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*SPOTLIGHT SHINES ON CHICAGO THEATERS WITH PRESENTATION OF  
54<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY JEFF AWARDS FOR EQUITY THEATER*

*Awards presented at star-studded ceremony honoring theater excellence*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Editor's Note:**

A complete list of recipients can also be found online at the Equity section at [www.jeffawards.org](http://www.jeffawards.org).

OCTOBER 17, 2022 – CHICAGO – In its 54<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of Equity theater excellence, the Jeff Awards recognized 46 award recipients selected from among 201 theater artist nominees across 38 artistic and technical categories. Award-winning Chicago actor, singer and entertainer E. Faye Butler hosted the first live in-person awards program and tribute to the theater community since 2019. The spectacular event, under the direction of Jim Corti and music direction by David Fiorello, featured work of many of the nominated productions and dozens of local theater artists as presenters.

The Goodman and Paramount Theatres tied for the most awards with each taking home six this season. “Kinky Boots” received all six awards for Paramount, including Production – Musical (Large) and Musical Direction. Goodman Theater garnered five awards for “Good Night, Oscar”, including Production – Play (Large), Sean Hayes for Performer in a Principal Role and Doug Wright for New Work, and one for “Gem of the Ocean”.

A Red Orchid Theatre captured five awards for “The Moors”, including Production – Play (Midsize) and Director for Kirsten Fitzgerald. Four awards were presented to Porchlight Music Theatre for “Blues in the Night” with honors for Production – Revue, as well as for Direction by Kenny Ingram, Musical Direction by David Fiorello, and Felicia P. Fields as Performer in a Revue.

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Three theaters each collected three awards. Drury Lane Productions received two honors for "Steel Magnolias" for Ensemble – Play (Large), Elizabeth Ledo as Performer in a Supporting Role, and for Richard Bermudez as Performer in a Principal Role – Musical in "Evita". Steppenwolf Theatre Company was recognized for "Choir Boy" with awards for Ensemble – Play (Large), Sheldon D. Brown as Performer in a Supporting Role, and Jason Lynch for Lighting Design. Teatro Vista's "Somewhere Over the Border" received awards for Production – Musical (Midsized), Ensemble and Director Denise Yvette Serna.

Additional performance awards were presented for Performer in a Principal Role – Play to Cassidy Slaughter-Mason in "The Luckiest" at Raven Theatre. Michael Wordly from "Kinky Boots" received the award for Performer in a Principal Role. Daniella Dalli, from "The Sound of Music" at Marriott Theatre, and Sara Reinecke, who appeared in "Kinky Boots", were both awarded Performer in a Supporting Role – Musical. And for her work in "Songs for Nobody" at Northlight Theatre Bethany Thomas received the award for Solo Performance.

Directing awards also went to Ron OJ Parsons for "Relentless" at TimeLine Theatre Company. Within the category of musical direction, there was a tie and Kory Danielson of "Kinky Boots" and David Fiorello for "Blues in the Night" at Porchlight were recognized.

Among the technical awards, Alex Sanchez received the award for Choreography for work on "West Side Story" at Marriott Theatre. Christian Kelly-Sordelet and David Blixt were recognized for Fight Choreography in "Athena" at Writers Theatre, while Sylvia Hernandez-DiStasi received the Artistic Specialization award for Circus and Movement Design based on "Lookingglass Alice", a production of Lookingglass Theatre Company in association with The Actors Gymnasium.

Other technical honors went to teams for "Good Night, Oscar", including Rachel Hauck (Lighting) and André Pluess (Sound), and "The Moors" featuring K Story (Lighting), Jeffrey Levin (Sound) and Myron Elliott-Cisneros (Costumes). Additional theater artists honored were lighting designer Joe Schermoly for "Hurricane Diane" at Theater Wit and costume design by Ryan Park for "Kinky Boots". The award for Projection Design was presented to Rasean Davonte Johnson and Michael Salvatore Commendatore for "It Came From Outer Space", a production of Chicago Shakespeare Theater in association with Universal Theatrical Group.

This year, the Jeff Awards introduced a new category for Short Run Productions (defined by 9-17 performances) which opened up opportunities for a number of theaters who produce shorter production runs and those reentering after the pandemic. Awards honored "The Magnolia Ballet" by About Face Theatre for Production – Play and Terry Guest for Performer in a Principal Role. Congo Square Theater received the Ensemble award for "What to Send Up When It Goes Down" and Angela Weber Miller was recognized for Design in "Who's Holiday!" at Theater Wit.

The Jeff Awards New Work category this season recognized three authors and their productions including Tyla Abercrombie for "Relentless" produced by TimeLine Theatre Company and Doug Wright for "Good Night, Oscar". Natalie Y. Moore was also recognized for her work "The Billboard" presented at 16<sup>th</sup> Street Theater in a short run production. In addition, the award for Original Music in a Play was presented to Pornchanok Kanchanabanca for "Gem of the Ocean" at Goodman Theatre.

Chuck Smith received a special award for Lifetime Achievement in Theatre. Smith is a Chicago native who has directed and produced productions across the country for over half a century. A nationally recognized director and five time Jeff Award nominee, Smith currently serves as resident director and member of the Board of Trustees of the Goodman Theatre. He is also a resident director at the Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe in Sarasota, FL and an associate member of MPAACT and The American Blues Theater in Chicago.

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In its 54<sup>th</sup> Anniversary season, July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022, the Jeff Awards membership judged the opening nights of 94 Equity productions from 49 producing organizations. Of these, 76 productions were "Jeff Recommended", which made them eligible for award nominations.

**The 54<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Equity Award recipients are:**

**Production – Play (Large) – The Dr. Harlan Haimes Award**

- "Good Night, Oscar" - Goodman Theatre

**Production – Play (Midsize)**

- "The Moors" - A Red Orchid Theatre

**Production – Musical (Large)**

- "Kinky Boots" - Paramount Theatre

**Production – Musical (Midsize)**

- "Somewhere Over the Border" - Teatro Vista

**Production – Revue (Large)**

- "Blues in the Night" - Porchlight Music Theatre

**Director – Play (Large)**

- Ron OJ Parson - "Relentless" - TimeLine Theatre Company

**Director – Play (Midsize)**

- Kirsten Fitzgerald - "The Moors" - A Red Orchid Theatre

**Director – Musical (Large)**

- Trent Stork - "Kinky Boots" - Paramount Theatre

**Director – Musical (Midsize)**

- Denise Yvette Serna - "Somewhere Over the Border" - Teatro Vista

**Director – Revue (Large)**

- Kenny Ingram - "Blues in the Night" - Porchlight Music Theatre

**Ensemble – Play**

- "Choir Boy" - Steppenwolf Theatre Company
- "Steel Magnolias" - Drury Lane Productions

**Ensemble – Musical**

- "Somewhere Over the Border" - Teatro Vista

**Performer In A Principal Role – Play**

- Sean Hayes - "Good Night, Oscar" - Goodman Theatre
- Cassidy Slaughter-Mason - "The Luckiest" - Raven Theatre

**Performer In A Principal Role – Musical**

- Richard Bermudez - "Evita" - Drury Lane Productions
- Michael Wordly - "Kinky Boots" - Paramount Theatre

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**Performer In A Revue**

- Felicia P. Fields - "Blues in the Night" - Porchlight Music Theatre

**Solo Performance**

- Bethany Thomas - "Songs for Nobodies" - Northlight Theatre

**Performer In A Supporting Role – Play**

- Sheldon D. Brown - "Choir Boy" - Steppenwolf Theatre Company
- Elizabeth Ledo - "Steel Magnolias" - Drury Lane Productions

**Performer In A Supporting Role – Musical**

- Daniella Dalli - "The Sound of Music" - Marriott Theatre
- Sara Reinecke - "Kinky Boots" - Paramount Theatre

**New Work – The Libby Adler Mages Award**

- Tyla Abercrombie - "Relentless" - TimeLine Theatre Company
- Doug Wright - "Good Night, Oscar" - Goodman Theatre

**Scenic Design (Large)**

- Rachel Hauck - "Good Night, Oscar" - Goodman Theatre

**Scenic Design (Midsize)**

- Joe Schermoly - "Hurricane Diane" - Theater Wit

**Costume Design (Large)**

- Ryan Park - "Kinky Boots" - Paramount Theatre

**Costume Design (Midsize)**

- Myron Elliott-Cisneros - "The Moors" - A Red Orchid Theatre

**Sound Design (Large)**

- André Pluess - "Good Night, Oscar" - Goodman Theatre

**Sound Design (Midsize)**

- Jeffrey Levin - "The Moors" - A Red Orchid Theatre

**Lighting Design (Large)**

- Jason Lynch - "Choir Boy" - Steppenwolf Theatre Company

**Lighting Design (Midsize)**

- K Story - "The Moors" - A Red Orchid Theatre

**Choreography**

- Alex Sanchez - "West Side Story" - Marriott Theatre

**Music Direction**

- Kory Danielson - "Kinky Boots" - Paramount Theatre
- David Fiorello - "Blues in the Night" - Porchlight Music Theatre

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### **Original Music In A Play**

- Pornchanok Kanchanabanca - "Gem of the Ocean" - Goodman Theatre

### **Fight Choreography**

- Christian Kelly-Sordelet and David Blixt - "Athena" - Writers Theatre

### **Projection Design**

- Rasean Davonte Johnson and Michael Salvatore Commendatore - "It Came From Outer Space" - Chicago Shakespeare Theater in association with Universal Theatrical Group

### **Artistic Specialization**

- Sylvia Hernandez-DiStasi - Circus and Movement Design - "Lookingglass Alice" - Lookingglass Theatre Company in association with The Actors Gymnasium

### **Short Run Production**

- "The Magnolia Ballet" - About Face Theatre

### **Short Run Production – Ensemble**

- "What to Send Up When It Goes Down" - Congo Square Theatre Company

### **Short Run Production – New Work**

- Natalie Y. Moore - "The Billboard" - 16th Street Theater

### **Short Run Production – Performer**

- Terry Guest - "The Magnolia Ballet" - About Face Theatre

### **Short Run Production – Design**

- Angela Weber Miller - "Who's Holiday!" - Theater Wit

### **Special Award**

- Chuck Smith - Lifetime Achievement in Theatre

### **Multiple Award Recipients**

#### By Theater

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Goodman Theatre             | 6 |
| Paramount Theatre           | 6 |
| A Red Orchid Theatre        | 5 |
| Porchlight Music Theatre    | 4 |
| Drury Lane Productions      | 3 |
| Steppenwolf Theatre Company | 3 |
| Teatro Vista                | 3 |
| About Face Theatre          | 2 |
| Marriott Theatre            | 2 |
| Theater Wit                 | 2 |
| Timeline Theatre Company    | 2 |

## By Production

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| “Kinky Boots”               | 6 |
| “Good Night, Oscar”         | 5 |
| “The Moors”                 | 5 |
| “Blues in the Night”        | 4 |
| “Choir Boy”                 | 3 |
| “Somewhere Over the Border” | 3 |
| “The Magnolia Ballet”       | 2 |
| “Relentless”                | 2 |
| “Steel Magnolias”           | 2 |

## About The Jeff Awards

The Jeff Awards is one of the most active and engaged theater awards organizations in the country evaluating hundreds of theatrical productions annually and holding two awards ceremonies highlighting work over the past Equity and Non-Equity seasons. Through our recommendations, awards, and honors we help foster the growth of companies, encourage artists, bring new appreciation for diverse storytelling, and cultivate civic pride in the achievements of the Chicago theater community. Originally chartered in 1968 to recognize Equity productions, the Jeff Awards Non-Equity Wing was established in 1973 to celebrate outstanding achievement in non-union theatre.

For more information, visit [www.jeffawards.org](http://www.jeffawards.org).

## **NOTE FOR MEDIA:**

*Photos from the event will be available on our website at [www.jeffawards.org](http://www.jeffawards.org) for download and use. Please credit Joe Mazza, Brave Lux.*

*The Jeff Awards website lists all the award recipients and nominations as well as other Jeff Awards information and news. Visit [www.jeffawards.org](http://www.jeffawards.org).*

*The Lifetime Achievement Award is part of a special awards category that the Jeff Awards has been presenting since 1969. To learn more [here](#) about previous recipients.*

*Names of award recipients was released immediately following the program on October 17<sup>th</sup> by email and on our website under Equity Awards at [www.jeffawards.org](http://www.jeffawards.org).*

*Media may contact theaters and artists directly for interviews. For quotes or an interview with any Jeff Awards committee members, please call or e-mail Suzanne Ross at 312-953-6987 or [suzanne@suzy-ross.com](mailto:suzanne@suzy-ross.com) or [media@jeffaward.org](mailto:media@jeffaward.org).*

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