 season. The home of Broadway in Austin will host the Heller Awards ceremony at Bass Concert Hall beginning in 2026, after 12 successful years at the Long Center for the Performing Arts.

The HAYAs are a highly anticipated annual event that recognizes the outstanding achievements of high school musical theater students and educators in the Greater Austin area. Founded by the Long Center, TPA, and ZACH Theatre, the program has been produced and presented by the Long Center since 2014.

Starting with 19 schools participating in the first annual ceremony, then known affectionately as the Greater Austin High School Musical Theatre Awards (GAHSMTA), the Long Center has elevated the program to now feature 37 schools and counting, reaching over 20,000 students and educators. With a focus of promoting the values of arts education, collaboration, and creativity under the Long Center’s leadership, the Heller Awards have continued to evolve as the needs of students and teachers have changed. Ginger Morris, Executive Artistic Director of Impact Arts, has served as the Producing Director of the program since its inception.

Cory Baker, President and CEO of the Long Center, remarked, “For twelve years, the Long Center has invested in and grown this amazing program to the extraordinary heights that it has achieved. Part of our continued support is recognizing this incredible opportunity for the HAYAs to partner with Broadway in Austin and TPA. Although we will all miss having the event in our theater, we are thrilled for this new chapter and excited to see this program continue to thrive and flourish.”

Stewardship of the HAYAs is part of TPA's multi-year expansion to maximize its educational impact. To help ensure the long-term viability of its educational programs, TPA has raised \$1M in new funding which will support the transition and ongoing operations of the HAYAs.

The Heller Awards are named for Andrew and Mary Ann Heller, whose initial gift established an endowment fund to support a portion of the program costs. That endowment has been transferred to TPA and increased with new funds.

Bob Bursey, the Executive & Artistic Director of **Texas Performing Arts**, noted that, "As the home of Broadway in Austin and as part of the University of Texas, the Heller Awards align perfectly with our passions for musical theater and education." He continued, "We are happy to ensure that the Heller Awards continue to celebrate our community's high school theater artists and to expand their opportunities in the years ahead."

Modeled after the Tony Awards®, the HAYAs honor the entire high school musical experience, on and off the stage. Awards are presented in 19 categories such as best production, lead and supporting performers, and technical design. 37 high schools are participating in the 2025 awards, from Travis and five surrounding counties.

The 2025 HAYA nominees will be announced via livestream on Sunday, February 23, at 5 PM, with the ceremony taking place on Wednesday, April 16 at the Long Center. In 2026, the event will move to TPA's Bass Concert Hall, where the larger venue will allow for increased attendance and engage participating students with other educational opportunities offered by Texas Performing Arts and the College of Fine Arts at UT Austin.

The HAYAs will be integrated into the next phase of TPA's education program expansion, which will serve more than 30,000 K-12 students across Central Texas in 2025-2026. New offerings include Austin's first-ever daytime school performance of a nationally touring Broadway show, a musical theater performance for every 5th grader in the Austin Independent School District, and additional school-day performances of acclaimed touring artists. With TPA's expanded programming for Austin area youth and Impact Arts' mission to train the next generation of young artists, the HAYAs moving to TPA extends their ongoing collaboration.

Since 2022, TPA has hosted Impact Arts' Summer Stock Austin, creating more avenues for young theater artists to hone their craft through performances at TPA's McCullough Theater each summer. This partnership expanded in 2023 when the HAYAs became a Regional Awards Program (RAP) for the National High School Musical Theatre Awards® (popularly known as The Jimmy Awards®) through TPA's membership in the Broadway League. As part of this collaboration, Impact Arts has worked closely with TPA to provide training and administrative support for Jimmy Awards preparation.

Presented by the Broadway League Foundation, the Jimmys represent the highest level of achievement in high school musical theatre, recognizing individual artistry in vocal performance, dance, and acting while underscoring the importance of theatre arts education in schools. Over the past two years, four students—Langston Lee, Kyra Carr, Ava Moak, and Jamias Hughes—have represented the HAYAs at the Jimmy's in New York City. In 2023, Lee, a student from Rouse High School, won the prestigious award for Best Performance by an Actor, further solidifying the HAYAs as a nationally significant platform for nurturing young talent.

At Texas Performing Arts, the Heller Awards will be produced in association with **Impact Arts**, and **Ginger Morris** will continue to play a key role in the program. “As the program’s Producing Director since its inception and now as the Executive Artistic Director of Impact Arts, I am proud of how this initiative has fostered community, mentorship, and excellence in arts education,” said Morris. “Texas Performing Arts has been instrumental in helping us achieve national recognition through our participation in the Jimmy Awards, and their deep connections to the industry will undoubtedly elevate the program even further. Together, we will continue to empower students, honor the vibrant contributions of educators who shape their journeys, and create unforgettable experiences. We look forward to reaching new audiences and embarking on the next chapter in this extraordinary venue.”

Support for the Heller Awards for Young Artists at Texas Performing Arts is provided by the Heller Awards for Young Artists Endowment and HAYA Executive Producers Andrew & Mary Ann Heller, Bettye Nowlin, and Marc & Carolyn Seriff.

Support for Austin’s participation in the Jimmy Awards is provided by Andrew & Mary Ann Heller, Mila McCutchen, Marcia & Gary Nelson, Bettye Nowlin, and Marc & Carolyn Seriff.

ABOUT THE HELLER AWARDS FOR YOUNG ARTISTS

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ABOUT THE LONG CENTER

Uniquely facing the city skyline, the Long Center is an iconic cultural hub and community gathering place – a reflection of Austin's eclectic and creative soul. Built in 2008 and with a local history that spans many more generations, the Long Center is dedicated to fueling community through creativity, elevating Austin’s creative sector, and connecting communities near and far through creative discovery. For more information about the Long Center, please visit thelongcenter.org or follow on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [X](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

ABOUT IMPACT ARTS

Impact Arts is a 501c3 nonprofit cultivating the next generation of artists and leaders through Summer Stock Austin, Texas Arts Project, Digital Learning Series, In-School Workshops, Teacher Workshops, and Private Lesson Studio all under the organization. Created by Ginger Morris, Victor Villalobos and Donelvan Thigpen, Impact Arts is committed to lifelong learning fostering empathy, creativity, and critical thinking through theatre and film programs propelling young artists to the next level in their careers. Uniquely empowering youth by producing professional quality productions, Impact Arts aims to be a leader in inclusive educational programs that use arts to unite people creating a lasting impact. Visit impactarts.org for more information.

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