

For Immediate Release: April 13, 2009

Contact: Cathy Crary
(703) 244-3505
(202) 337-4572

**25TH ANNIVERSARY HELEN HAYES AWARD RECIPIENTS ANNOUNCED TONIGHT
BEFORE A SOLD-OUT CROWD AT THE HISTORIC WARNER THEATRE**

Washington, DC – The 25th Annual Helen Hayes Awards were presented tonight at one of our nation's most prestigious cultural events. Nearly 2,000 theatre artists and supporters filled the majestic Warner Theatre in downtown DC for an evening of dazzling entertainment replete with humor, celebration, and great tributes to Washington area professional theatre.

The evening highlighted the 2008 collective endeavors of 69 theatres plus theatre festivals which produced 428 productions, 169 readings, and 154 festival productions totaling 8,723 performances seen by a total of 1,997,071 audience members, the highest Washington theatre attendance number in four years.

The abundance of works produced in this region stands as testament to Washington's prominence as a theatre community, second to New York City in its breadth and depth of offerings.

Stars of Washington and national stages joined together to present awards in 25 categories for artistic achievement. It was a night of many surprises with ties in five categories. [Click here](#) for a complete list of 2009 Helen Hayes Awards Recipients.

The Awards show was highlighted by sensational entertainment and moving tributes, punctuated by the joyful spontaneous spirit only found in the theatre. The star-studded cast of performers, included E. Faye Butler, Rick Hammerly, Janine Gulisano, Stephen Schmidt, Jenna Sokolowski and Michael Sazonov.

Awards were presented by stellar theatre veterans along with some of Washington's most exciting new theatre artists: Harold Burgess, Beverly Cosham Robert Aubrey Davis, Thembi Duncan, Conrad Feininger, Gabriela Fernandez-Coffey, Rick Foucheux, June Hansen, Stephen Hills, Glen Howard, Naomi Jacobson, Guy Saint-Jacques, Caleen Sinnette Jennings, Ernie Joselovitz, Marcus Kyd, Jaylee Mead, Karl Miller, Gia Mora, Jennifer Nelson, Ann Norton, Rosemary Pardee, Dan Pruksarnukul, Reggie Ray, Scot Reese, Nancy Schertler, Shirley Serotsky, Alexander Strain, Michael Tolaydo, David Emerson Toney, and Brad Watkins.

Special guests included: Washington philanthropist Jaylee Mead; James MacArthur, son of Helen Hayes and playwright Charles MacArthur, and Deputy Director of Mission from the Canadian Embassy, Guy Saint-Jacques.

In addition, three special awards were presented:

The Helen Hayes Tribute, sponsored by philanthropist Jaylee Mead, was presented to **The Artistic Directors of Washington's professional theatres**. Every year The Tribute honors some of the most distinguished artists in the theatre profession. This year was no exception. On the occasion of its 25th Anniversary, the Helen Hayes Awards honored those who dedicate every day of their lives to creating exceptional theatre; embody the vitality, spirit, and distinctive nature of each Washington theatre;

routinely do everything from pick out a season to pick up the trash; and possess unique artistic visions that forge our exceptionally rich theatre community.

When The Helen Hayes Awards began, there were 20 producing theatres. In 1986, the work of their Artistic Directors was recognized by the first Tribute (then called the American Express Tribute). Today, there are 74 producing theatres. Helen Hayes Awards Chairman of the Board Victor Shargai said "On our 25th anniversary, there was absolutely no question that The Tribute should be given to artistic directors who are the heart and soul of Washington theatre."

Previous Tribute recipients include Derek Jacobi, James Earl Jones, Mary Martin, Angela Lansbury, Jason Robards, Chita Rivera, August Wilson, Jerry Herman, Terrence McNally, and Frances Sternhagen.

The Washington Post Award for Innovative Leadership in the Theatre Community was presented to Helen Hayes Awards Founder **Bonnie Nelson Schwartz**. After a 1983 visit to Chicago during which she saw the positive effects of that city's Jefferson Awards on the theatre community, Bonnie knew it was time for Washington to recognize its own. "I like to believe that the Helen Hayes Awards helped shine a light on the wealth of talent and creativity that makes this city's theatre so exciting," Bonnie says. "When I go to the theatre in New York or Chicago, L.A., or even London, I feel a warm glow when I see The Helen Hayes Awards in the bios of the actors, directors, designers and writers. Their pride is a gift, an acknowledgement that we are making a difference."

Since 1986, *The Washington Post* has honored the inspired efforts of theatres, directors, local governments, service organizations, and several remarkable individuals – all with an imaginative spirit and deep desire to foster Washington theatre.

Presented only for the second time, **The John Aniello Award for Outstanding Emerging Theatre Company**, was given to **Constellation Theatre Company**. Since their debut in June, 2007 with Caryl Churchill's adaptation of *A Dream Play*, Constellation Theatre Company has established their own niche among Washington's exceptional theatre companies. Their imaginative and effervescent style of storytelling has dazzled audiences and critics alike.

This award was established in memory of John Aniello, a devoted champion of young, promising talent and an avid theatergoer since 1960. The John Aniello Award recognizes and encourages the efforts of companies who are just getting started yet have produced a body of work that is new, daring, and exciting.

The Creative Team

The creative team for the 25th Anniversary Helen Hayes Awards was comprised of a crew who are extraordinary theatre artists in their own right. The show was directed by **Jerry Whiddon**, written by **Renee Calarco**, and designed and produced by **Daniel MacLean Wagner**. **George Hummel** served as the Musical Director, and **Michael J. Bobbitt** as choreographer. Helen Hayes Awards President and CEO **Linda Levy Grossman** executive-produced the show. The team also included Stage Manager **Martha Knight**, Production Managers **Cary Louise Gillett** and **Shari Silbergliitt Moxley**, and Visual Media Producer **Jack Stillwell**.

The evening began at the JW Marriott Hotel with the Chairman's Reception, attended by nominees, celebrities, and special guests. The show was followed by Washington's largest cast party, the Ovation Gala, at the JW Marriott, where partygoers dined and danced amidst decor honoring Washington's nearly 70 theatres.

KPMG and **PNC Bank** are Helen Hayes Awards Presenting Sponsors. Sponsors of The 25th Annual Helen Hayes Awards include **Bloomingdale's**, **Washington Life Magazine**, **American Airlines**, **Jaylee Mead**, **The Washington Post**, **BNA**, and **Washington Blade**.

[Click here](#) for a high resolution photograph of the 2009 Helen Hayes Awards Recipients. Additional photographs will be available at approximately 2:00 am, Tuesday, April 14 by clicking [here](#).

The Helen Hayes Awards

Founded in 1983, the Helen Hayes Awards is a vibrant living legacy to Washington native and “First Lady of the American Theatre,” Helen Hayes, whose legendary work ethic and standards of excellence continue to inspire Washington artists. Helen Hayes began her lifelong love affair with theatre at the age of five after seeing her first play at The National Theatre. Eighty years later, she presided over the inaugural presentation of her namesake awards on the same stage.

The Curtain Never Comes Down

Among the area’s chief community builders, The Helen Hayes Awards helps to strengthen our region by building one of its most powerful assets: the professional theatre. While the organization takes center stage on one night each year, our work behind the scenes to build audiences, honor excellence, and educate youth continues for 365 nights – and days.

- The Washington Audience Development Initiative--multi-layered marketing, awareness, and advocacy campaigns to promote the breadth, scope, and importance of the Washington theatre profession
- The Theatre Legacy Project, a unique program that introduces young, public school students and Boys and Girls Clubs children to the magic and practical applications of live theatre via classroom visits, theatre tickets, bus transportation, teacher training, and resource materials – free-of-charge. More than 30,000 children have participated in the program since 1994.
- www.helenhayes.org is the comprehensive go-to Internet resource used by more than two million annually that features all Washington-area professional theatres and their neighborhoods, a searchable database of Helen Hayes Awards nominees and recipients, and information about The Helen Hayes Awards process, nominees, and programs.
- Washington Theatre TixCertificates, Gift certificates accepted at nearly 50 theatres throughout the metropolitan area that encourage audiences to try new venues and productions and make it easy to give the gift of live theatre while letting the recipient choose what to see.
- The Washington Theatre Guide is the most comprehensive FREE print resource of its kind with information about complete seasons, festivals, readings, and special events at all Washington theatres as well as nearby restaurants, parking, and public transportation. The Guide also offers theatre education resources for students, teachers, parents, and professional theatre students.

For more information about the Helen Hayes Awards programs and services, visit helenhayes.org, email info@helenhayes.org, or call (202) 337-4572.

###