

# Heller Awards for Young Artists To Take Bass Concert Hall Stage For The First Time on May 6, 2026

*Beginning with the 2025-26 Season, the home of Broadway in Austin will host the Heller Awards ceremony at Bass Concert Hall*

AUSTIN, TX, UNITED STATES, September 11, 2025 / EINPresswire.com/ -- 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.



TPA Heller Awards Logo



2025 Winners: Heller Awards for Young Artists; Photo Credit: Huey Henry

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."



2025 Participants of the Heller Awards for Young Artists; Photo Credit: Huey Henry



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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](https://impactarts.org/heller-awards).

#### ABOUT TEXAS PERFORMING ARTS

Texas Performing Arts (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](https://impactarts.org) for more information.

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