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Pittsburgh CLO Announces the 2023 Gene Kelly Award Winners



Pittsburgh, May 27, 2023 - An overly-enthusiastic sold-out crowd gathered at the Benedum Center as Pittsburgh CLO and The Michael J. Kara Family honored Allegheny County's finest high school performers at the 32nd Annual Pittsburgh CLO Gene Kelly Awards for Excellence in High School Musical Theater on Saturday, May 27, 2023.

Named for legendary performer and Pittsburgh native Gene Kelly, this celebration emphasizes the importance of arts education and rewards the time, energy, and dedication that local high schools devote to their musical productions each spring.

The ceremony included live ensemble performances by eight Best Musical nominees, and live performances by six Best Actor and six Best Actress nominees. Ensembles performed a five-minute selection from their nominated musicals, and Best Actor and Actress nominees performed in character-driven medley groups. Special guest presenters included local television personalities WPXI's **David Johnson**, WQED's **Nancy Polinsky**, KDKA's **Bob Pompeani**, and

Gene Kelly's widow **Patricia Ward Kelly**.

Pittsburgh CLO's Gene Kelly Awards is the nation's oldest, most comprehensive regional awards program. Patterned on the Tony Awards®, it recognizes excellence in student performances and production, including Best Student Orchestra, Scenic Design, Costume Design, Lighting Design, Ensemble, Crew/Technical, Dance Ensemble, Vocal Ensemble, Outstanding Student Artist, and Musical. Awards are given in four budget levels, ensuring that all schools, whether public and private and no matter their resources, have an equal opportunity to participate and win.

Pittsburgh CLO's Gene Kelly Awards presented over **\$50,000** in scholarships, including the following college-bound seniors:

Point Park University presented **Phoenix Thomas** and **Nick D'Angelo** with a scholarship renewable for four years, to attend Point Park University's Conservatory of Performing Arts.

Robert Morris University presented **Hayden Krupp** with a scholarship renewable for four years, to attend Robert Morris University.

Seton Hill University presented **TJ Betzner** with a scholarship to attend Seton Hill University.

Gene Kelly Cash Scholarships were awarded to three high school seniors who have applied and were accepted to a school for the performing or technical arts: **Rachael Parsons, Lucia Lazzara-Goodrich, Kaitlyn Majewski, and Miralhi Taylor-Martin.**

The Pittsburgh CLO Ambassadors awarded scholarships to three college-bound students who will be pursuing a major outside of the arts: **Elaine Gombos** and **Leah McConnell**

The Charles Gray Award for Special Achievement in Arts Education was presented to **Pittsburgh Urban Christian School**, in recognition of its arts education program. The school has made an enduring commitment to use the arts as a way to build community, develop empathy, and promote leadership skills. The school was presented with an award and a cash prize.

Now in its 20th year, The Kelly Critics program is a joint partnership between Pittsburgh CLO, Dr. Christopher Rawson, and the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. Presenting this award was Sharon Ebersson of On Stage Pittsburgh. **Kevin Hutchinson** from Baldwin High School was presented the Christopher Rawson Kelly Critics Award and a cash prize.

Over the past three months, a panel of judges have attended the performances by the following 32 Allegheny County high schools: *Avonworth High School, Baldwin High School, Bishop Canevin High School, Carlynton Junior-Senior, High School, Chartiers Valley High School, Eden Christian Academy, Elizabeth Forward High School, Gateway High School, Hampton High School, Keystone Oaks High School, McKeesport Area High School, Montour High School, Moon Area High School, North Hills High School, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart High School, Penn Hills High School, Pine-Richland High School, Pittsburgh Allderdice High School, Pittsburgh CAPA 6-12, Plum Senior High, Quaker Valley High School, Redeemer Lutheran School, Riverview Jr./Sr. High School, Serra Catholic High School, Sewickley Academy, Shady Side Academy Senior School, Springdale Jr./Sr. High School, St. Joseph High School, Thomas Jefferson High School, West Allegheny High School, Westinghouse Arts Academy, and Woodland Hills Senior High School.*

The Recipients of the 2023 Gene Kelly Awards are:

Best Scenic Design

Budget Level I

Serra Catholic High School
Little Shop of Horrors (Broadway Version)

Budget Level II

Westinghouse Arts Academy
Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat

Budget Level III

Elizabeth Forward High School
The Hunchback of Notre Dame

Budget Level IV

Hampton High School
Something Rotten!

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Best Costume Design

Budget Level I

Redeemer Lutheran School
Rodgers & Hammerstein's Cinderella (Original)

Budget Level II

Carlynton Junior-Senior High School
Disney's The Little Mermaid

Budget Level III

Elizabeth Forward High School
The Hunchback of Notre Dame

Budget Level IV

Hampton High School
Something Rotten!

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Best Lighting Design

Budget Level I

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart
Big Fish

Budget Level II

Westinghouse Arts Academy
Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat

Budget Level III

Elizabeth Forward High School
The Hunchback of Notre Dame

Budget Level IV

Hampton High School
Something Rotten!

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Best Vocal Ensemble

Budget Level I

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart
Big Fish

Budget Level II

Westinghouse Arts Academy
Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat

Budget Level III

Elizabeth Forward High School
The Hunchback of Notre Dame

Budget Level IV

Thomas Jefferson High School
Anything Goes (2022 Revision)

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Best Dance Ensemble

Budget Level I

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart High School
Big Fish

Budget Level II

Westinghouse Arts Academy
Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat

Budget Level III

Elizabeth Forward High School
The Hunchback of Notre Dame

Budget Level IV

Hampton High School
Something Rotten!

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Best Crew/Technical Execution

Budget Level I

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart High School
Big Fish

Budget Level II

Avonworth High School
Grand Hotel: The Musical

Budget Level III

Elizabeth Forward High School
The Hunchback of Notre Dame

Budget Level IV

Thomas Jefferson High School
Anything Goes (2022 Revision)

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Best Student Orchestra

Pittsburgh CAPA 6 - 12

The Prom

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Outstanding Student Artist

Alexa Custer

Assistant Music Director

Pittsburgh CAPA 6 - 12

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Best Supporting Actor

Brooks Brady

Thomas Nostradamus

Something Rotten!

Hampton High School

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Best Supporting Actress

Ashley Caldwell

Erma

Anything Goes (2022 Revision)

Thomas Jefferson High School

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Best Actor

Tyler Guinto-Brody

Quasimodo

The Hunchback of Notre Dame

Elizabeth Forward High School

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Best Actress

Kaitlyn Majewski

Natalie Haller/Ed

All Shook Up

McKeesport Area High School

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Best Musical

Budget Level I

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart High School

Budget Level II

Westinghouse Arts Academy
Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat

Budget Level III

Elizabeth Forward High School
The Hunchback of Notre Dame

Budget Level IV

Hampton High School
Something Rotten!

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In 2009, former Pittsburgh CLO Executive Producer and CEO, Van Kaplan, brought Pittsburgh CLO's Gene Kelly Awards into the national spotlight by co-founding the Jimmy Awards/National High School Musical Theatre Awards, based on its own revered program. Originally, 16 existing regional awards programs participated. Due to the growth in popularity of high school musicals, 46 programs will participate in this year's event and culminating performance on Broadway.

The winners for Best Actor and Best Actress will represent Pittsburgh CLO's Gene Kelly Awards in the Jimmy Awards®/National High School Musical Theatre Awards® in New York City on Monday, June 26. The Jimmy Awards®/National High School Musical Theatre Awards® impacts more than 140,000 students annually who participate in high school musical theater competitions sponsored by top professional theaters across the country. A Best Actress and Best Actor winner from each of these competitions is sent to New York for a week-long theater intensive of coaching and rehearsals with industry professionals in preparation for a one-night-only showcase at The Jimmy Awards® on Broadway, where a panel of judges crowns the nation's top performers. Since its inception, NHSMTA has been the catalyst for more than \$4,000,000 in educational scholarships awarded to deserving young performers. For more information, visit www.JimmyAwards.com.

The Gene Kelly Awards are presented by the Michael J. Kara Family with additional support provided by Deloitte, The Gismondi Family Foundation, Point Park University, Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield, PNC Bank, the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust, and the CLO Ambassadors.

The Charles Gray Award is made possible by the Roy A. Hunt Foundation. The Pittsburgh CLO would also like to thank The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust for the use of the Benedum Center. Deloitte Consulting, LLP is the official auditor for the Gene Kelly Awards.

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*Pittsburgh CLO has been a driving force behind the preservation, creation and promotion of live musical theater since 1946. As one of the largest regional musical theater organizations in the country, it is fortunate for the yearly support of nearly 200,000 audience members. In addition to producing fresh new productions of Broadway classics, the not-for-profit's mission is to develop new works and showcase emerging talent, and has been credited with launching the careers of numerous artists such as Billy Porter, Renée Elise Goldsberry, Rob Marshall, Kathleen Marshall, Rob Ashford, Bernadette Peters, and Shirley Jones. The organization's dedication to musical theater extends beyond its six-show Summer Season at the Benedum Center to year-round programming at the 250-seat Cabaret Theater, which saw the world premieres of *Up and Away* and *Game On* in 2018 and *The Double-Threat Trio* in 2019. Its extensive education efforts include the Pittsburgh CLO Academy of Musical Theater; a university internship program; New Horizons, and in-school programs *Gallery of Heroes* and *Creative Vision*. Other ongoing initiatives include the Construction Center for the Arts, the Gene Kelly Awards for Excellence in High School Musical Theater, and SPARK, a festival for new small-cast musicals launched in 2018. The organization also founded the National High School Musical Theatre Awards/ Jimmy Awards®. To further its mission to grow the art form, Pittsburgh CLO has been involved with 29 Broadway shows (32 Tony Awards®), and in 2014 produced the world premiere of *An American in Paris* in Paris, then on Broadway, where it won 4 Tony Awards®, and in London, Tokyo, Pittsburgh and throughout the U.S. and Europe. Pittsburgh CLO is the subject of a film starring Jeff Goldblum titled "Pittsburgh." pittsburghCLO.org.*

PITTSBURGH CLO

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