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[**Musical Theater Songwriting Challenge Opens for High School Students**](https://www.arts.gov/news/2017/musical-theater-songwriting-challenge-opens-high-school-students)

***Presented by the National Endowment for the Arts partnering with American Theatre Wing and***

***in collaboration with Playbill, Inc. and Disney Theatrical Productions***

*Washington, DC*—American musical theater is burgeoning with new musical styles, stories, and audiences, offering a world of possibility for young artists, especially songwriters. To encourage young artists to enter musical theater, the National Endowment for the Arts is expanding its [Musical Theater Songwriting Challenge](https://www.arts.gov/partnerships/songwriting) from last year’s three-city pilot to a national program available to all high school songwriters working in any musical genre. Applicants submit a recording of an original song that could appear in a musical theater show. Partnering with the NEA in the Songwriting Challenge is the American Theatre Wing along with collaborators Playbill, Inc. and Disney Theatrical Productions.

High school songwriters should go to the [Songwriting Challenge](https://www.arts.gov/partnerships/songwriting) section of the NEA website between October 2, 2017 and the submission deadline of January 5, 2018 to enter the competition. Six regional winners will be selected in February 2018 for a trip to New York City in April to work with professional musicians, singers, songwriters, and producers during an intense weekend of workshops. The performance of their song by those musicians and singers will be judged by a panel of esteemed musical theater artists as the final competition and webcast live. One of the six will be selected as the national champion. Winners will receive scholarships and more.

“This is a great opportunity for the National Endowment for the Arts to honor the creativity of America’s youth,” said NEA Chairman Jane Chu. “The Musical Theater Songwriting Challenge is part of that commitment to strengthen our next generations of creative talent; the talent of our future.”

“Now, more than ever, it is important to nurture and support creativity, especially amongst young, emerging artists who might not have access to the arts. I am proud to be partnering with the National Endowment for the Arts, with support from Playbill and Disney Theatricals, on this project. I hope that from this we will see the next generation of Rodgers & Hammersteins, Jonathan Larsons, and Lin-Manuel Mirandas,” said Heather Hitchens, president of the American Theatre Wing.

The [American Theatre Wing](http://americantheatrewing.org/), the theater support organization that founded and co-produces the Tony Awards® and co-produces the Obie Awards®, is working with the NEA to implement the program across the nation and is developing curriculum materials to guide and inspire young songwriters. All materials will be available for free, as they are developed, in the Songwriting Challenge web section. Playbill, Inc. and Disney Theatrical Productions are program collaborators, providing funding and promotional support.

Last year’s pilot competition took place in Dallas, TX; Minneapolis, MN; and Seattle, WA withAngel Rodriguez from Seattle chosen as the 2016 national champion. Videos of Angel and the other two finalists are on the Songwriting Challenge webpage, along with content featuring theater and music stars such as Lin-Manuel Miranda, Josh Ritter, John Lloyd Young, Ben Folds, and Natalie Merchant.

Join the songwriting Twitter conversation at #IWriteMusicals.

**About the National Endowment for the Arts**

Established by Congress in 1965, the NEA is the independent federal agency whose funding and support gives Americans the opportunity to participate in the arts, exercise their imaginations, and develop their creative capacities. Through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies, and the philanthropic sector, the NEA supports arts learning, affirms and celebrates America’s rich and diverse cultural heritage, and extends its work to promote equal access to the arts in every community across America. Visit arts.gov to learn more about NEA.

**About the American Theatre Wing**

The American Theatre Wing is currently celebrating a 100 years of service to American Theatre across the nation. Its programs provide theatre education opportunities for underserved students through the Andrew Lloyd Webber Initiative, develop the next generation of theatre professionals through the SpringboardNYC and Theatre Intern Network, incubate innovative theatre across the country through the National Theatre Company Grants, foster the next generation of musical theatre writers through the Jonathan Larson® Grants, honor the best in New York theatrical design with the Henry Hewes Design Award, and illuminate the creative process through the Emmy-nominated “Working in the Theatre” documentary series. In addition to founding the Tony Awards®, the American Theatre Wing is the new home of the Village Voice’s Obie Awards®, Off Broadway’s Highest Honor.