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# News From: **The Helen Hayes Awards**

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**For Immediate Release**

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**HELEN HAYES AWARDS NOMINEES ANNOUNCED  
Monday, February 9, 2009  
AT THE NATIONAL THEATRE'S, HELEN HAYES GALLERY**

**25th Anniversary Awards To Be Presented Monday, April 13, 2009**

**Washington, DC** – Theatre artists and productions nominated for The 25th Anniversary Helen Hayes Awards were announced this evening at a press conference hosted by The National Theatre in its Helen Hayes Gallery.

Before announcing the nominees, Helen Hayes Awards President & CEO Linda Levy Grossman reported that **out of Washington's 69 professional theatres, 45 theatres produced 172 productions that met eligibility requirements during the January 1 – December 31, 2008 judging cycle.** From these shows, **150 artists, ensembles and productions from 21 theatres were nominated in 25 categories.**

Sixty-three judges, selected by a panel of area artistic directors, cast approximately **22,000 scores** in consideration of close to **2700 pieces of work** (performances, designs, productions, directions etc). From that work, **1,378 were acting performances alone.**

Click [here](#) to see the 2009 Helen Hayes Awards nominations

In comparison, in 2008 (for adjudicated productions from January 1 – December 31, 2007), 48 theatres produced 189 eligible productions that resulted in 147 nominations.

Click [here](#) for a summary of the Helen Hayes Awards Adjudication Process.

Ms. Grossman commented that the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary nominations are distinctive in two additional ways: 1) The overall exceptional level of work produced in 2008 resulted in many tied scores that could not be broken; and 2) the quantity and quality of ensemble work necessitated the division of The Canadian Embassy Award for Outstanding Ensemble into two separate categories: one for ensemble of a play and the other for ensemble of a musical. This distinction will be applied in any year when there is a similarly large number of ensembles garnering such high scores.

Upon welcoming the crowd of approximately 200 theatre makers and patrons, Victor Shargai, Chairman of The Helen Hayes Awards Board of Directors, made two major announcements:

- 1) Beginning with the 2009 Awards presentation, the award for *Outstanding Lead Actor, Resident Play* will be named ***The Robert Prosky Award for Outstanding Lead Actor, Resident Play***. The naming of this award, approved unanimously by the Helen Hayes Awards Board of Directors, will continue to honor the legacy of the legendary actor; a friend, neighbor, colleague and a man who held his fellow actors in the highest regard possible. Mr. Shargai added, "Bob was in fact himself an architect of the Washington theatre community, and for 25 years he maintained a very special connection to The Helen Hayes Awards. Even after he made it big in television and film, Bob's deep ties to Washington theatre always remained strong."
- 2) This year's **Helen Hayes Tribute, sponsored by Jaylee Mead** - which recognizes some of the most distinguished artists in the theatre profession - **will be presented to The Artistic Directors of Washington's professional theatres.**

“In 1986, the very first Tribute was given to Washington artistic directors,” said Mr. Shargai. “It was absolutely appropriate that we began that first chapter honoring those 20 leaders. And on the occasion of our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, we now honor almost 70 artistic directors who dedicate every day of their lives to creating exceptional 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.”

- 3) The **John Aniello Award for Outstanding Emerging Theatre Company** will be given to **Constellation Theatre**. This award was established in 2008 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.

In 1983, Helen Hayes Awards Founder Bonnie Nelson Schwartz recognized that the 14 professional theatres that, at the time made Washington their home, were worthy of great attention and celebration. So when the first Helen Hayes Awards judging cycle began in 1984, the stage was set to cultivate a theatre community that would become **the second most prolific theatre town in the country**.

During these past 25 years, when a theatre received a Helen Hayes Award for artistic excellence and used their credential to attract new audiences and support, they were able to invest in programming and facilities. In response, theatre audiences grew across the region. And then, to serve this growing consumer demand, restaurants and stores opened, generating significant new revenue and revitalizing neighborhoods. For Helen Hayes Award nominated artists, the recognition conveys a high level of achievement to help advance their profile to audiences and to the national theatre community. The ripple effect has been astounding.

However, work that is nominated – and work that ultimately receives Awards – **is not** “best” or “better” in any way. Such distinctions simply aren’t possible. But all nominated work does have something in common – it is all **Outstanding**.

### **Helen Hayes**

Helen Hayes began her lifelong love affair with theatre at the age of five after seeing her first play at The National Theatre. Her legendary work ethic and standards of excellence earned her the title “First Lady of the American Theatre.” Eighty years after her first visit to The National Theatre, she presided over the inaugural presentation of her namesake awards and continued to inspire the Washington artists that followed in her footsteps. [The National Theatre](#) is now operated by the non-profit National Theatre Corporation, and managed by The Shubert Organization.

### **The Helen Hayes Awards – The Curtain Never Comes Down**

The Helen Hayes Awards is among the area’s chief community builders, helping 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 to celebrate Washington area theatre, our work behind the scenes to build audiences, honor excellence, and educate youth continues for 365 nights – and days. For more information about the Helen Hayes Awards programs and services, go to [helenhayes.org](http://helenhayes.org) or call 202-337-4572.

### **The Awards Gala**

The 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Helen Hayes Awards will be held on Monday, April 13, 2009 at the Warner Theatre and JW Marriott Hotel. One of our country’s most prestigious cultural events, The Helen Hayes Awards annually honors excellence in professional theatre throughout the Washington metropolitan area. For additional information about the Awards Gala, [helenhayes.org](http://helenhayes.org) or call 202-337-4572.

### **Our Partners**

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