

# **HELEN HAYES AWARDS POLICIES & PROCEDURES**

**For 2025**

## HELEN HAYES AWARDS CATEGORIES

The Helen Hayes Awards are presented annually each spring, for eligible productions that opened during the previous calendar year.

**HELEN and HAYES Categories apply to RESIDENT PRODUCTIONS only**, defined as *one that has been developed, contracted and produced specifically for one or more theatres in Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Area, for which 50% or more of all production and design elements were created for this production at this theatre(s), and meeting all other eligibility criteria (see page 13). A production that does not meet these criteria will be considered a Visiting Production (see page 4).*

- Only the cast members as of a production's opening performance in Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Area are eligible for acting awards, including Ensemble awards.
- An Ensemble is defined as four or more actors and refers to the full cast.
- An Eligible Theatre's artistic director, or his or her designee, is solely responsible for determining if an actor is to be considered in the Lead or Supporting category. But judges will consider and score any acting company as an Ensemble, in addition to scoring individual artists.
- For Outstanding Costume, Lighting, Set, and Sound Design awards, scores submitted by all the judges on the HELEN Play and HELEN Musical panels, or the HAYES Play and HAYES Musical panels, will be combined.
- If an Eligible Theatre wishes to have sound designers or composers considered for the Outstanding Sound Design award, it may include those artists when submitting production ballot information for the category of Sound Design. The judges will collectively consider the artist's work.

### HELEN CATEGORIES

*The Helen category recognizes outstanding work in resident theatre productions where less than 51% of a cast operates under an Actors Equity Association (AEA) contract and no more than 3 AEA actors are in the cast.*

### CATEGORIES

Outstanding Play

Outstanding Director of a Play

Outstanding Lead Performer in a Play

Outstanding Supporting Performer in a Play

Outstanding Ensemble in a Play

Outstanding Choreography in a Play

Outstanding Musical  
Outstanding Director of a Musical  
Outstanding Musical Direction  
Outstanding Lead Performer in a Musical  
Outstanding Supporting Performer in a Musical  
Outstanding Ensemble in a Musical  
Outstanding Choreography in a Musical

Outstanding Costume Design  
Outstanding Lighting Design  
Outstanding Set Design  
Outstanding Sound Design  
Outstanding Media/Projection Design

#### **HAYES CATEGORIES**

*The Hayes category recognizes outstanding work by an Eligible Theatre operating under an AEA agreement; a production where 51% or more of the cast are operating under an AEA contract; or a production in which 4 or more cast members are working under an AEA contract.*

Outstanding Play  
Outstanding Director of a Play  
Outstanding Lead Performer in a Play  
Outstanding Supporting Performer in a Play  
Outstanding Ensemble in a Play  
Outstanding Choreography in a Play

Outstanding Musical  
Outstanding Director of a Musical  
Outstanding Musical Direction  
Outstanding Lead Performer in a Musical  
Outstanding Supporting Performer in a Musical  
Outstanding Ensemble in a Musical  
Outstanding Choreography in a Musical

Outstanding Costume Design  
Outstanding Lighting Design  
Outstanding Set Design  
Outstanding Sound Design  
Outstanding Media/Projection Design

## **VISITING PRODUCTIONS**

Outstanding Visiting Production

Outstanding Performer, Visiting Production

A Non-Resident (Visiting) Production meets more than one of the following criteria.

- A majority of the funding for the production (51% or more) comes from a commercial entity.
- The production has been developed, contracted, or produced specifically for a theatre (or theatres) outside of the DC region, either before or after its Washington engagement.
- Prior to the opening night of the DMV production, the production has been scheduled or announced for a future commercial run. (Commercial theatre is defined as for-profit, non-tax-exempt theatre production.)
- A majority of the creative team (including actors, directors, and designers) are from a previous out-of-town production.

If a theatre organization disagrees with their production's designation as a non-resident production, they may contact the Helen Hayes team to appeal this decision.

Remounting and Revivals: A revival or remounting of a Non-Resident (Visiting) Production is not eligible for awards recognition if the same work is staged less than 10 years after the closing of the previous presentation of the production, at the same or another theatre.

## **THEATRE FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES**

Outstanding Production, Theatre for Young Audiences

- *A production is eligible for this award if it is intended for audiences age 12 and under. An Eligible Theatre's artistic leadership is solely responsible for deciding if a production should be considered in this category, in which case the production is not eligible for consideration in any Outstanding Play or Musical Category.*
- *Theatre for Young Audiences nominees and recipients are determined by the combined scores of HELEN play and musical judges or HAYES play and musical judges, depending upon how the production is identified.*

## **CO-PRODUCTIONS**

- A production created by two or more Eligible Theatres, performed in one or more locations in Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Area, will be considered a Co-Production and judged as one production, with awards recognition for all the Eligible Theatres involved.

- A production created by an Eligible Theatre with a theatre outside Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Area will be considered eligible, subject to all other applicable criteria, whether or not its first performance takes place within or outside the Metropolitan Area.
- When two companies in Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Area co-produce, but only one of the companies is an Eligible Theatre, the joint production must still meet the 10-performance and single-location requirements, although either company's performance location will be acceptable. But only the Eligible Theatre may be a Helen Hayes Awards recipient.
- All participants must set production dates before the first production goes into rehearsal; playbills and marketing materials at each theatre must credit all the productions.
- Productions meeting the above criteria are eligible for consideration in all resident award categories including Original New Play or Musical or Original New Play or Musical Adaptation.

***For context: Here are the guidelines for Co-Productions from the Rules & Regulations. (No changes recommended at this time.)***

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- Productions meeting the above criteria are eligible for consideration in all resident award categories including Original New Play or Musical or Original New Play or Musical Adaptation.

#### **REVIVALS AND RE-MOUNTINGS**

*A revival or remounting is a production restaged by the theatre company that produced it within the previous 10 years.*

An Eligible Theatre's artistic leadership is responsible for verifying that a revival or remounted production may qualify for awards recognition:

- A revival or remounting is not eligible for awards recognition if the same work is staged within 10 years after the closing of the previous production, at the same theatre and by the same company.
- A revival or remounting may be eligible for awards if the production is led by a different creative team; at least 50 percent of the production elements are new; and at least 50 percent of the cast is new.
- If the text of the revival or remounting is substantially different from that of the original production, the show may also qualify for awards recognition.

### **WORLD PREMIERES (RESIDENT PRODUCTIONS)**

The Charles MacArthur Award for Outstanding Original New Play or Musical  
Outstanding Original Play or Musical Adaptation

*An Original New Play or Musical is one born entirely from the playwright's imagination--did not exist until the dramatist imagined it--. This original new work is being staged for the first time anywhere, in any language, and the Eligible Theatre and the playwright have a contractual arrangement customary for such a presentation.*

*An Original New Play or Musical Adaptation is inspired by, based on or derived from pre-existing published material, such as a novel or short story, a film, musical, ballet, opera or operetta, a poem, children's story, or an established artist's body of work. Again, the adaptation is being presented for the first time anywhere, in any language, and the Eligible Theatre and the playwright have a contract that is customary for such a presentation.*

- A musical revue that is derived from previously existing music or song catalogues but is being given an original presentation may be considered for the **Outstanding Original New Play or Musical Adaptation** award. However, if the title of the play or musical refers to another play or musical on which the production is based, the current production cannot be considered for an award in the Original New Play or Musical category.
- If a play or musical has been presented previously, it may still qualify in the Outstanding Play or Musical Adaptation category or the Outstanding Original Play or Musical Adaptation category, provided that earlier productions were developmental or part of a festival of plays-in-process, with minimal production elements; that productions had fewer than 10 performances before 99 persons or less; and that producers did not solicit media reviews.
- If the phrase "World Premiere" was used in conjunction with a prior production in any of its playbills or marketing materials, the work cannot be considered in the New Play categories.
- A collection of plays or musicals ticketed as a single production will usually be judged as a single production.

## **ROLLING WORLD PREMIERES**

*Rolling world premieres occur when a new work is developed with multiple creative teams in different communities and the productions open within a span of 12 months.*

For an Eligible Theatre's production to qualify as a Rolling World Premiere in the categories of Outstanding Original New Play or Musical, or Outstanding Original New Play or Musical Adaptation, it must meet the following criteria:

- Two or more theatres must participate in the partnership; all participants must set production dates before the first production goes into rehearsal; playbills and marketing materials at each theatre must credit all the productions; the playwright must participate in the Washington theatre's production process.
- Productions meeting the above criteria are eligible for consideration in all resident award categories including Original New Play or Musical or Original New Play or Musical Adaptation.

## HELEN HAYES RECOMMENDED

To help promote a production while it is still running, it may receive the designation of Helen Hayes Recommended (HHR), based on voting on the production ballot. The objective is to give theatres another tool to attract audience members.

- On the ballot, the judge will check an additional box for HHR:
  - YES – I would recommend this production
  - NO – I would not recommend this production
  
- HHR will be determined by an affirmative vote of at least 60% of the ballots cast. Judges are scheduled early in a production's run in order for this designation to be useful to the theatre in their promotions.
  
- Once HHR is determined either way, Theatre Washington will notify the theatre and provide HHR graphics for use, as well as notate this designation on [theatrewashington.org](http://theatrewashington.org).
  
- Even if the HHR designation is not given, any individual artist associated with that production or the production itself, may still receive a nomination and/or award. HHR voting and production balloting are separate.



## **ELIGIBILITY**

To be considered for participation in the Helen Hayes Awards, a professional theatre company may be a not-for-profit institution or a commercial enterprise; community theatres and theatre programs within academic institutions are not eligible. A potential Eligible Theatre will be asked to submit a New Theatre Application to Theatre Washington to see if they are interested in joining the John Aniello Emerging Cohort for one to two years. Or if they are interested in Helen Hayes Eligibility only, the Adjudication Committee will make recommendations based on the application.

### **Eligibility Criteria**

- The production must be staged within Washington, D.C. Metropolitan area, defined as the District of Columbia; Montgomery and Prince George's Counties in Maryland; Arlington and Fairfax Counties in Virginia; City of Alexandria, VA; City of Fairfax, VA; City of Falls Church, VA; the Route 29 corridor from Washington, D.C. through Columbia, MD; and the Route 50 corridor from Washington D.C. through Annapolis.
- The theatre or producer must financially compensate all artists for their work on the production. By participating in the Helen Hayes Awards process, each theatre or producer affirms that information about artist compensation is completed.
- The theatre or producer must have acquired the legal right(s) to present the production. By participating in the Helen Hayes Awards process, each theatre or producer affirms that information about performance rights is accurate and complete.
- If the production is a Hayes Musical or Hayes Play, it must have at least 15 performances for paying audiences. If the production is a Helen Musical or Helen Play, it must have at least 10 performances for paying audiences. Half of these performances must take place on weekdays between 10 AM and 9 PM or on weekends between 10 AM and 11 PM. If a theatre is forced to cancel performances due to unpreventable circumstances and will not fulfill the requisite performance number, it will notify Theatre Washington of the circumstances. The theatre may then ask to maintain the production's eligibility if a quorum of the judges have already seen a performance. If a theatre is forced to cancel performances due to unpreventable circumstances that hinder judge attendance, and the theatre has an available recording of the production, judges may view that recording in order to submit scores so that the production garners the minimum requirement of at least five ballots to remain eligible.
- Theatre Washington requires eight week notification in advance of the performance. Failure to submit a ballot within this timeline may result in fewer than a quorum of judges being able to see the production.
- Theatre Washington with advisement of the Adjudication Committee may decide not to review a production.

## **EMERGING THEATRES**

*Historically, Theatre Washington has defined an Emerging Theatre as one that has not previously participated in the Helen Hayes Awards process. However, Theatre Washington recognizes that we may intersect with organizations and productions at different stages of organizational development. For any organization interested in understanding how to become part of the Helen Hayes Awards process, we offer the following. These steps do not exclude the organization from other activities and programming provided by Theatre Washington.*

Theatre Washington will host meetings for a cohort of theatres who are interested in participating as Emerging Theatres. To participate as an Emerging Theatre, an organization must submit the New Theatre Application, which will be reviewed by the Emerging Theatre Committee of Theatre Washington's Advisory Committee.

John Aniello Emerging Theatre Cohort:

- The John Aniello Emerging Theatre Mentorship Program would serve as an opportunity for its member theatres to connect with and learn from other organizations in the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Area over a one to two-year period. This program would offer support and resources to its members in the form of bimonthly discussions, workshops, meetings, along with the possibility of space sharing, equipment sharing, etc.
- If members of the John Aniello Emerging Theatre Cohort fulfill all Eligibility Requirements listed above during the one to two year program period and are found eligible by the Adjudication Committee, they can then be recommended for adjudication by the Adjudication Committee for the upcoming or following Helen Hayes Awards cycle, depending on when the program end falls on the calendar year.
- The nominees of the John Aniello Cohort will be recognized annually at the Helen Hayes Awards.

Other Path:

- If a non-Eligible theatre wishes to become eligible for adjudication but does not feel the need or want to participate in the John Aniello Emerging Theatre Mentorship program, they will submit an New Theatre Application and eligibility will be recommended by the Adjudication Committee. These theatres must fulfill all Eligibility Requirements outlined above and submit a letter of intent to Theatre Washington at least six months prior to the beginning of a new Helen Hayes Awards adjudication cycle.
- An Emerging Theatre will provide ticket(s) for members of the Emerging Theatre Committee of the Advisory Committee for its productions.

## SELECTING JUDGES FOR THE HELEN HAYES AWARDS

Every year, open judge slots are filled through a nomination, voting, and impaneling process. Anyone interested in applying to be a judge can do so through an open application process and are considered based on the [Helen Hayes Judge criteria](#).

The candidates' bios will then be distributed for a vote to theatre practitioners and to theatre organizations to distribute to their staff and contractors. All voting participants are allowed to cast one ballot. The votes collected will be used as a guide for the Judge Selection Committee to empanel the judges into the five panels.

The Judge Selection committee will be made up of no more than 7 members who will serve staggered 2-year terms. The committee will not hold positions for people who are eligible for awards. Examples include but are not limited to those who are managing directors, artistic directors, directors, designers, actors, playwrights, and choreographers. The committee will hold positions for candidates who are not directly eligible for awards. Examples include but are not limited to those who are current and former judges, members of the stage management team, administrative staff, production managers, dramaturgs, and front of house.

The panels selected have no fewer than:

- HELEN Play Panel: 9 judges
- HELEN Musical Panel: 7 judges
- HAYES Play Panel: 9 judges
- HAYES Musical Panel: 7 judges
- NEW PLAY Panel: 7 judges

When the judges have been chosen, Theatre Washington will contact each successful candidate, to confirm that they will serve and fulfill all the requirements. Theatre Washington will thank the candidates; share the names of judges with the community by announcing the names on its website and in other media, and in a communication to the Eligible Theatres. Theatre Washington will provide transparency on the process including how the votes influenced the final decisions of the panel.

If a judge or theatre becomes aware of a conflict of interest after judges have been selected and announced, the judge or theatre's leadership should promptly notify Theatre Washington in writing and

explain why the judge in question might be unable to adjudicate fairly. If Theatre Washington agrees that there is a conflict of interest, the judge will not be assigned to evaluate that theatre's productions.

## **COMMUNICATING WITH Theatre Washington**

- Within 30 days of a production or season being announced, but no later than November 30 preceding the Awards year, each Eligible Theatre must post its productions to Theatre Washington's website, [theatreWashington.org](http://theatreWashington.org).
- For each production, an Eligible Theatre must complete a Production Page on the website, to identify a production's artist personnel and awards category.
- As early as possible, but no later than the first of the month prior to the month in which a production begins, an Eligible Theatre must provide Theatre Washington with the dates and times of at least 5 suggested performances that judges are invited to attend on the HHA Ballot & Judge Scheduling Page on the website. If a theatre has any preferences or limitations regarding ticket distribution, this is the time to let Theatre Washington know, and reasonable requests will be honored if at all possible. In addition, if a theatre misses the deadline, a production can still be judged, provided that a minimum of 10 performances will be presented after 21 days from the date when the theatre sends ticket availability to Theatre Washington.
- When an Eligible Theatre presents a new play or musical (original or newly adapted), it must complete the New Play Application 10 weeks before the production opens, so that the Adjudication Committee can review and approve the application. Within 24 hours of the show's closing, the theatre must submit the final production script for review by the New Play judges to complete their balloting.
- If a theatre does not fulfill the communication requirements outlined above, the production in question will not be eligible for Awards consideration.

## **PROVIDING TICKETS FOR THE JUDGES**

- An Eligible Theatre is expected to provide Theatre Washington with two tickets for each judge assigned to a particular eligible production. If a theatre has any preferences or limitations regarding ticket distribution, they should let Theatre Washington know when posting dates for judges to attend, and reasonable requests will be honored if at all possible.
- Judges' tickets should be for one or more performances during the early dates of a production's run. Unless it is unavoidable, perhaps because a run is short or judges are unable to attend a performance after a show has opened, judges should not attend a preview.
- Once a judge is scheduled to see a performance, per an agreement between Theatre Washington and the Eligible Theatre, neither organization may unilaterally change that agreement.

## THE ADJUDICATION PROCESS

- Each eligible production will be identified as either a *Resident Production* (A production that, as of its opening performance, has been developed, produced, and contracted for a specific Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Area theatre, including Rolling World Premieres and CoProductions as defined in the Policies & Procedures) OR a *Visiting Production* (A production that, as of its opening performance, has been developed, produced, and contracted specifically for one or more theatres outside of the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Area, prior to or following its Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Area engagement). A production for which the lead producer (as defined by the percentage of production costs funded) is a commercial entity or for which a future commercial production is scheduled and/or has been announced publicly prior to its opening performance in the Washington, D.C. area will be considered a *Visiting Production*.
- Each Play or Musical (Original or Adaptation), shall be attended both by NEW PLAY judges and by HELEN or HAYES (whichever is applicable) judges. HELEN or HAYES judges will adjudicate all production and acting elements. NEW PLAY judges will adjudicate only the script and score; scripts are due from the theatre within 24 hours of the production's closing to then be sent to the NEW PLAY judges to complete their balloting (for productions with little to no dialogue, the theatre and the playwright will be encouraged to include whatever language would be useful to a judge to evaluate their submitted script since it will likely be more of descriptive outline of the work rather a traditional dialogue script).
- For each award category, each judge will score each artist or the production itself, as applicable, on a scale of 0 – 10. All judges are specifically instructed that their scoring shall not be made in comparison to any other production or individual piece of work.
- In order for a production to be judged fairly, judges file ballots having seen the same cast and the same script as their colleagues. Theatres should notify Theatre Washington in advance of any cast changes or extensive script changes.
- If an actor is replaced for a performance, or in the production, after the opening, and the judges are unable to view the original actor in a role, that role will be eliminated from awards consideration. The judges will, however, continue to evaluate other awards categories, including Ensemble.
- If unpreventable circumstances make it impossible for artistic elements to be fully executed during a performance, the Eligible Theatre should notify Theatre Washington, which will make its best effort to ensure that a quorum of ballots (five) necessary for adjudication of a fully realized performance can be gathered. However, if a quorum cannot be achieved due to performance interruption, the show or artistic element will be ineligible for awards consideration. Addendum: In 2020, in that the coronavirus crisis caused theatres to cut short some productions, the organization's statistician recommends allowing productions with only four ballots to remain eligible and be included in the 2020 tabulations citing that the differential between each

representing 25% of the score (for 4 ballots) vs 20% (for 5 ballots) is minimal and consistency in scoring can be maintained.

- Theatre Washington will retain an independent auditing firm to (a) collect, tabulate, and analyze all judge scores to determine the statistically appropriate Awards nominees and recipients in all categories (including “second look” ballots, described below) and (b) strictly maintain the confidentiality of all ballot information.
- The scores from all judges on each of the five panels will determine the nominees in each category; the nominees shall be the five artists or productions receiving the highest total scores in each respective category, while the nominees in the Outstanding Performer categories (excluding Visiting Performer) shall be the ten performers receiving the highest total scores in each respective category. In the event of any tie among the highest total scores in any category, a tie-breaking system may be applied.
- Following the public announcement of the Awards nominees, the judges on each of the five panels will convene for a “second look” at that panel’s respective nominees. During each panel’s “second look” session, it shall discuss the merits of each nominee’s work and each judge shall then confidentially rank (from one to five) each nominee in each category in order of personal assessment of outstanding merit. Judges will rank only the work they attended. The artist (or production) with the highest point total in a category shall receive the Helen Hayes Award, with two recipients with the highest point totals in the Outstanding Performer categories (excluding Visiting Performer) receiving the Helen Hayes Award. In the event of a tie among the highest total scores in any category, a tie-breaking system may be applied.

*The policies and procedures governing The Helen Hayes Awards are annually updated and approved by the Board of Directors of Theatre Washington, based on recommendations submitted by the Advisory Committee.*

*For more about the responsibilities of the Helen Hayes Awards judges, please read the Guide for Judges, below.*

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