The Show Director

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Getting Started

As your school's Show Director, you are responsible for making sure your school follows the rules for your Cappies Show.

Please read (and, when requested respond to) Cappies emails.

Show Director Checklist

As you plan a Cappies Show, you may wish to keep handy the two-page "Show Director Checklist." A copy is provided in this Mentor Binder. This is especially helpful when you are doing this for the first time.

Selecting and Scheduling a Cappies Show

Depending on your Cappies program, your school will be allowed to have either one Cappies show (usually the case in large programs), or two Cappies shows (in smaller programs).

Show Selection

The show you select is up to you, within the limits set by the rules and the calendar set by your program. If your school does two major shows per year, and are in a program that allows only one of them to be a Cappies show, you will have to choose between them. Some schools select the major show of the year. Others select the show that includes the most students.

The Cappies program gives equal attention to musicals and non-musical plays. If you do a play and a musical each year, you may wish to alternate your selections from one year to the next, to have your Cappies show be a play one year and a musical the next year.

In your school's application, you proposed a date and time for your Cappies show, and gave some alternative dates and times. Each program has outer calendar bounds for Cappies show dates, and each program has rules about the number of Cappies shows that can occur in the same time slot.

Saturday matinees and evenings are the best times for Cappies shows. Friday evenings are good also, but sometimes require critics to drive through heavy rush-hour traffic. Other weekday evenings may fall on school nights, when critics have other homework. Sunday matinee shows require critics to write reviews very quickly, and mentors to edit them late that same night.

If your school is distant from many other schools, or if transportation is a problem for any other reason, the best time slot for your Cappies show may be a Saturday matinee.

Some Show Directors prefer to schedule Cappies shows for nights when small (non-sellout) audiences are expected, to help fill otherwise empty seats. Others prefer to have Cappies shows on nights when they expect large, enthusiastic audiences, whose response to the show they hope will energize the cast and, perhaps, impress the critics. Some prefer opening night, while others prefer to wait a show or two to enable the cast and crew to become more comfortable with the show.

If you are planning to run a show over two weekends, it works best to schedule the Cappies show for the first weekend, to enable you to "ride the reviews" and generate extra audience -- and excitement -- during the second weekend of shows.

If another school in your program has a Cappies show the same as the one you wish to select (e.g., if you both are doing *West Side Story*), that is all right, but the critics from the two schools will not be allowed to review each others' shows

Show Eligibility

Your Cappies show must be at least 75 minutes long, of one scripted show -- or two scripted shows with a similar theme. (No festival of one-acts, please.) If the show you're planning to do is quite lengthy, you may need to set an early start time. Under the rules, if a show has final bows that start after 10:30 PM, it can be disqualified from some awards. (The goal is to enable student critics to have a good post-show discussion and return home by midnight.) It helps to have an intermission of 15 minutes or more, to enable the critics to have a good mid-show discussion, but the rules allow exceptions to this.

The performing cast must be at least half drawn from students in grade 9 through 12. There can be younger or older cast members in the show, or helping with the orchestra or tech aspects, but this will affect qualification for awards.

Be sure you have secured the rights to produce your show. Cappies may request verification of publisher permission for any changes in a production which might otherwise violate the publisher's contract.

If you would like to have your Cappies show reviewed but not considered for awards, the rules allow that. If you would like your school to have a critics team but no Cappies show, the rules allow that too.

Eligibility for Award Categories

The Cappies have 33 award categories that are determined by the votes of the critics. Each of these categories has eligibility rules, along with guidelines for the critics to use when watching and scoring shows. Please read these pages carefully. If you wish, you are welcome to share them with your cast and crew, so they will know what critics are being encouraged to observe or hear.

Before starting work on your Cappies show, please consult the Award Category Guide. Note, for example, that if an adult sings a full song (or is otherwise in a supporting role), the show cannot be considered in the "musical" (or "play") categories.

Pay particular attention to the eligibility rules for non-performing categories, like Costumes, Props & Effects, Costumes, Choreography, Orchestra, and Creativity. If you wish to qualify your students for award consideration in those categories, you must provide information prior to the show. For your students to be eligible for the tech award categories, it's important to take care not to have too much adult participation.

Please read carefully, and complete, the Award Category Eligibility form. You must give this form to the Editor Mentor not later than 30 minutes prior to curtain. On this form, note that any item marked with an asterisk (***) must be answered, prior to a show, for a student who does that work to be considered for award eligibility in that category. This is required for categories (i.e., Costumes, Props & Effects, Orchestra, Choreography, Creativity, Dancer) where it is helpful, and sometimes essential, for critics to know what to consider -- and, especially -- what is and is not the work of students -- as they watch and listen to a show. If that information is provided after that, the Mentors will decide how necessary it was for critics to have it in advance, and whether the show should be declared eligible or ineligible in that category.

For each non-performing category that involves a group of more than four persons (like an orchestra), please provide a name for the group. You can list no more than four individual names in any one category.

If you wish, you may share the Award Criteria Guide with your cast and crew. That would enable them to see what the critics are being asked to keep in mind, look and listen for, and consider when scoring.

In preparing for a Cappies show, and in the show itself, a cast and crew can feel a (gentle) taste of what it feels like to prepare and perform a critically-reviewed show in a professional theater environment. Some directors use the prospect of Cappies reviews as a way of encouraging performers and tech workers to take direction and rehearse seriously -- and to focus on aspects of their work that might be improved, as the date of the Cappies show approaches.

Show Updates and Schedule Changes

If your school application did not list the name of a Cappies show, please alert program officials as soon as you know its name. If at any point you change the Cappies show you'll be doing, that's all right, but you need to alert program officials right away about that. If you need to change the show date or time (e.g., to change a matinee to an evening performance), you'll need advance approval from program officials. Usually, that can be arranged.

If, for any reason, including weather, your Cappies show is canceled -- or if you learn that there is a substantial risk that your Cappies show may be canceled -- you must inform the Program Director immediately

Show Publicity

Your Program Director may ask you and your students to participate in pre-show publicity, or to provide JPG photos to accompany published reviews. The Program Director may also ask your school to assist in regional publicity campaigns, for the Cappies or high school theater in general. If so, please work with your school's Show Director (and, perhaps, critics) in providing what the Program Director may request.

Presenting a Cappies Show

Please plan ahead for your Cappies show, and make sure you know what is expected. Each participating school is asked to designate a parent Booster, and that person can help -- as can your school's critics team.

A Cappies Show

If you and your students (and Boosters) wish, you can treat your Cappies show as a major event, with decorations, hallway entertainment, alumni receptions, the presence of administrators and faculty -- or you can treat it as just another show, except with Cappies critics present.

Don't forget to give your completed Award Category Eligibility form to the Editor Mentor, not later than 30 minutes before curtain.
If you "double cast" -- and intend to do a show with different casts on different nights -- you need to decide which cast will perform the Cappies show. You can do this any way you want -- by drawing straws, going with seniors, using your strongest cast, or some other criterion, but no school's show will be reviewed, or considered for awards, more than once.
If you intend any post-show recognitions, please wait to start that until after the critics have left the theater. (You may want to make an announcement about that.) The critics may not take part in any post-show audience discussion of the Cappies show.
If you plan any other special recognitions, whether at the start of the show or before intermission, please excuse the critics from those, as well. (If possible, you may wish to schedule those for a performance other than the Cappies show.)

Cappies Room

Please provide a "Cappies room" for critics and mentors. It can be a school room, chorus room, cafeteria, or something like that. You'll need to make that room available 45 minutes before curtain and up to 45 minutes after final bows. It probably won't take that long, but it might. Make sure your school's security force realizes this.

In the Cappies room, set the room up in a way that best promotes discussion between the critics, in a circle or all around one big table, depending on the number of critics expected.

Your school will need to provide free refreshments in the Cappies room -- something to drink, perhaps some chips and cookies, something comparable to what the audience can buy at intermission. Your Booster can coordinate this, but please make sure it is done. If your Boosters want to provide more than the minimum, that's fine, and (especially on week nights) it's often appreciated, but it's really not necessary -- and, over the years, no one has ever felt that the quality of the food influences critics, one way or the other.

Whoever handles the food needs to know that they can't be in the room during intermission and after the show, when the critics are discussing anything. Those conversations are highly confidential, to ensure that nobody's feelings will be hurt. This means that parents will have to wait until the critics are finished before they can start cleaning up. (Critics are encouraged to help clean up the Cappies room.)

If more than 20 critics are on the attendance list, and if you have it available, please try to provide a simple microphone and speaker for the mentors to use. This aids greatly in discussions.

You'll need to provide at least one student usher, to stand outside the door of the Cappies room and escort the mentors and critics to their seats right before the show starts, and again after intermission. Please make sure your stage manager doesn't start the show, or resume after intermission, until you know that critics and mentors have been seated. It works well if they're the last ones seated, and then you start the show.

While the critics are in the Cappies room, the usher should stay by the door, in case there are any questions. It helps if the usher knows who's who on the cast. You, as Show Director, should be reachable, in case the mentors have any questions.

Please arrange for the Cappies room to be secure, and locked, during the performance. If this is not possible, please alert the mentors, so they can advise critics to keep all valuables with them at all times.

Cappies Tickets

Under the rules, your school is required to provide complimentary tickets to critics and mentors. You are encouraged, but not required, to provide excellent seats -- preferably center section, about rows five to seven. Do not seat critics in the first row or two -- that can distract your performers -- but make sure they are where they can see and hear well (even if sound and light problems arise), appreciate the intensity of the performances, and feel the energy of the audience response. At a musical, try not to seat critics too close to the orchestra, to make sure they can hear the vocalists well.
If you seat the critics elsewhere -- on the sides, in the back, or in a balcony -- you run the risk that they may not see and hear well enough to give full credit to all aspects of the show.

Please rope off wherever the critics are going to sit, and make sure your ushers enforce this until the critics arrive. It can be quite awkward when critics enter the theater, right before curtain, and do not have enough seats, or have to sit around others in their seating area. Unless you have a full house and need every seat, it's a good idea not to have parents of students at your school, or anybody else, sitting next to critics. The critics like to write down notes during shows, and they don't like to do it when somebody from the school is sitting next to them, peering onto what they may be writing.

The number of critics who attend your show will depend on the size of your program, the week of your show, and other factors. In small programs, during busy periods, the number may be ten or fewer. In large programs, especially at year end and during weeks when not many schools have shows, the number of critics could swell to more than fifty.

It's true that these tickets are, in one sense, lost revenue to your school's theater program -- especially if the show is a sellout. Over time, however, the Cappies will sell far more seats than you're being asked to provide. Many critics also bring parents and other friends (often to help with driving), and they must purchase tickets.

Two weeks, one week, and two days before the show, you'll get an email telling you how many tickets are being requested. The final count is usually (but not always) slightly smaller than the final ticket count. Please note that you will be asked to provide two tickets for Mentors (in unusual cases, three tickets for mentors) and two for Cappies officials. The officials' tickets may or may not be used.

Some Show Directors like to have as many critics attend their show as possible. Others would rather limit the number. You may do so, within limits -- and those limits vary with each Cappies program. In no case may you request a critic limit of less than 30. (For most programs, the minimum limit will be 50.) If you think you might want to limit critic attendance, you should do so as soon as possible.

You can request that a limit be placed at the start of the year, or at any time during the year -- but you may not ask that critics be removed from your show's attendance list. If you wait until 60 critics have signed up for your show to request a limit, the limit cannot be set any lower than 60.
When you consider the number of free tickets you are providing for your critics, please remember that other schools' Show Directors are providing free tickets to critics from your school.

Under no circumstances can you fail to provide tickets to all critics who are present and who were on the final (48-hour) attendance list, and to the designated mentors and program officials. Failure to do so can result in sanctions for your show, including possible disqualification from awards. If you are oversold, you will have to ask others to relinquish their seats.

You need hold tickets for critics only until five minutes prior to curtain. If you have a sellout, you can sell any tickets set aside for any critic who arrives later than five minutes before curtain.
If you anticipate that providing sufficient Cappies tickets could be a problem, you might think about adding an additional show, or scheduling a special critics' performance, perhaps a dress rehearsal. Those might not be ideal performances to schedule as your Cappies show, but this is allowable under the rules.

Critics Materials

You'll need to provide show programs to all mentors and critics. You can give them any other materials you'd like, about anything you think they should know about your show.

Make sure your show program spells all student and character names accurately -- and spells them the same, every time they appear. Please proofread carefully, to prevent easily avoidable misspellings of names in published reviews. It helps critics reviewing your show if you post a board displaying the photographs and names of cast members. Your school's Booster and critics can help with these items.

If you wish, you can provide all critics with a copy of your Award Category Eligibility form. This is not required, but it is helpful.

You may not give critics any guidance on who to pick for the performing categories. That is for them to decide on their own.

If you wish, you may speak to the critics before the show. During and after the show, you can only speak to them if you're invited, to answer specific questions they might have.

Critics Decorum and Safety

Please remind your cast and crew that, before or after the show, they may not socialize with any critic. Nor may they do so -- including phoning or emailing -- until the critic has submitted a review (or the final deadline has passed). Afterwards, they may have social contacts with a critic who may be a friend, but should never discuss anything said in the critics' discussion, including Critics' Choices and scores. Cast and crew must not inquire about Critics' Choices, which will be posted only after all Critics have voted for Cappie nominations and awards.

Critics may not openly discuss any aspect of the performance within earshot of any member of the audience. If you notice this occurring, please alert s mentor. And, of course, please do not allow any parent to ask any critic for his or her opinion of the show.

The safety of critics is of paramount concern. No critics may be left alone, late at night, at an unfamiliar school. Under the rules, one mentor is required to remain at a performing school until the last critic has left for home. If you see a critic left alone, waiting for a ride, with no mentor in sight, please remain with that critic until someone has arrived with a ride home.

Please remind your Booster to help you prevent flash photos during a Cappies Show, which can sometimes be a problem. You might want to make a pre-show announcement, and usher enforcement of the rule if anyone takes a flash photo. This is not a Cappies rule -- just a strong suggestion. It is well-known to any theater director that flash photos can be very distracting to performers, causing them to break concentration and keeping them from doing their best onstage. Flashes can also interfere with the concentration of (and be annoying to) the audience -- and critics. Video cameras can also distract performers and critics, and you might consider only allowing them in locations where they do not affect the performers' concentration and the audience's view of the show.

Cappies Reviews

Program officials will forward reviews of your Cappies show directly to you, usually on the Sunday night or Monday after your show.

All critics who attend a show are required to submit a review. In most Cappies programs, somewhere between 90% and 95% of all critics who attend a show do submit a review before the final deadline (the Wednesday following a show -- three days after the original deadline, which is Sunday).

It can be quite an exciting moment when the Cappies reviews arrive. Usually, it is also quite a happy moment for the cast and crew. Reading the reviews can also be a good learning experience for them, and a useful feedback mechanism for you, as the Show Director.

Cappies reviews are, on the whole, warmer than reviews of professional shows, and that is as it should be. Nearly always, there are many positive mentions of students. However, these are real reviews, and critics are told not write "rave" reviews only for rave-worthy shows. They are encouraged to make criticisms, and they usually do. Those criticisms must follow the rules, the key aspects of which are (1) no criticisms by name (or character name), and (2) no sarcasm or negative tone.

Also, critics are not allowed to praise or criticize adult theater directors, by name or by implication. They may not praise or criticize other adult by name. They may not criticize any work done by students younger than 9th grade. They are encouraged to mention an adult playwright or composer, but their task is not to critique the work, but rather a school's production of that work.

To learn more about what is and is not allowable in Cappies reviews, you can see the rules -- or look through the critics' training materials, which offer numerous examples.

You should expect that some student work will receive critical comments, some students will be praised more than others, and some students may be disappointed in not being praised or mentioned.

The spirit with which the reviews are received by a cast and crew can depend on how you present the reviews to them. Encourage them to take whatever useful things they can from the reviews, while keeping in mind that each review is one person's opinion, nothing more nor less.

By agreeing to host a Cappies show that will be reviewed, you are agreeing to post the reviews for your cast and crew to read, subject to this exception: You may choose to withhold a review for any reason -- if, for example, you consider a comment to be blatantly unfair, or if you know a particular review will be received very poorly by one or more students -- but you can do so for no more than one to three reviews. (See the rules.) Most Show Directors prefer to let their critics see all the reviews, regardless what they say.

You may, if you wish, share Cappies reviews with parents and others, but you are not required to do so. You may wish to select a few of them for that purpose.

You are welcome to use Cappies reviews for promotional purposes. You may quote any portion of any Cappies review, as long as you credit it to the critic and the Cappies.

The mentors will select the reviews to be published. In some programs, the reviews submitted to major newspapers will not be forwarded to the performing schools, because those reviews are likely to be edited further.

When selecting reviews for publication, mentors know they are determining which reviews will be "of record," and shared with the public. They are encouraged to give equal weight to their accuracy and the quality of the writing. Therefore, they have the responsibility of determining which reviews are the best-written descriptions of what did in fact happen on stage. It often happens that a mentor is a friend or professional colleague of the Show Director whose Cappies show is being reviewed. One of the reasons two mentors are scheduled for each show is to provide two professional judgments about which reviews should be published.

It is important, for many reasons, for Show Directors not to express any objection to the selections after they are published, to a cast or crew or anyone else.

It is against the rules for a Show Director, or any other teacher, parent, or student from the performing school, to discuss any review (published or not) with a critic

Critics' Choices

A Critics' Choice is not a nomination, but rather a decision to place a candidate on the year-end award ballot.

To be a Critics' Choice, a student (or group) must be eligible in an award category. For information about that, or to see what other guidelines the critics are following in selecting Critics' Choices, please see the Award Category Guide.

After a Cappies show, during their post-show discussion, the mentors determine the award categories for which a show qualifies. In the non-performing categories, they base this on information provided by the Show Director. The critics then determine who their "Critics' Choices" are for each award category for which the show qualifies. They do this by consensus, or if necessary by vote.

Between 7 and 10 days prior to award voting, the Program Director will send you an email, listing the Critics' Choices for that year's Cappies show (or shows). This is to confirm name spellings and correct obvious errors *only*. You will be asked to email any corrections.

Participating in Awards

Award Voting

If your Cappies program includes awards, the critics will gather to vote online for "Cappie" nominations and awards, after the final shows have been reviewed. To qualify as an award voter, a critic must have submitted reviews for a minimum number of shows. That minimum can be between 3 and 5 reviews, depending on the program.

Also, under the rules, each school's critics team must meet a minimum standard to qualify its school's own Cappies show for awards. That standard may vary, for each Cappies program. Your Program Director will advise you what it is. It will be the responsibility of your school's Cappies Advisor, and Lead Critic, to make sure the team meets that minimum standard -- but it will be the show you direct that is at risk of being disqualified if they do not, so you may wish to keep track of their performance, as well.

The critics vote through specially designed computer software, through which they give scores and points to individual candidates. No critic sees all shows (or anything close to that), of course, and the voting system has been designed to account for that.

The Cappies voting system has also been constructed to be totally evenhanded to all schools, regardless of the size of their own critics team or the number of critics who attended their own Cappies show, to identify (and, hence, discourage) "gaming" or strategic voting by individual critics or teams, and to provide Cappies officials with clear and fully auditable results.

The critics vote through a combination of evaluation scores, nomination and award points, and tie-breaks. A complete description of the Cappies voting system is in the rules, and a summary can be read on the Cappies web site, on the "Rules & Forms" page.

Award Categories

The non-performing categories include marketing and publicity, sound, lighting, make-up, costumes, sets, props, special effects and/or technology, stage management and crew, choreography, orchestra, and creativity (which includes student directing, composing, playwriting, lyric-writing, and musicianship).

The performing categories include ensemble in a play, ensemble in a musical, featured actor and actress, male and female dancer, male and female vocalist -- and comic, supporting, and lead actors and actresses for plays and musicals.

A student may only be nominated once (per show) in the non-performing categories, and once in the performing categories. If a program allows two shows per school, a student may be nominated once for each show in the non-performing categories, and once in the performing categories. (Critic awards are treated separately.)

There are four overall school awards: song, play, and musical.

Depending on the Cappies program, there can be from three to five critics' awards, including critics team, and individual critic awards determined by gender or year in school.

Commendations

As Show Director, you may, if you wish, name up to four students as Cappie Commendees. Their recognition (and award items) will depend on your Cappies program. Your Program Director will advise you about this. You should wait to name your Commendees until after nominations are announced. You are encouraged, but not required, to select Commendees who are not nominees.

You have wide latitude to select Commendees -- or not to select them. They must be students in grade 9 to 12, who in your judgment have made a significant contribution to your school's theater program. They might be performers in a non-Cappies show, performers or tech workers in your Cappies show whom you feel the critics may not have sufficiently recognized, students who did work (designing programs and posters, doing publicity, or handling box office) that fits within no award category, or any other student you may wish to recognize.

The Program Director will set a deadline for you to name Commendees. Please do not miss that deadline.

Your Program Director may ask someone from your school to pick up awards items for your Nominees and Commendees. You may wish to ask for assistance you're your school's Booster with this task.

Nominations and Awards

Nominations are announced within one to two days after the voting. Most Cappies programs post the nominations online. Awards are announced at the Cappies Gala.

When you present your Cappies show, when nominations and awards are announced, and again at the Gala when awards are presented, you and your students should realize that, per the cliché, the chips will fall where they may. Your school may receive several nominations, or not many. (In large programs, some schools receive no nominations.) At a Gala, your students may win the awards for which they're nominated, or not. If they do, kudos to everybody. If not, hooray for whoever won, and it's on to summer (and next year).

Yes, it can be exciting, and feel rewarding, to your students (and to you) when your show receives multiple nominations and wins awards -- but please do your best to encourage your students not to let it feel like a major disappointment if your show is not recognized as much as you expected.

As with reviews, a Show Director can greatly influence the attitude students take toward nominations and awards. Suggest that they treat it as a learning experience. Remind them that the competition was very tough, which is almost always the case. Reassure them that receiving nominations and awards (or not receiving them) doesn't make a show any better (or worse) than it was when the curtain came down.

No voting system is perfect, of course -- and any outcome merely reflects the viewpoint of the judges, not any absolute truth -- but great care is taken by program officials to make sure Cappies voting meets very high standards of fairness and integrity. If your students are disappointed in the results, it is important that you, as the Show Director, not give the students any reason to believe that the voting was in any way unfair or illegitimate.

If any person wishes to appeal any voting outcome, he or she may do so by contacting your Program Director. This will result in a careful audit of the results by the Steering Committee, with the outcome of that audit reviewed by the Cappies Governing Board. The decision of the Governing Board will be final. Under the rules, no one -- including a person appealing a voting outcome -- may see the raw voting data.

If you have concerns about letting your show be evaluated for awards by student critics trained by the Cappies, through a voting system managed by the Cappies, then the best plan is not to submit your show for awards evaluation.

Attending a Cappies Gala

If your program has awards, the year will end with an awards ceremony, which may or may not be identified as a Cappies Gala.

A program may choose to distribute awards without a Gala, at a simple ceremony. Or a program may choose to present a Cappies Gala is a formal Tonys-style event that combines awards with select student performances. Some Cappies Galas are at high schools, and others are at high-profile theater venues.

Prior to a Cappies Gala, your Program Director may schedule photo sessions for Nominees, for whom the Cappies may not have email addresses or phone numbers. If so, please assist with this, to make sure your students can join in any pre-Gala publicity.

If your program is planning a Cappies Gala, your Program Director may invite students from your school to perform in it. In small programs, all schools may be invited to perform a song or sketch from a Cappies show. In large programs, the invitation may only go to those nominated in the Song, Play, and Musical categories.

If you are invited to perform at a Cappies Gala, the Gala Director will contact you in a timely manner about rehearsals, scores, and other issues. The timetable may be quite short, so please respond to a Gala Director's inquiries in a very timely manner.

Depending on your Cappies program, the Program Director may issue a request for students who may wish to audition for the select Gala student cast of vocalists, dancers, and musicians. Please assist the Program Director in spreading word to your students about any such opportunities.

Prior to a Cappies Gala, tickets will be made available for your school. The number of available tickets, per school, will depend on the size of your Cappies program and the size of the Gala venue. As the Show Director, you will be in charge of ticket purchases, pick-ups, and distributions, but you may wish to ask your school's Cappies Advisor (and Booster) to help with this.

Understandably, the size of each school's Gala ticket request may depend to some degree on the number of nominations that school has received and on any invitation for students from that school to perform at the Gala. Here again, a Show Director can greatly influence student decisions about whether to attend a Cappies Gala, even if some disappointment is felt about a school's list of nominations.

We encourage teachers and students from all participating schools to attend the Gala, cheer for students from all schools, and celebrate all the fine shows performed through the year.

No matter where the awards go, students at your school will have a wonderful time at the Cappies Gala. And then it's on to next year!

Letter From A Show Director

> *"So, what's the point?"*
>
> *A colleague who was considering joining the Cappies program asked me that question. He wanted to know if it was all about who gets the Best Play or Best Musical trophy. Or who gets bragging rights over what school for the most nominations or awards. The politically correct answer: No, of course not. The truth: Some people (students and teachers alike) tended to think that way during the course of the first year. My view: It's nice to get that kind of attention (including from school administrators). It's nice that someone cares. But Cappies is about more than the trophies and glamour of the Gala night.*
>
> *What's the point? Recognition for the students, for the local programs, and for theatrical education in general. If the best way to get this is to imitate the second most watched television show annually (the Oscars) and create an interest for people to root for a particular program as well as come to more productions, then I'll go for that. Awards, "best this and that," golden trinkets – for better or for worse, this is what raises the interest of our society. So we do that, and the result? Recognition for this year and sold-out shows for next year. The danger is when someone actually makes the mistake of attributing quality based on the number of trinkets won. If you are able to eliminate that thinking among your students and communities, then you have what the Cappies Gala should be: a celebration of the arts rather than a competition for gold-plated metal.*

The point should be about giving high school students more journalistic experience and arts training than most so-called critics get before their 30s. The point should be everyone in the community recognizing the hard work and dedication put forth by the theater arts students of a particular high school. Work during the entire 180-day season as opposed to the 60- or 75-day season of most sports. The point should be recognition for a particular school's continual dedication to excellence in Theater Arts over several years. The point should be to get people in those seats that are perennially unfilled, so that the students feel their endeavors are worthwhile. The point should be to foster the growth of future actors, designers, directors, composers, and writers to interpret our society and an audience to support them.

The point is that the Cappies is the best idea to put that deserving spotlight on high school theater arts that I have ever experienced. It works – when you go about it with the correct philosophy.

I hope the Cappies brings your school's theater program all the recognition it richly deserves. I hope some administrators who always attend every sporting event tell you they actually read the review in the paper and are kicking themselves for not seeing your show. I hope your next show sells through the roof. I hope your kids are proud of who they are and what they can do. Because that is the point.

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Cappies of the National Capital Area