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DAVID CERDA TO RECEIVE SPECIAL NON-EQUITY JEFF AWARD

Monday, May 15, 2017 - Chicago, IL. More than 200 members of the Chicago theatre community signed a recommendation that the 2017 Non-Equity Special Jeff Award be bestowed on David Cerda, the co-founder and Artistic Director of Hell in a Handbag Productions for his theatrical and charitable contributions. The Jeff Awards Committee concurred. David Cerda will receive the award at the 44th Annual Non-Equity Awards ceremony on June 5th at the Athenaeum Theatre.

Hell In A Handbag Productions may be the only theatre in the world that gives website prominence to a review that says the best thing about their shows is that "they are completely ridiculous," meant in the very best way. For a great admirer of Charles Ludlam's Ridiculous Theatrical Company, that's a point of pride.



In a business that tends to take itself extremely seriously, Cerda is quite happy to have fun. That even extends to the name the company selected when it was founded in 2002. "Hell In A Handbag was the popular choice of the founders," Cerda says. They hadn't heard the phrase just that way, but rather as the more common "in a handbasket", but he says, "because of the drag element, handbag seemed more fitting."

That drag element was important for Cerda, and not just because the theatre was a forerunner in gender issues. "The roles I wanted to play were women's roles," he says. "I wanted to be a glamorous movie star on the stage." Cerda has indeed performed in many HIAH shows, "whether the company wanted me or not."

As a company known for doing drag and camp, HIAH tries to keep it light says Cerda. Even in a time when most stage comedies wield a message hammer in the second act, Cerda asserts "We try to have a message, but it's not like we're trying to hide the silly."

Cerda may be decidedly unserious on stage, but he is decidedly serious about working to give back to the community. He was elected to the Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame in in 2016 for both theatrical achievements and philanthropic efforts. Hell In A Handbag has raised over \$58,000 for local and national causes, ranging from the American Cancer Society to The Wounded Warrior Project to Hams 4 Hams, an organization he co-founded with Lori Cannon that provides holiday staples for clients of Groceryland, which feeds those who are HIV positive and living with AIDS.

Cerda will receive the Special Award at the 44th Annual Non-Equity Jeff Awards, to be held at the Athenaeum Theatre, located at 2936 N Southport, on Monday, June 5th. This award show will honor 127 nominees in 26 categories being recognized for outstanding work at Chicago's non-union theatres from April 1 ,2016, to March 30, 2017. The public is invited to attend. Ticket information can be found at www.jeffawards.org -

