



**PRIME STAGE
THEATRE**

“Where Literature Comes to Life”

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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- **Matt Henderson will emcee 6th Annual High School Drama Awards**
 - **Prime Stage Theatre gala set for Jan. 10, 2026 at Hillman Center**
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PITTSBURGH (Dec. 18, 2025) — Pittsburgh actor/playwright **Matt Henderson** will serve as emcee for Prime Stage Theatre’s [6th Annual High School Drama Awards](#) honoring student actors and tech crews performing in non-musical plays.

The awards take place Saturday, Jan. 10, 2026 at Hillman Center for the Performing Arts, 423 Fox Chapel Road, Pittsburgh PA. Students from 12 area high schools were nominated in 16 categories. The list of the 2026 nominees is at <https://online.flippingbook.com/view/92149407/>.

The event annually draws around 400 students, teachers and families. During the evening, schools have the option to present a short scene from their nominated production.

“What is unique about these awards,” says Drama Awards director **John Dolphin**, “is that students must be in a backstage leadership role or onstage performance role. We encourage adult mentorship and assistance, but in the end, these productions are student-run.”

This year’s Best Overall Production nominees are **Avonworth High School** (*Moon Over Buffalo*), **Baldwin High School** (*The Neverland Project*), **Pine-Richland High School** (*The Election*), **Our Lady of the Sacred Heart High School** (*You Can’t Take It with You*) and **Shady Side Academy Senior School** (*Big Love*).

Emcee [Matt Henderson](#) is one of Pittsburgh’s most versatile actors whose recent credits include *Noises Off* (Pittsburgh Public Theater), *Andy Warhol’s Tomato* (Pittsburgh International Classic Theatre), *The Haunted Man’s Christmas Carol* (Cup-A-Jo Productions) and independent productions of *The Trial* and *Witch*.

“The High School Drama Awards is our way of looking to the future,” says **Dr. Wayne Brinda**, Prime Stage Theatre producing artistic director. “By encouraging these young actors and technical specialists in their early efforts, we’re building a strong foundation for Pittsburgh theatre in years to come.”

Since its founding in 1996, Prime Stage Theatre has presented over 110 plays that introduce student and family audiences to classic and contemporary works of world literature.

The theatre's current 2025-26 Season of World Premieres by Pittsburgh Playwrights includes *Mr. Edgar A. Poe Presents: Tales of Mystery, Horror & Imagination* by Lawrence C. Connolly; *Freedom House: Giving Life a Second Chance* by L.E. McCullough; and *Speak* by Tammy Ryan.

6th Annual High School Drama Awards sponsors are King Family Giving Fund and SLB Radio; more information is at <https://primestage.com/events/drama-awards/>.

WHAT: Prime Stage Theatre 6th Annual High School Drama Awards

WHEN: Saturday, Jan. 10, 2026, 7:00 p.m.

WHERE: Hillman Center for the Performing Arts, 423 Fox Chapel Rd. Pittsburgh PA 15238

MORE INFO: <https://primestage.com/events/drama-awards/>

Award Categories

- Best Actor
- Best Actress
- Best Supporting Actor
- Best Supporting Actress
- Best Student Director
- Best Student Stage Manager
- Best Student Scenic Design and/or Fabrication
- Best Student Lighting Design and/or Operation
- Best Student Prop Design and/or Fabrication
- Best Student Sound Design and/or Operation
- Best Student Costume Design and/or Fabrication
- Best Student Makeup Design and/or Application
- Best Student Use of Creative Special Effects
- Best Student Onstage Run Crew
- Best Student Program/Post Design and/or Fabrication
- Best Overall Production

Participating Schools

- Avonworth High School
- Baldwin High School
- Chartiers Valley High School
- Deer Lakes High School
- Fox Chapel High School
- Hampton High School
- Our Lady of the Sacred Heart High School
- Pine-Richland High School
- Quaker Valley High School
- Shady Side Academy Senior School

- Springdale Junior/Senior High School
 - Thomas Jefferson High School
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For more information about the Drama Awards — please contact Connie Brinda, Prime Stage Theatre General Manager at cbrinda@primestage.com or at (724) 773-0700.

Prime Stage Theatre Upcoming Events

* **Jan. 23-Feb. 1, 2026 – *Freedom House: Giving Life a Second Chance***
By L.E. McCullough; directed by Scott Calhoon

Historical playwright L.E. McCullough dramatizes the 1967 creation of Freedom House Ambulance Service, America's first mobile emergency medical unit staffed by professionally-trained paramedics from Pittsburgh's Hill District.

* **Monday, Jan. 26, 2026, 7:30 p.m.**
Pittsburgh Jazz Legacy: A Concert Celebrating the Spirit of Freedom House

Marty Ashby of MCG Jazz hosts an unforgettable evening of live jazz on the stunning set of *Freedom House: Giving Life a Second Chance*. Featuring live performance by living legends Roger Humphries (drums), Dwayne Dolphin (bass), Max Leake (piano) and Mark Jackovic (saxophone), this concert showcases the music of historic Pittsburgh jazz greats Ahmad Jamal, Stanley Turrentine and Billy Strayhorn and includes video clips and images from the MCG Jazz PBS documentary on Pittsburgh Jazz. Tickets: <https://ci.ovationtix.com/36406/performance/11736234>

* **May 1-10, 2026 – *Speak***
By Tammy Ryan; directed by Dana Hardy Bingham

Resident New Dramatists playwright Tammy Ryan brings to the stage Laurie Halse Anderson's acclaimed young adult novel *Speak*, the contemporary story of a teenage girl who uses art to find her voice and redefine her identity after the trauma of rape.

6th Annual Prime Stage High School Drama Awards Nominees

All Nominees Are Listed Alphabetically by School

Best Actor

Paxon Masters

George Hay in *Moon Over Buffalo*

Avonworth High School

Robert Svenson
Stage Manager in *Our Town*
Fox Chapel Area High School

Salvador Lazano
Martin Vanderhof in *You Can't Take It with You*
Our Lady of the Sacred Heart High School

Conor Barcaskey
Mark Davenport in *The Election*
Pine-Richland High School

Noah Thompson-Jones
Constantine in *Big Love*
Shady Side Academy Senior School

Best Actress

Ella Ging
Charlotte Hay in *Moon Over Buffalo*
Avonworth High School

Emma Underwood
Wendy Darling in *The Neverland Project*
Baldwin High School

Grace Gouwens
Emily Webb in *Our Town*
Fox Chapel Area High School

Marena Miller
Penelope Sycamore in *You Can't Take It with You*
Our Lady of the Sacred Heart High School

Elise Duckworth
Christy Martin in *The Election*
Pine-Richland High School

Best Supporting Actor

Cameron Del Grosso
Howard in *Moon Over Buffalo*
Avonworth High School

Solomon Edwards
Professor Willard in *Our Town*
Fox Chapel Area High School

Isaac Jones
Boris Kolenkov in *You Can't Take It with You*
Our Lady of the Sacred Heart High School

Brendan Plowey
Gary McMaster in *The Election*
Pine-Richland High School

David Wang
Nikos in *Big Love*
Shady Side Academy Senior School

Best Supporting Actress

Adalyn Burgoyne
Rosalind Hay in *Moon Over Buffalo*
Avonworth High School

Kelly Champion
Hook in *The Neverland Project*
Baldwin High School

Faye Muller
Mrs. Gibbs in *Our Town*
Fox Chapel Area High School

Mira Cupps
“Sweet Pea” Meadowbrook in *Death By Chocolate*
Hampton High School

Eva Friedlander
Eleanor in *Big Love*
Shady Side Academy Senior School

Best Student Director

Laviny Lima, Ella Machen & Millie McAdams
Moon Over Buffalo
Avonworth High School

Abby Hoin & Brooke Manning
The Neverland Project
Baldwin High School

Marin Reinhardt
You Can't Take It with You
Our Lady of the Sacred Heart High School

Emma Leghorn
The Great Gatsby
Quaker Valley High School

Natalya Turner
Those Who Remain Turn the Pages
Thomas Jefferson High School

Best Student Stage Manager

Laviny Lima, Ella Machen & Millie McAdams
Moon Over Buffalo
Avonworth High School

Theo Kistler & Mia Russell
The Play That Goes Wrong
Chartiers Valley High School

Lily Cannon
Our Town
Fox Chapel Area High School

Abigail Robinson
You Can't Take It with You
Our Lady of the Sacred Heart High School

Alli Andresky, Vincenzo Gaeta & Anjana Palathunkal
The Election
Pine-Richland High School

Best Student Scenic Design and/or Fabrication

Abby Horn
The Neverland Project
Baldwin High School

Tyler Debski
The Play That Goes Wrong
Chartiers Valley High School

Jude Leddy
You Can't Take It with You
Our Lady of the Sacred Heart High School

Alexander Bi, Sam Davidheiser & Makayla Miller
Big Love
Shady Side Academy Senior School

Raine Cerrie, Alexis Chase, Caleb Fancella & Sedona Hodill
The Witch's Princess
Springdale Jr./Sr.High School

Best Student Lighting Design and/or Operation

Shayne Parks
Elephant Man
Deer Lakes High School
Jacque Day
You Can't Take It with You
Our Lady of the Sacred Heart High School

Zoe Furrow
The Election
Pine-Richland High School

Sam Davidheiser
Big Love
Shady Side Academy Senior School

Aaron Pennell
Those Who Remain Turn The Pages
Thomas Jefferson High School

Best Student Sound Design and/or Operation

Frankie Rovitto & Penny Scheuring
Moon Over Buffalo
Avonworth High School

Erin Stein & Elias Zeiner
Our Town
Fox Chapel Area High School

Liana DeLisio
The Election
Pine-Richland High School

Alexander Hoe & Bres Plesh Stock-Bratina
Big Love
Shady Side Academy Senior School

Andy Horvath
Those Who Remain Turn the Pages
Thomas Jefferson High School

Best Student Costume Design and/or Fabrication

Brooke Manning
The Neverland Project
Baldwin High School

Evy Dillon
Death By Chocolate
Hampton High School

Anna Luiza Bacchi, Evelyn Bertiaux & Adele Hydzik
The Great Gatsby
Quaker Valley High School

Lillian McCall
The Witch's Princess
Springdale Jr./Sr. High School

Liberty Neeley
Those Who Remain Turn the Pages
Thomas Jefferson High School

Best Student Makeup Design and/or Application

Ash Campbell
The Neverland Project
Baldwin High School

Abby Haas & Molly Krajcovic
Our Town
Fox Chapel Area High School

Evelyn Bertiaux & Adele Hydzik
The Great Gatsby
Quaker Valley High School

Hayden Folmer, Isabella Iannuzzi & Natahlia Schreckengost
The Witch's Princess
Springdale Jr./Sr. High School

Gracie Pennell
Those Who Remain Turn the Pages
Thomas Jefferson High School

Best Student Prop Design and/or Fabrication

Emma Underwood
The Neverland Project
Baldwin High School

Cassidy Davis
The Play That Goes Wrong
Chartiers Valley High School

Rachel Brito & Kahler Salva
The Election
Pine-Richland High School
Gabe Bowers, Delaney Haas & Sedona Hodill
The Witch's Princess
Springdale Jr./Sr. High School

Danny Flatley
Those Who Remain Turn the Pages
Thomas Jefferson High School

Best Student Use Of Creative Technical Effects

Adam Drischler
The Neverland Project
Baldwin High School

Tyler Debski
The Play That Goes Wrong
Chartiers Valley High School

Balan Mundok & Dylan Thompson
The Witch's Princess
Springdale Jr./Sr. High School

Best Student Onstage Run Crew

TEAM
The Play That Goes Wrong
Chartiers Valley High School

TEAM
Our Town
Fox Chapel Area High School

Team
The Election
Pine-Richland High School

TEAM
Big Love
Shady Side Academy Senior School

TEAM

Those Who Remain Turn the Pages
Thomas Jefferson High School

Best Student Program/Poster Design and/or Fabrication

Abby Horn, Josie Lang & Mary-Kate Stock
The Neverland Project
Baldwin High School
Shayne Parks
Elephant Man
Deer Lakes High School

Bridget Fogle, Sophia Muoio & Zoe Vesci
You Can't Take It with You
Our Lady of the Sacred Heart High School

Juliette Pala
The Election
Pine-Richland High School

Anna Luiza Bacchi
The Great Gatsby
Quaker Valley High School

Best Overall Production

Avonworth High School
Moon Over Buffalo

Baldwin High School
The Neverland Project

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart High School
You Can't Take It with You

Pine-Richland High School
The Election

Shady Side Academy Senior School
Big Love

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