



The Philadelphia Independence Awards

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FRANKFORD HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL “ALL SET” WITH SUPPORT OF THE PHILADELPHIA INDEPENDENCE AWARDS

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PHILADELPHIA, PA — [The Philadelphia Independence Awards](#) (PIA) presented a \$3000 grant to **Frankford High School**, a public school in the Philadelphia School District, to support their performing arts department’s annual musical and the work of theater directors, Rebecca Wizov, Michael Sherman, Brittany Cramer, and Alden Berrier. The 2024 “Give a Musical” grant was awarded for materials acquisition to replenish the school's set building supplies after the high school underwent remediation due to asbestos removal. Currently students are performing their show in a rented space and have been unable to utilize materials that were stored in the school's closed performance space.

Frankford High School will present *The Addams Family* as their musical production this year, March 21st to 23rd. Due to the remediation in their school, this year’s production will take place at Taller Puertorriqueño at 2600 N. 5th Street (right near 5th and Lehigh) in Philadelphia.

Wizov says that the young theater program has only been in operation for the last six years, after a long down time due to lack of music staff. During those six years, two were lost due to the pandemic, and then the doors closed due to the asbestos issue. "Pre 2010, we had a theater program but there was a severe lull while the school did not have any theater directors. We have built everything in our program from the ground up - including our physical sets. Our



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production last year of *In the Heights* had some new set pieces including a bar, door, and folding flats... " Those, Wizov explained to the granting committee, are inaccessible, and may even have been destroyed during construction.

The musical, she notes, is not just a highlight for the school, but has already become a big event for the community. "It is one of the best attended events by parents and family members throughout the whole school year!"

The production's director, Michael Sherman, agrees that the program is all about the community. "Students build friendships. They build trust. They learn responsibility and open their eyes to a world of musical theater that exists....The students in this program have an opportunity to be accepted and respected. It builds their confidence."

The Philadelphia Independence Awards celebrates regional high school musical theater and its student artists by providing rigorous development for existing high school theater programs, promoting diverse elements of the professional theater community, and fostering support for under-resourced school theater programs. PIA closes each high school theater season with an awards show to recognize many of the great things happening in the local high school musical theater scene. Over 20 awards are given each season in both performing and non-performing categories.



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The Give a Musical Grant is the funding and outreach arm of PIA. High schools across the region help to fundraise by announcing to their patrons that they are supporting under-resourced schools in the region. Winners of previous awards also assist in the fundraising to give back to the community that supported their needs. This community approach helps to support under-resourced school theater programs in any stage of development.

"Our goal with the Give a Musical Grant is to give all of our participating schools a level playing field as they strive for excellence in the performing arts, and work to present strong musical theater productions," says Aileen Lynch-McCulloch, the head of the grant committee. McCulloch has spent over thirty years serving students in the region working with such organizations as The Arts Bubble, The Vagabond Acting Troupe, Young Audience Arts for Learning and Philadelphia Young Playwrights Festival. She has been a board member of PIA as well as an adjudicator for the last six years. "Theatrical arts give young people a voice, and teach empathy that helps to create stronger community bonds. Our grant program is at the heart of PIA's effort to make sure young people in our community have access to these powerful art opportunities."

Frankford student performer, 11th grader Jayden Colon-Torres plays Gomez Addams in this year's show, and agrees that arts opportunities are important to his classmates. "The school musical theater program gives me space to tap into my creativity and imagination. With this grant money, we will be able to grow the program, and our imagination does not have to be limited."



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The Philadelphia Independence Awards welcomes donations and also asks community organizations to support the annual awards. In 2023, Temple University, University of the Arts, West Chester University and The Kimmel Cultural Center helped to sponsor the high school musical theater program. For more information on how you can support The Give a Musical Grant or the Philadelphia Independence Awards and annual workshops, visit the website at: <https://www.independenceawards.com/about.php>

Images included below.



Thanks to their Give a Musical Grant from the Philadelphia Independence Awards, Frankford High School students are hard at work on sets to replace inaccessible supplies due to asbestos remediation.



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