



# And the Ovation Awards Go to . . .

By DON SHIRLEY  
TIMES THEATER WRITER

The Mark Taper Forum's "Metamorphoses" and Civic Light Opera of South Bay Cities' "Dreamgirls" were the big winners at the Ovation Awards ceremony Monday at the Ahmanson Theatre.

Both productions won four trophies each, with "Metamorphoses" named best play and "Dreamgirls" named best musical in the larger theater category.

The evening also was a triumph for Deaf West Theatre, which won both of the production awards top honors in the smaller theater category.

Operating out of its new home in North Hollywood, Deaf West produced only two shows this year. "Oliver!" received the Ovation for best musical in a smaller theater, plus direction and choreography honors, while "A Streetcar Named Desire" was picked best play in a small theater and also won a script adaptation award.

Accepting the production honor for "Oliver!" Deaf West artistic director Ed Waterstreet noted that the upraised arms of the human figure represented in the Ovation trophy resembles the way "deaf people applaud"—also with arms stretched above the head, while the hands and wrists

quiver. The large Deaf West contingent in the hall used that distinctive form of applause often on Monday.

Civic Light Opera of South Bay Cities won the best larger musical award for the second year in a row, again facing down some big-league competition, among them, Cameron Mackintosh's touring "Les Miserables." Last year, the group's "West Side Story" defeated such shows as the touring "Cabaret," the Tony-winning "Fosse" and the Pasadena Playhouse's nationally televised "Play On!"

The company's executive director-producer James Blackman used his acceptance speech to suggest to Ahmanson Theatre artistic director Gordon Davidson that perhaps a reprise of "Dreamgirls" could be booked into the Ahmanson or elsewhere at the Performing Arts Center of Los Angeles County.

Besides the production award, "Dreamgirls" won three of the four musical acting awards, for Kecia Lewis, Billy Porter and Tonya L. Dixon. Lewis thanked the South Bay company "for allowing us to meet onstage every day for prayer, which is why I believe the show was so successful."

The fourth musical acting honor went to Douglas Sills of "The Scarlet Pimpernel," who noted that L.A. is his home and delivered a plea for Los Angeles theater "to stick to our own personality." His enthusiasm for L.A. theater was seconded by Kathleen Chalfant, who was named best actress in a play for "Wit." Although she lives in New York, where she received immense acclaim for her off-Broadway performance of "Wit," "Los Angeles audiences were the best we ever played to," she said.

The relatively unknown Dominic Hoffman was named best actor in a play for his self-written solo "Uncle Jacques' Symphony," which also won a writing award as best world premiere. It was produced at the small Stages in Hollywood.



Linda Bove, left, and Phyllis Frelich proudly accept the Ovation Award for New Translation/Adaptation in "A Streetcar Named Desire."

Walt Disney Co. CEO Michael Eisner, accepting a previously announced award for leadership in theater, said the company became involved in theater as "a natural evolution" from the live entertainment at Disney theme parks. "Our goal was not a monetary goal," he said. However, with the success of "Beauty and the Beast" and "The Lion King," "we've come out of it with an economic platform that seems to be working."

Actor Ray Stricklyn accepted a previously announced lifetime achievement award with this advice to young actors: "You'll be up and you'll be down. Remember that neither place is permanent."

Award presenters included such big names as Kevin Spacey, Linda Hamilton and Patrick Stewart. Each presenter related a memory from L.A. theater, the funniest of which was Megan Mullally's story of how an errant costume plunged her briefly into inadvertent toplessness during a performance of

"You Never Know," at the Pasadena Playhouse.

The awards are sponsored by Theatre L.A. This year, 320 shows registered for Ovation consideration. Center Theatre Group received more awards than any other producer or presenter, taking five for shows at the Mark Taper Forum and two for shows at the Ahmanson. There were 120 voters, representing Theatre L.A. members or serving as at-large voters appointed by Theatre L.A.

The winners:

**Play/Larger:** "Metamorphoses," Mark Taper Forum

**Play/Smaller:** "A Streetcar Named Desire," Deaf West Theatre

**Musical/Larger:** "Dreamgirls," Civic Light Opera of South Bay Cities at the Redondo Beach Performing Arts Center

**Musical/Smaller:** "Oliver!," Deaf West Theatre

**Writing of a World Premiere:** Dominic Hoffman, "Uncle Jacques' Symphony"

**New Translation/Adaptation:** Bob Daniels, Linda Bove and Phyllis Frelich, "A Streetcar Named Desire"

**Director/Musical:** Jeff Calhoun, "Oliver!"

**Director/Play:** Mary Zimmerman, "Metamorphoses"

**Leading Actor/Play:** Dominic Hoffman, "Uncle Jacques' Symphony"

**Leading Actress/Play:** Kathleen

Chalfant, "Wit"

**Leading Actor/Musical:** Douglas Sills, "The Scarlet Pimpernel"

**Leading Actress/Musical:** Kecia Lewis, "Dreamgirls"

**Featured Actor/Play:** Joe Hart, "The Angels of Lemnos"

**Featured Actress/Play:** Kathryn Joosten, "Ladies of the Corridor"

**Featured Actor/Musical:** Billy Porter, "Dreamgirls"

**Featured Actress/Musical:** Tonya L. Dixon, "Dreamgirls"

**Ensemble Performance:** Cast of "Forbidden Broadway Y2K/LA"

**Set Design/Larger:** David Gallo, "Jitney"

**Set Design/Smaller:** Thomas Buderwitz, "Against the Glass"

**Costume Design/Larger:** William Dudley, "Amadeus"

**Costume Design/Smaller:** Alvin Colt, "Forbidden Broadway Y2K/LA"

**Lighting Design/Larger:** T.J. Gerckens, "Metamorphoses"

**Lighting Design/Smaller:** David Flad, "The Angels of Lemnos"

**Sound Design/Larger:** Andre Pluess and Ben Sussman, "Metamorphoses"

**Sound Design/Smaller:** Jeff Bek and Eric Snodgrass, "Nosferatu"

**Choreography:** Brian Paul Mendoza, "Oliver!"

**Career Achievement Award:** Ray Stricklyn

**James A. Doolittle Award for Leadership in Theater:** Michael D. Eisner and Walt Disney Co.



CAROLYN COLE / Los Angeles Times

**Kathleen Chalfant**  
Best actress: play



**Douglas Sills**  
Best actor: musical

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# Entertainment Today's critics pick the best of 2000



## Ticket holders

ENTERTAINMENT TODAY JANUARY 5-JANUARY 11, 2001

### THE 10<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL TICKETHOLDER AWARDS, 2000

Anyone who tells you theater isn't happening in Los Angeles hasn't been going out much. Sure, the theatrical community is stepchild to the film industry, so before stage actors move West to join the fold they must accept two givens: A) Theater here must be created for the process, l'cuz if you think this can lead to movie stardom, the chances are as slim as winning lotto and B) The idea of earning a living in L.A. theater is almost an impossibility. Those things understood, there is a bounty of theater lovingly produced in L.A., just no guaranteed audiences of any size or loyalty to support it. But the year 2000 saw over 1,250 productions registered with Theatre LA, most playing in one of our 130-plus small stages seating 99 or less. But maybe it says something that an even half of my top 10 choices as Best Production of the year, seen elsewhere in this issue, and six of nine awardees honored below appeared at such modest waiver-sized venues, the actors and other artists working virtually for free.

**BEST ACTOR:** Brian Dennehy, *Death of a Salesman*, Ahmanson

Can't get much better than this. Dennehy might be the first actor ever to choose to play Willy Loman as a true survivor right up until the last sound effect, not a victim from the very start. **RUNNERS UP:** Charles Brown, *King Hedley II*, Mark Taper; Troy Katsur, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Deaf West; Jeremy Lelliott, *Hair*, Gene Bua Theatre; Randle Mell, *Closer*, Taper; Ron Silver, *Bill Graham Presents*, Canon Theatre

**BEST ACTRESS:** Kathleen Chalfant, *Wil*, Geffen Playhouse

If *Wil* had played L.A. just a month or so earlier, Zoe Caldwell might have had a run for her money as my choice for Best Actress of the Decade (1990-1999). It'll be nine years before challengers can try to topple Chalfant from the tip-top of my same list for the current decade, but I find it hard to imagine anyone could be remotely successful in that effort. Simply one of the best performances ever. **RUNNERS UP:** Elizabeth Franz, *Death of a Salesman*, Ahmanson; Maggie Gyllenhaal, *Closer*, Taper; Sally Ann Howes, *James Joyce's The Dead*, Ahmanson; Suanne Spoke, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Deaf West; Susan Sullivan, *Glass Menagerie*, Pasadena Playhouse

**BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR:** Stephen Klein, *Shopping and Fucking*, Celebration Theatre

Klein was arresting and suitably scary as the masochistic streetwise 14-year-old hustler who should have been playing video games in the adjacent arcade rather than turning tricks above it, giving a performance that is etched indelibly in my memory, I suspect for a long time to come. **RUNNERS UP:** Michael Caldwell, *View from the Dome*, Theatre Neo; Harris Doran, *Oliver!*, Deaf West; Ron Eldard, *Death of a Salesman*,

Ahmanson; Brandon Johnson, *Hair*, Gene Bua Theatre; Lou Myers, *King Hedley II*, Taper; Stephen Spinella, *James Joyce's The Dead*, Ahmanson

**BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS:** Wendy Johnson, *And Baby Makes Seven*, Relentless Theatre Company at the Lillian

Always a great fan of the work of Judy Holliday-clone Johnson, who has



Dennehy, left, in *Death of a Salesman*

been a bridesmaid and never a bride for this same distinction twice now over the last few years, finally I get to put her remarkably refreshing and inventive work ahead of all the others. **RUNNERS UP:** Diana Bellamy, *The Ladies of the Corridor*, Tamarind; Juanita Jennings, *King Hedley II*, Taper; Daniele O'Loughlin, *Harold and Maude*, Theatrum Botanicum; Rachel Malkenhorst, *And Baby Makes Seven*, Relentless; Rachel Winfree, *View from the Dome*, Theatre Neo

**BEST ENSEMBLE CAST:** *View from the Dome*, Theatre Neo at the Egyptian Arena

If this is the kind of work that comes from a ego-less group of professionals working together over a long period of time to create great theater, let us lift a glass to artistic collaboration at its best—and obvi-

ously most trusting. A super introduction to a dynamic company of dedicated L.A. actors. **RUNNERS UP:** *Dandelion Wine*, The Colony; *Expecting Isabel*, Taper; *Hair*, Gene Bua Theatre; *James Joyce's The Dead*, Ahmanson; *Jitney*, Taper

**BEST DIRECTION:** Marion McClinton, *King Hedley II*, Mark Taper Forum

And speaking of collaborations, that of McClinton and August Wilson is a collaboration made in modern theatrical heaven. **RUNNERS UP:** Jeff Calhoun, *Oliver!*, Deaf West; Colin Campbell, *View from the Dome*, Theatre Neo; Robert Falls, *Death of a Salesman*, Ahmanson; Olivia Honneger, *And Baby Makes Seven*, Relentless; Deborah Lavine, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Deaf West; Mary Zimmerman, *Metamorphoses*, Taper

**NEW DISCOVERY:** Jeremy Lelliott, *Hair*, JerBear Productions at the Gene Bua Theatre

Hands-down. As the egomaniacal Berger, this enormously talented 18-year-old, who also produced this superlative all-teen revival, proved himself to be one of the few successful Hollywood film/TV kids who will easily make it professionally past puberty—and surely only improve with maturity. If Lelliott ever loses the fan clubs of teenybopper girls and cuddly spreads in *Ten Beat*, his career is guaranteed to reach all new levels of artistic wonder on the American stage. Just watch.

**BEST PLAYWRIGHT:** Lanie Robertson, *Nasty Little Secrets*, Theatre/Theater

OK, so I couldn't really list *Nasty* in my choices of top 10, since I not only spearheaded its West Coast debut but played one of the leads; that could redefine the term "conflict of interests." But I can with all honesty list Robertson as my choice for the best playwright of the year in L.A., confirmed not only by me but by the production's current nomination for Best Play of 2000 by the GLAAD Media Awards.

**BEST CABARET PERFORMANCE:** Yvette Freeman, The Cinegrill

Freeman and her equally gifted musical director/accompanist Lanny Hartley appeared here "just for the fun of it," but also to help launch the debut of Freeman's knockout CD *A Tribute to Dinah Washington*. After winning an Obie in 1998 for *Dinah*

*Was*, Freeman is an expert at recreating the work of Washington, but she is also powerful and infectious on her own.

**SPECIAL PERFORMANCES:** Charles Nelson Reilly's *Save It For the Stage*, Falcon Theatre; *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* staged reading benefit, Ahmanson

**THE WORST OF 2000: PLAY (tie):** *The People Vs. Mona*, Pasadena Playhouse and *The Poison Tree*, Taper; **MUSICAL:** *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, Ahmanson; **ACTOR:** Douglas Sills, *Scarlet Pimpernel*; **ACTRESS:** Ann Archer, *Poison Tree*; **DIRECTION:** Jeremiah Morris, *Popcorn*, Actor's Alley

Best wishes to all for 2001. Considering recent events in our nation, I thought it might be interesting to end the year by repeating a prediction from Nostradamus in 1555: "Come the millennium, month 12, in the home of our greatest power, the village idiot will come forth to be acclaimed the leader." Oops. ☐

# Entertainment Today's critics pick the best of 2000

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## Best of THEATER 2000

by Travis Michael Holder

### THE TEN BEST THEATER PRODUCTIONS IN LOS ANGELES, 2000

#### 1. *Wit*

Margaret Edson's extraordinary Pulitzer Prize winner managed to unfold its absorbing and inspirational medical tale without schmaltz — and with large dollops of delightfully grim bedside humor. Edson's seductively candid ability to chronicle how a staunchly independent college professor chooses to handle her losing battle with cancer was immeasurably aided, both here at the Geffen and originally off-Broadway, by a miraculous *tour de force* turn from Kathleen Chalfant in the role, one of the most extraordinary performances I have ever had the fortune to observe.

#### 2. *Shopping and Fucking*

In the future when I hear the phrase "assaulting the senses," chances are this West Coast premiere might just come to mind. The Celebration's gritty depiction of a group of strung-out, sexually adventurous and millennially-challenged London street kids might have just become another play about all God's *chil'ns* gone awry, but Mark Ravenhill's amazing script and a strikingly minimal production seeped in boldly graphic visual shocks quickly lifted



Theatrical magic when stirred: *Jitney*

it far above the inherent plasticity of *Rent*.

#### 3. *Jitney*

Perhaps now my favorite work by August Wilson, this obscure and sometimes forgivably flawed early (1978) effort by one of our greatest modern American playwrights became theatrical magic when stirred to a boil in its pre-Broadway run at the Taper by a precision troupe of world-class actors working under the spellbinding yet austere leadership of Wilsonmeister Marion McClinton.

#### 4. *A Streetcar Named Desire*

If he were still alive and in the flesh and not just living on forever in his incredible body of work, Tennessee Williams, who loved to show up at small productions of his plays, would have had nothing but kudos for Deaf West's half-signing/half-speaking interpretation of his greatest work, the perfect choice to open the company's wonderful new permanent space in the NoHo arts district.

#### 5. *Hair*

Never would I have guessed when I took the stage myself for the first time as Woof in this brave new musical that, 32 years later, I would be watching it gloriously recreated by an all-teen ensemble of kids who weren't even born until I was in my mid-30s. And never would I have thought that Jeremy Lelliott's

JerBear Productions would be the first "tribe" since our original band of hippies and pseudo-hippies to get the true meaning of the piece. As presented at the Gene Bua Theatre, this was a quintessential mounting of what is, now, often far too dated to succeed.

#### 6. *Death of a Salesman*

This 1999 Tony-winning Broadway revival of Arthur Miller's classic offered a view of the 20<sup>th</sup> century American experience that proved in many ways even more poignant today than when it was first presented. Manifesting the Everyman Willy Loman as the first true victim of the Capitalist system at its most nightmarish, *Salesman* could not have more artfully presented, than here at the Ahmanson, more sharply directed than by Goodman Theatre's Robert Falls, nor more stunningly performed than by a splendid veteran cast led by Brian Dennehy.

#### 7. *James Joyce's The Dead*

Like reading a great leather-bound novel by a crackling fire, this production at the Ahmanson of Joyce's 1914 short story *The Dubliners* defied every rule of musical theater — except, that is, bringing together a knockout ensemble cast of true Broadway legends to inhabit the Morkan sisters' lovely Victorian dining room for their suitably warm and fuzzy annual Christmas get-together.

#### 8. *View from the Dome*

Tackling this outrageous send-up of some of Washington, D.C.'s strangest bedfellows, Theresa Rebeck gloriously managed to skewer the dwindling sanctity of our political leaders' private lives as they try

valiantly to keep their erections in their pants and run the country simultaneously. This presentation at the Egyptian Arena by the gifted members of Theatre Neo won my annual Best Ensemble Award elsewhere in this issue.

#### 9. *Metamorphoses*

Mary Zimmerman of Chicago's Lookingglass Theatre Company turned the Taper stage into Cirque du Soleil's *O* for his arresting and uniquely contemporary interpretation of the writings of Ovid. Had the acting been up to the production design and Zimmerman's imagination, this would have reached much higher on my list.

#### 10. *Oliver!*

OK, so maybe Deaf West can do no wrong. A presentation by a deaf theatre company of a huge classic musical comedy — Under Jeff Calhoun's brilliant staging, this production not only overcame the language barrier but magically shrunk to the perfect size for this small stage despite the large cast — or perhaps because of them. Obviously committed people are in abundance at Deaf West.

### SPECIAL PERFORMANCE OF NOTE

1960's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* was presented at the Ahmanson for one night only as a staged reading to benefit the Center Theatre Group's Programs for Youth and Uta Hagen's HB Playwrights Foundation. Directed by William Garden, this once-in-a-lifetime event starred Jonathan Pryce, Peter Gallagher, Mia Farrow, and the original Martha Hagen herself — at age 80 still a Herculean and sexy monster. If theater is my church, work such as this is my salvation.



Boldly graphic: *Shopping and Fucking*

### Wenzel Jones

#### Los Angeles area

**PRODUCTION:** *Golden Child*, East West Players at the David Henry Hwang Theatre; *The Master and Margarita*, Zoo District of ArtShare and the Hudson Theatre; *A Streetcar Named Desire* at Deaf West Theatre. **PLAYWRITING:** Mona Mansour, *Me and the SLA*, the Village of the Gay & Lesbian Center; Del Shores, *Southern Baptist Sissies*, Delane Productions at the Zephyr Theatre. **ADAPTATION:** Jeff Calhoun, *Oliver!* at Deaf West Theatre (from Lionel Bart's book and lyrics); Shishir Kurup, *An Antigone Story* (a greek tragedy hijack), Cornerstone Theater Company at the Subway Terminal Building (from Sophocles' *Antigone*); Robert A. Prior, *Speed-Hedda*, Fabulous Monsters at the Evidence Room (from Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*). **MUSICAL SCORE:** Michael Rhoton, *Tonight at 8:30* at Pacific Resident Theatre. **CHOREOGRAPHY:** Onolee Hunter, *bare*, God Help Productions at the Hudson Mainstage; Jane Paik, *The Joy of Gay Sex*, Goodcop Productions at the St. Genesis Theatre. **DIRECTION:** John Fisher, *The Joy of Gay Sex*; J.M. Higgins, *The Apollo of Bellac*, Buffalo Nights Theatre Company at Powerhouse Theatre; Shishir Kurup, *An Antigone Story* (a greek tragedy hijack); Deborah LaVine, *A Streetcar Named Desire*; Loren Rubin, *The Master and Margarita*. **MUSIC DIRECTION:** Paul Cady, *The Joy of Gay Sex*; Dennis Castellano, *Enter the Guardsman* at the Laguna Playhouse; Mary Van Arsdal, *Tonight at 8:30*; Carol Weiss, *Oliver!* **SCENIC DESIGN:** D Marilyn Bookwalter, *Defiled* at the Geffen Playhouse; Kristen Bradfield McCarroll, *The Apollo of Bellac*; Victoria Petrovich, *Golden Child*; Robert Steinberg, *A Streetcar Named Desire*. **LIGHTING DESIGN:** Howard Binkley, *Expecting Isabel* at the Mark Taper Forum; Ken Booth, *Skin of Our Teeth* at A Noise Within; Paulie Jenkins, *Enter the Guardsman*; Frank McKown, *What's Wrong With Aagry?* at the Celebration Theatre; Michael Philippi, *Death of a Salesman* at the Ahmanson Theatre. **COSTUME DESIGN:** Angela Bologh Calin, *The Misanthrope*, A Noise Within at the Luckman Fine Arts Complex; Joyce Kim Lee, *Golden Child*; Dick Magnanti, *The Apollo of Bellac*; Ann Sheffield, *Enter the Guardsman*. **SOUND DESIGN:** Jon Gottlieb, *Expecting Isabel*. **PERFORMANCE:** Mark Brey, *Speed-Hedda*; Bridgid Cleary, *Expecting Isabel*; Robertson Dean, *Cymbeline*, A Noise Within at the Luckman Fine Arts Complex; Christopher Gartin, *Snakebit* at the Coast Playhouse; Magda Harout, *The Kiss at City Hall* at the Pasadena Playhouse; Suanne Spoke, *A Streetcar Named Desire*; Karen Tucker, *The Apollo of Bellac*. **ENSEMBLE PERFORMANCE:** The casts of *The Complete Work of Wilm Shkspr (Abridged)*, *Twelfth Dog Night* at the Globe Playhouse; *Culture Clash Anthology* at the Los Angeles Theatre Center; *The Master and Margarita*, and *Tonight at 8:30*.

### Terri Roberts

#### Los Angeles area

**PRODUCTION:** *A Streetcar Named Desire* at Deaf West Theatre; *bare*, God Help Productions at the Hudson Mainstage; *Dreamgirls*, Civic Light Opera of South Bay Cities at the Redondo Beach Performing Arts Center; *Oliver!* at Deaf West Theatre. **PLAYWRITING:** Jon Hartmore Jr. and Damon Intrabartolo, *bare*. **ADAPTATION:** Jeff Calhoun, *Oliver!*; Steven Leigh Marris, *A Bright Room Called Day* at Theatre of NOTE (emendations to the play by Tony Kushner). **TRANSLATION:** Bob Daniels, Deanne Bray, Betsy Ford, Lisa Hermatz,



*A Streetcar Named Desire.*

and Missy Keast, *Oliver!* (from Lionel Bart's book and lyrics). **TRANSLATION/ADAPTATION:** Phyllis Frelich, Linda Bove, and Bob Daniels, *A Streetcar Named Desire* (from the play by Tennessee Williams). **DIRECTION:** Julia Rodriguez Elliott and Geoff Elliott, *The Skin of Our Teeth* at A Noise Within; Kristin Hanggi, *bare*; Deborah LaVine, *A Streetcar Named Desire*. **CHOREOGRAPHY:** Eric Anderson, *bare*; Brian-Paul Mendoza, *Oliver!* **MUSIC DIRECTION:** Scott Nagatani, *Follies*, East West Players at the David Henry Hwang Theatre; Ken Parcher, *up the week without a paddle*, Neuratic Young Urbanites at the Celebration Theatre; Jeff Rizzo, *Dreamgirls*; Boko Suzuki, *Swing!* at the Ahmanson Theatre. **SCENIC DESIGN:** D Marilyn Bookwalter, *Defiled* at the Geffen Playhouse; John Iacovelli and Pat Emory, *Laura*, Judy Arnold Productions at the Tiffany Theatre; Desma Murphy, *Ballad Hunter*, Road Theatre Company at the Lankershim Arts Center; Robert Steinberg, *A Streetcar Named Desire*. **LIGHTING DESIGN:** Root Choyce, *Red, White and Tuna*, McCoy Rigby Entertainment at La Mirada Theatre for the Performing Arts; David Flad, *Ballad Hunter*; Kaiti O'Donohue, *The Seagull*, Actor's Co-op at the Crossley Theatre; Dan Weingarten, *In Flagrante Gothica*, Circle X Theatre Company at the McCadden Place Theatre. **COSTUME DESIGN:** Linda Fisher, *Red, White and Tuna*; Thomas G. Marquez, *Dreamgirls*. **MASK DESIGN:** Julie Taimor and Michael Curry, *The Lion King*, Walt Disney Theatrical Productions at the Pantages Theatre; Paule Lamasson, *Pathé X*, Zoo District at the Lillian Theatre. **HAIR DESIGN:** Paul Huntley, *The Scarlet Pimpernel* at the Ahmanson Theatre. **MAKEUP DESIGN:** Nancee Waterhouse, *Ballad Hunter*. **SOUND DESIGN:** Doug Green, *Oliver!*; Ken Huncavsky, *Red, White and Tuna*; Andre Pluss and Ben Sussman, *Metamorphoses* at the Mark Taper Forum; Peter Stenshoel, *The Seagull*; Wav Magic, *Ballad Hunter*. **PERFORMANCE:** Eydie Alyson, *Once in a Lifetime* at West Coast Ensemble; Jill Hill, *The Skin of Our Teeth*; Kacia Lewis, *Dreamgirls*; George McDaniel, *Oliver!*; Billy Porter, *Dreamgirls*; Suanne Spoke, *A Streetcar Named Desire*; Deborah Strang, *The Skin of Our Teeth*. **ENSEMBLE PERFORMANCE:** The casts of *bare*; *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and *Oliver!*

### Michael Green

#### Los Angeles area

**PRODUCTION:** *Balm in Gilead*, Camelot Artists at the Skylight Theater; *The Misanthrope*, A Noise Within at the Luckman Fine Arts Complex. **PLAYWRITING:** Jim Inman, *Appearances to the Contrary* at the Gaston Center Theatre. **DIRECTION:** Sabin Epstein, *The Misanthrope*; Edwin Gerard Hamamdjian, *Beast on the Moon* at the Fountain Theatre; Allen Williams, *Balm in Gilead*. **SCENIC DESIGN:** Roy Christopher, *Blithe Spirit* at the Pasadena Playhouse; Robert Steinberg, *The Gin Game* at Deaf West Theatre. **PERFORMANCE:** Mark Bramhall, *The Misanthrope*; Precious Chong, *Appearances to the Contrary*; Precious Chong, *My Swan*, Nexus Ensemble Theater at Santa Monica Playhouse; Anna Der Nersesian, *Beast on the Moon*; Michael Gabriel Goodfriend, *Beast on the Moon*; P.B. Hutton, *The Ladies of the Corridor*, Theatre Geo at the Tamarind Theatre; Jessica Litwak, *Victory Dance* at the Village of the Gay & Lesbian Center; Timothy Murphy, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* at Pacific Resident Theatre; Joel Swetow, *The Misanthrope*. **ENSEMBLE PERFORMANCE:** The cast of *Balm in Gilead*.

### Dany Margolies

#### Los Angeles area

**PRODUCTION:** *Dandelion Wine*, Calony Theatre Company at Burbank Center Stage. **PLAYWRITING:** Bridget Carpenter, Ping Chong, Constance Congdon, Kia Corthron, Maria Irene Fornes, Philip Kan Gotanda, Jessica Hagedorn, David Henry Hwang, Craig Lucas, Robert O'Hara, Hang Ong, José Rivera, Diana San, Alice Tuan, Mac Wellman, and Chay Yew, *The Square*, Center Theatre Group/Mark Taper Forum's Taper, Too, at the Actors' Gang; Beth Henley, *Signature*, Bloy Street Productions/Naked Angels Theatre Co. at the Actors' Gang Theatre. **ADAPTATION:** Bob Daniels, Linda Bove, and Phyllis Frelich, *A Streetcar Named Desire* at Deaf West Theatre; Troubadour Theatre Company, *A Midsummer Saturday Night's Fever Dream* at the Grove Center Theatre, the Miles Memorial Playhouse, and the Falcon Theatre. **DIRECTION:** Hope Alexander, *Night Sky* at Odyssey Theatre Ensemble; Veronica Brady, *Signature*; Bari DeLorenzo, *Saved* at the Evidence Room; Rick Sparks, *Down South*, Hillcrest Productions at the Flight Theatre at the Complex. **MUSIC DIRECTION:** Peter Matz, *Mack & Mabel*, Reprise Broadway's Best at Freud Playhouse; Boko Suzuki, *Swing!* at the Ahmanson Theatre. **SCENIC DESIGN:** Michael Devine, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* at South Coast Repertory; Desma Murphy, *Ballad Hunter*, the Road Theatre Company at the Lankershim Arts Center; Karyl Newman, *Mizlansky/Zilinsky* at the Geffen Playhouse; Mark Wendland, *Death of a Salesman* at the Ahmanson Theatre. **LIGHTING DESIGN:** Paulie Jenkins, *Communicating Doors* at the Laguna Playhouse; Geoff Korf, *Mizlansky/Zilinsky*; Patrick Mees, *Le Manège*, Pierre Cordin at the New Ivar Theatre; Kaiti O'Donohue, *The Road to Mecca* at the Fountain Theatre; Tom Ruzika, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*. **SOUND DESIGN:** Nathan Wang, *The Square*. **PERFORMANCE:** Ellen Gear, *Harold and Maude* at the Will Geer Theatricalum Botanicum; Peter Michael Goetz, *All My Sons* at South Coast Repertory; Asif Mandvi, *Sakina's Restaurant* at Odyssey Theatre Ensemble; Lorraine Newman, *Delachments*, the Loretta Theatre at the Tiffany Theatre. **ENSEMBLE PERFORMANCE:** The casts of *Merrily We Roll Along* at West Coast Ensemble and *Tonight at 8:30* at Pacific Resident Theatre.

# THEATER

## The 22nd Annual L.A. Weekly Theater Awards Nominations

THE FOLLOWING SHOWS AND/OR INDIVIDUALS HAVE been nominated by this newspaper's theater critics for excellence on stages of 99 seats or less, in productions opening between January 1 and December 31, 2000, in the Los Angeles area. The awards will be presented on Monday night, April 23, 2001, as part of an interactive carnival extravaganza at the Los Angeles Theater Center, 514 S. Spring St., downtown, hosted by Robert Prior and the Fabulous Monsters, with John Fleck, David Schweizer and other presenters to be announced shortly in these pages. Doors open at 6 p.m.; awards are given out at 8 p.m.; a catered reception will follow. Tickets for all nominees are free. Guests and all others, \$5 at the door. Nominees in the Production of the Year, Revival Production of the Year and Musical of the Year categories include

(as verified in a published playbill): producers, playwrights, directors, designers, actors and stage managers. The Production Design category includes producers, directors and designers. Ensemble categories include actors and directors. Seating is not guaranteed and will be allocated strictly on a first to call, first served basis. To RSVP, or to request further clarification, call (323) 993-3693. Checks may be sent to L.A. Weekly, c/o Lisa Yu, 6715 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90028, but must be received by April 18. The new category of Short Plays refers to plays falling somewhere between a one-act and a full-length play. The full-length Play Writing award comes with a cash prize made possible by the generosity of A.S.K. Theater Projects. —Steven Leigh Morris



### PRODUCTION OF THE YEAR

*The Akhmatova Project*, Critical Mass, at the Actors' Gang Theater  
*The Berlin Circle*, Evidence Room  
*The Darker Face of the Earth*, Fountain Theater/BAND, at the American Renaissance Theater  
*In Flagrante Gothico*, Circle X Theater Company, at the McCadden Place Theater  
*The Master and Margarita*, Zoo District, at ArtShare/Hudson Backstage  
*Pudd'nhead Wilson*, Falcon Theater  
*The Seagull*, Actors Co-op

### REVIVAL PRODUCTION OF THE YEAR (OF A 20TH-CENTURY WORK)

*The Apollo of Bellac*, Buffalo Nights Theater Company, at the Powerhouse Theater  
*The Man Who Had All the Luck*, Antaeus Company, at the Ivy Substation  
*Night and Her Stars*, Alliance Repertory Company  
*Saved*, Evidence Room

### MUSICAL OF THE YEAR

"bare," God Help! Productions, at the Hudson Mainstage Theater  
*Forbidden Broadway: Y2K L.A.I.*, Tiffany Theater  
*Godspell*, Actors Co-op  
*Merrily We Roll Along*, West Coast Ensemble

### LEADING FEMALE PERFORMANCE

Lesley Fera, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Pacific Resident Theater  
 Megan Mullally, *The Berlin Circle*, Evidence Room  
 Priscilla Pointer, *The Road to Mecca*, Fountain Theater  
 Suanne Spoke, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Deaf West Theater Company

### LEADING MALE PERFORMANCE

Paul Gutrecht, *The Man Who Had All the Luck*, Antaeus Company, at the Ivy Substation  
 Travis Michael Holder, *Nasty Little Secrets*, Theatre/Theater  
 Troy M. Kotsur, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Deaf West Theater Company  
 Stephen Van Dam, *The Hasty Heart*, Actors Co-op

### SUPPORTING FEMALE PERFORMANCE

Christine Deaver, *Pathé X*, Zoo District, at the Lillian Theater  
 Lisa Jeffrey, *Shakin' the Mess Outta Misery*, Stella Adler Theater  
 Lisa Picotte, *Merrily We Roll Along*, West Coast Ensemble  
 Marianne Savell, *The Seagull*, Actors Co-op  
 Alorna Wright, *Shakin' the Mess Outta Misery*, Stella Adler Theater

### SUPPORTING MALE PERFORMANCE

Joe Colligan, *The Fiery Furnace*, Eclectic Company Theater  
 John Fleck, *The Berlin Circle*, Evidence Room  
 Robert Symonds, *The Road to Mecca*, Fountain Theater  
 Marcelo Tubert, *The Man Who Had All the Luck*, Antaeus Company, at the Ivy Substation

### COMEDY PERFORMANCE

Mark Brey, *Speed-Hedda*, Fabulous Monsters, at Evidence Room  
 Leslie Jordan, *Southern Baptist Sissies*, Deiane Productions, at the Zephyr Theater  
 Kacy Peacock, *The Marriage of Bette and Boo*, the Elephant Space

### ONE-ACT PERFORMANCE

Donald Agnelli, *Poulet Giganticus*, Theater of NOTE  
 Mitchell Gossatt, *Terminal Hip*, Bottom's Dream, at the Ivy Substation  
 Brad Henson, *Two Men Losing Their Minds*, Moving Arts, at the Los Angeles Theater Center  
 Jason Huber, *Chat Whell's Economic Subterfuge*, Theatre/Theater  
 Brian Newkirk, *Two Men Losing Their Minds*, Moving Arts, at the Los Angeles Theater Center

### PLAY WRITING

Alice Dodd/Jillian Armenante, *In Flagrante Gothico*, Circle X Theater Company, at the McCadden Place Theater  
 Doug Field, *Down South*, The Complex  
 Cody Henderson, *Carrots for Hare*, Ghost Road Company, at the Powerhouse Theater  
 Alec Holland and Melissa Samuels, *Triple Threats*, Third Street Theater  
 Stephen Legawiec, *Twilight World*, Ziggurat Theater, at the Gascon Center Theater  
 Del Shores, *Southern Baptist Sissies*, Deiane Productions, at the Zephyr Theater

### ONE-ACT PLAY WRITING

Shelia Callaghan, *New Shoes*, Moving Arts, at the Los Angeles Theater Center  
 Dennis Miles, *Poulet Giganticus*, Theater of NOTE

### DIRECTION

Nancy Keystone, *The Akhmatova Project*, Critical Mass, at the Actors' Gang Theater  
 Frederique Michel, *MedeaText: Los Angeles/Despoiled Shore*, City Garage  
 Jon Lawrence Rivera, *Sleepwalk*, Playwrights' Arena, at Inside the Ford

Loren Rubin, *The Master and Margarita*, Zoo District, at ArtShare/Hudson Backstage  
 David Schweizer, *The Berlin Circle*, Evidence Room  
 Diane Venora, *The Seagull*, Actors Co-op

### SHORT-PLAY DIRECTION

Victor D'Altorio, *The Babysitter*, McCadden Theater  
 J.M. Higgins, *The Apollo of Bellac*, Buffalo Nights Theater Company, at the Powerhouse Theater  
 Robert Prior, *Speed-Hedda*, Fabulous Monsters, at Evidence Room

### COMEDY DIRECTION

Rik Keller, *Dubya 2000*, Sacred Fools Theater Company  
 Steve Rudnick, *Triple Threats*, Third Street Theater  
 Del Shores, *Southern Baptist Sissies*, Deiane Productions, at the Zephyr Theater  
 Rick Sparks, *Down South*, The Complex

### ENSEMBLE

*The Akhmatova Project*, Critical Mass, at Actors' Gang Theater  
*The Babysitter*, McCadden Theater  
*The Berlin Circle*, Evidence Room  
*Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Pacific Resident Theater  
*The Master and Margarita*, Zoo District, at ArtShare/Hudson Backstage  
*Pudd'nhead Wilson*, Falcon Theater  
*Waiting for Godot*, Matrix Theater

### COMEDY ENSEMBLE

*The Apollo of Bellac*, Buffalo Nights Theater Company, at the Powerhouse Theater  
*In Flagrante Gothico*, Circle X Theater Company, at the McCadden Place Theater  
*Speed-Hedda*, Fabulous Monsters, at Evidence Room  
*Triple Threats*, Third Street Theater

### SOLO PERFORMANCE, MALE

Ric Borelli, *Best Dope in Town*, Screamin' Chicken Productions, at the Tamarind Theater  
 Art Metrano, *Metrano's Accidental Comedy*, Fine & Dandy Productions, at the Odyssey Theater  
 Michael O'Connor, *The Berkshire Village Idiot*, Ensemble Studio Theater, at the Gascon Center Theater

### SOLO PERFORMANCE, FEMALE

Rosa Abdoo, *Get to the Part About Me*, The Complex

Atlong Malinowski, *The Bully*, Blue Sphere Alliance, at the Lex  
 Iteama Maree, *Eggs and Fleas*, Blue Sphere Alliance, at the Lex  
 Sun St. Pierre, *Sacrifice*, Blue Sphere Alliance, at the Lex

### PRODUCTION DESIGN

*Dubya 2000*, Sacred Fools Theater Company  
*The Master and Margarita*, Zoo District, at ArtShare/Hudson Backstage  
*Pathé X*, Zoo District, at the Lillian Theater  
*Saved*, Evidence Room  
*Speed-Hedda*, Fabulous Monsters, at Evidence Room

### COSTUME DESIGN

Cathy Crane-McCoy, *Three Sisters*, El Portal Center/Circle Theater  
 Paule Doss, *Down South*, The Complex  
 M.E. Dunn, *In Flagrante Gothico*, Circle X Theater Company, at the McCadden Place Theater  
 Kara Feely, *Pathé X*, Zoo District, at the Lillian Theater  
 Mario Parian/Sofi Khachmanyan, *The Master and Margarita*, Zoo District, at ArtShare/Hudson Backstage  
 Lee C. Smith, *MedeaText: Los Angeles/Despoiled Shore*, City Garage

### LIGHTING DESIGN

Robert Fromer, *Sleepwalk*, Playwrights' Arena, at Inside the Ford  
 David F. Hahn, *How To Steal an Election*, Actors' Gang  
 Craig Pierce, *The Apollo of Bellac*, Buffalo Nights Theater Company, at the Powerhouse Theater  
 Rand Ryan, *The Babysitter*, McCadden Theater

### SET DESIGN

Jason Adams/Alicia Hoge, *The Berlin Circle*, Evidence Room  
 John H. Binkley, *Sleepwalk*, Playwrights' Arena, at Inside the Ford  
 Charles A. Duncombe Jr., *MedeaText: Los Angeles/Despoiled Shore*, City Garage  
 Gary Lee Reed, *The Seagull*, Actors Co-op  
 Gary Smoot, *In Flagrante Gothico*, Circle X Theater Company, at the McCadden Place Theater  
 Robert Steinberg, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Deaf West Theater Company  
 Juliana von Hauthrich, *Ghosts in the Cottonwoods*, 24th Street Theater

### SOUND DESIGN

Jason Duplissea, *The Apollo of Bellac*, Buffalo Nights Theater Company, at the Powerhouse Theater

Frank Fitzpatrick/Bill Radd Thedford, *Shakin' the Mess Outta Misery*, Stella Adler Theater  
 John Zalewski, *Sleepwalk*, Playwrights' Arena, at Inside the Ford

### CAREER ACHIEVEMENT

Martin Magner

### MUSICAL/VOCAL DIRECTION

Eric Anderson, "bare," God Help! Productions, at the Hudson Mainstage Theater  
 Darryl Archibald/Brian Murphy, *Merrily We Roll Along*, West Coast Ensemble  
 Dana Bisignano, *Godspell*, Actors Co-op

### ORIGINAL MUSIC

Jef Bek, *The Master and Margarita*, Zoo District, at ArtShare/Hudson Backstage

### QUEEN OF THE ANGELS AWARD

Kim Garfield

### ADAPTATION

Victor D'Altorio/Henrietta Pearsall, *The Babysitter*, McCadden Theater  
 Charles A. Duncombe Jr., *MedeaText: Los Angeles/Despoiled Shore*, City Garage  
 Brian Foyster, *A Separate Peace*, Hudson Guild Theater  
 Meryl Friedman, *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, Falcon Theater  
 Richard Hellweg and Michael Franco, *The Master and Margarita*, Zoo District, at ArtShare/Hudson Backstage

### CHOREOGRAPHY

Kate Caplin, *Godspell*, Actors Co-op  
 Nancy Keystone, *The Akhmatova Project*, Critical Mass, at the Actors' Gang Theater  
 Larry Sousa, *Merrily We Roll Along*, West Coast Ensemble

### VIDEOGRAPHY

Chris Bell/Larry Basso, *How To Steal an Election*, Actors' Gang  
 Michael Rainey, *Dubya 2000*, Sacred Fools Theater Company  
 Rush Riddle/Marvin Solomon, *Speed-Hedda*, Fabulous Monsters, at Evidence Room

### PROP DESIGN

John Alteri/Joe Seely/Joe Fria, *Pathé X*, Zoo District, at the Lillian Theater  
 Bradley Thordarson, *Dubya 2000*, Sacred Fools Theater Company

### MASK DESIGN

Paule Lemasson, *Pathé X*, Zoo District, at the Lillian Theater  
 Jami Rudofsky/Dick Maganti, *The Apollo of Bellac*, Buffalo Nights, at the Powerhouse Theater



WEDNESDAY  
FEBRUARY 28, 2001  
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# Calendar

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

## 'In Flagrante Gothicto' Tops Critics' Nominations

**Theater** • Tiny Hollywood company is followed by 'The Lion King,' 'bare' and 'Metamorphoses' in the L.A. group's balloting.

By DON SHIRLEY  
TIMES THEATER WRITER

"In Flagrante Gothicto," a Gothic romance parody at a tiny Hollywood theater, landed seven Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle nominations, more than any other production in this year's competition, the organization announced Tuesday.

The production by Circle X Theatre Company at the McCadden Place Theatre won a shared writing nomination for its creators, Jillian Armenante and Alice Dodd. Armenante was also nominated for directing, and Dodd for acting. The show is one of five nominees for outstanding production.

Three shows garnered five nominations apiece, including the Mark Taper Forum's "Metamorphoses," which is another of the five nominees for outstanding production. But the other two runners-up in the overall nomination count, Disney's "The Lion King" and the little musical "bare," were not among the production nominees.

"The Lion King" has an unusual distinction: Three of four nominations are in one category, costumes. The show's costumes, masks and puppets, and hair and makeup received individual nominations.

Two shows at Pacific Resident Theatre, "Tonight at 8:30" and "Lady Chatterley's Lover," were among the five production nominees. With each of them taking four nominations, Venice-based Pacific Resident Theatre was second only to the Center Theatre Group for the most nominations by a single company. Center Theatre Group's shows at the Taper and the Ahmanson Theatre received a total of 11 nominations. For the first year since 1981, South Coast Repertory in Costa Mesa received no nominations.

The L.A. Drama Critics Circle membership consists of 23 critics. The Los Angeles Times does not participate, although three freelance reviewers for The Times are members.

According to the group's rules,



LAWRENCE K. HO / Los Angeles Times

Alice Dodd, foreground, won nominations for co-writing and acting in the parody "In Flagrante Gothicto."

half of the 60 nominees will win; there may be more than one winner—or none—in any category. The awards ceremony is scheduled for April 2 at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel. The event is open to the public; reservations are available at (323) 656-9407.

The nominees:

**Production:** "In Flagrante Gothicto," Circle X Theatre Company at McCadden Place Theatre; "Lady Chatterley's Lover," Pacific Resident Theatre; "The Master and Margarita," Zoo District at ArtShare and Hudson Theatre; "Metamorphoses," Mark Taper Forum; "Tonight at 8:30," Pacific Resident Theatre.

**Direction:** Jillian Armenante, "In Flagrante Gothicto"; Michael Lilly, "Additional Particulars"; Daniel O'Connor, "Tonight at 8:30"; John Vreeke, "Lady Chatterley's Lover"; Mary Zimmerman, "Metamorphoses."

**Writing:** Jillian Armenante and Alice Dodd, "In Flagrante Gothicto"; Phyllis Frelich, Linda Bove & Bob Daniels, Dear West Theatre's adaptation of "A Streetcar Named Desire"; Ronald Harwood, "Taking Sides"; Ed Simpson, "Additional Particulars."

**Musical Score:** Shaun Davey and Richard Nelson, "James Joyce's The Dead"; Amanda Green and Curtis Moore, "Up the Week Without a Paddle"; Jon Hartnere Jr. and Damon Intrabartolo, "bare."

**Lead Performance:** Kirk Baily, "Additional Particulars"; Kathleen Chalfant, "Wir"; Leland Crooke, "Taking Sides"; Alice Dodd, "In Flagrante Gothicto"; David Dukes, "Waiting for Godot"; Leslie Fera, "Lady Chatterley's Lover"; Travis Michael Holder, "Nasty Little Secrets"; Gregory Itzin, "Waiting for Godot"; Troy M. Kotsur, "A Streetcar Named Desire"; Suanne Spoke, "A Streetcar Named Desire"; Deborah Strang, "The Skin of Our Teeth."

**Featured Performance:** Eydie Alyson, "Once in a Lifetime"; Anastasia Basil, "In Flagrante Gothicto"; Stephen McKinley Henderson, "Jitney"; Jill Hill, "The Skin of Our Teeth"; Leslie Jordan, "Southern Baptist Sissies"; Keili Leikovitz, "bare"; Molly Schaffer, "Tonight at 8:30"; Ann Walker, "Southern Baptist Sissies"; Amy Warner, "Lady Chatterley's Lover."

**Scenic Design:** David Gallo, "Jitney"; Daniel Ostling, "Metamorphoses"; Neil Patel, "Dinner with Friends"; Gary Smoot, "In Flagrante Gothicto"; Robert Steinberg, "A Streetcar Named Desire."

**Lighting Design:** T.J. Gerckens, "Metamorphoses"; Donald Holder, "The Lion King"; Jennifer Tipton, "James Joyce's The Dead"; Dan Weingarten, "In Flagrante Gothicto."

**Costume Design:** Maro Parian and Sofi Khachmany, "The Master and Margarita"; Julie Taymor, "The Lion

King" costumes; Julie Taymor and Michael Curry, "The Lion King" masks and puppets; Michael Ward, "The Lion King" hair and makeup.

**Sound Design:** Bruce Ellman, "Fully Committed"; Andre Pluess and Ben Sussman, "Metamorphoses"; Casey Stone, "bare."

**Choreography:** Cate Caplin, "Godspell"; Garth Fagan, "The Lion King"; Onalee Hunter, "bare."

**Musical Direction:** Deborah Lurie, "bare"; Charles Prince, "James Joyce's The Dead"; Boko Suzuki, "Swing"; Mary Van Arsdell, "Tonight at 8:30."

# Reviews

## REVIEWS

A STREETCAR  
NAMED DESIRE

at Deaf West Theatre



Reviewed by Wenzel Jones

**R**EAD THIS REVIEW. Not to be strident, but I realize that this is one of those oft-revived warhorses, reviews of which may not attract readers past the title, as they mutter a dismissive and world-weary, "Streetcar again?" This is *Streetcar* as you've never seen it before. Director Deborah LaVine has reconfigured the show to emphasize loneliness and miscommunication by having Blanche (Suanne Spoke) as a hearing person adrift in the world of the deaf. It's a brilliant notion and, more important, masterfully executed.

Most of the characters are portrayed by deaf actors who sign their dialogue, while hearing actors provide the voices from the upper level of Robert Steinberg's French Quarter tenement set. The melding of two actors into one character is seamless in every instance. The set, by the way, falls short of perfection only in its lack of oppressive humidity and a handful of scut-

tling roaches. While Ted Schumacher's trumpet playing is not, literally, a part of the set, it appears to spring unbidden, and beautifully, from the locale.

Spoke is extraordinary as her Blanche tries to adjust to the non-hearing world. Her signing is at first awkward, like stumbling through a foreign country with nothing but a phrase book, eventually growing more assured and expressive. Williams' more florid passages are only enhanced by the visual expressiveness of American Sign Language. Spoke makes you forget that anybody else has ever done the part.

Neither Stanley (Troy M. Kotsur, voiced by John Ireland) nor Stella (Terrylene, voiced by Maureen Davis) are eclipsed, however, by the infamous Miss du Bois. Their love is a powerful thing, brilliantly captured by the four actors responsible. And—not to be flippant but only because

everybody I've told about the show asked me—the answer is no. Stanley does *not* stand at the bottom of the stairs and spell out S-T-E-L-L-A. The moment is rendered in such a way as to be shattering. The supporting characters of Mitch, Blanche's gentleman friend (Bob Hiltermann, voiced by Phil Di Pietro) and the upstairs neighbor Eunice (Wanda La Coure, voiced by Donne McRae) are handled with grace and humor by the performers. Donna Scarte, Mark Brudney, Bryan Buckey, and Olav Axelsen round out the truly impressive cast.

Ken Booth's lights are lovely (although it seems that Blanche's Chinese paper lantern should have changed the mood of the room just a little) and the sound design by Bill O'Brien is especially impressive, since sub-woofers have been installed beneath the seating area to enhance the experience. The music comes through

your feet and the tram sounds feel just as if *Desire* were running right down Lankershim. Catch it before it's gone.

"A Streetcar Named Desire," presented by and at the Deaf West Theatre Company, 5112 Lankershim Blvd., N. Hollywood. Thurs.-Sat. 8 p.m., Sat. 2 p.m., Sun. 3 p.m. Mar. 4-Apr. 9, 515-20-1818/752-2773.



photo by Ed Kileger

Stop sign: Troy Kotsur and Suanne Spoke in *A Streetcar Named Desire*.THE ACTORS  
TRADE WEEKLYMarch 9 — March 15, 2000  
\$2.75 California / \$3.25 elsewhereBACKSTAGE  
DRAMA LOGUE

# Daily News

FRIDAY, MARCH 24, 2000

L.A. LIFE

DAILY NEWS • FRIDAY • MARCH 24, 2000

# Weekend

## This 'Streetcar' heading in desirable direction

By Julio Martinez  
Special to the Daily News

There is an intellectual adjustment theater audiences need to make when observing deaf actors signing on stage while hearing actors voice their dialogue from another part of the stage.

### Review

The attention can't help but be split between the moving body and the sounded voice. This process becomes even more complicated when you combine hearing actors who speak their own lines and deaf actors who can't in the same scene.

These concerns are soon washed away in the surge of aesthetic brilliance that is Deaf West Theatre's transcendent production of the Tennessee Williams classic, "A Streetcar Named Desire." Director Deborah LaVine has brilliantly infused the often jarring social tension that exists in the communication between the hearing and the deaf into the fabric of Williams' tale of

### The facts

- **What:** "A Streetcar Named Desire."
- **Where:** Deaf West Theatre, 5112 Lankershim Blvd., North Hollywood.
- **When:** 8 p.m. Thursdays and Fridays, 2 and 8 p.m. Saturdays, 3 p.m. Sundays; through April 9.
- **Tickets:** \$20.
- **Our rating:** ★★★★★

Blanche DuBois (Suanne Spoke), an aging, emotionally fragile Southern belle whose tenuous hold on reality is relentlessly crushed by her sister's brutish husband, Stanley Kowalski (Troy M. Kotsur). The story centers on the earthy, passionate relationship between Stanley and his newly pregnant wife Stella (Terrylene), a non-hearing couple who fluidly sign their joyous bond with one another.

Their dialogue is voiced by two denizens of their New Orleans

neighborhood (John Ireland and Maureen Davis), who observe everything from the wrought-iron balconies that hover over the couple's tiny two-room abode. Cautiously invading this seedy but vibrant enclave is Stella's hearing, older sister Blanche, a refined school teacher, whose youthful aristocratic upbringing never prepared her for the uncompromising poverty and rejection that comes from watching the family estate consumed by creditors and her once-glowing beauty lost to middle age.

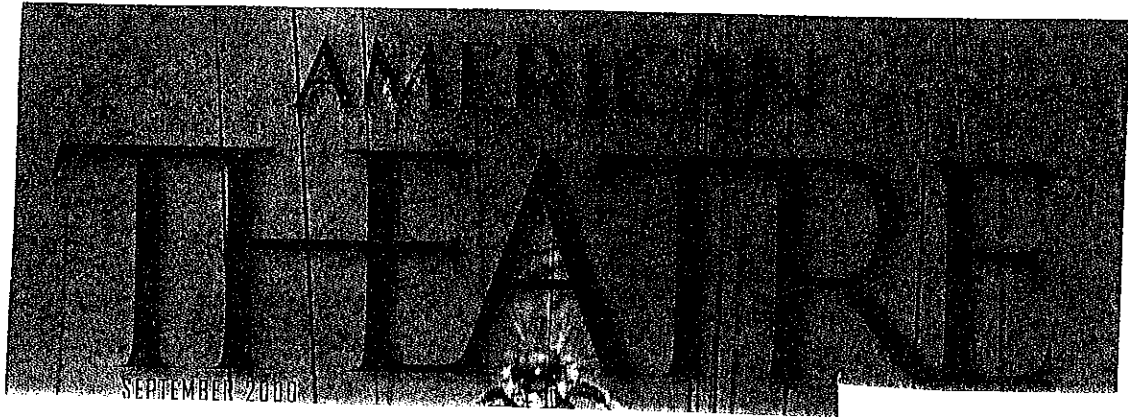
Aside from the inevitable tension inherent in Stanley and Blanche occupying the same space, LaVine has added the dimension of Blanche being a hearing person trapped within Stanley and Stella's small world of non-hearing friends and neighbors. And once Stanley reasons that Blanche's repugnance of him and "his kind" could be a threat to his relationship with Stella, he simply destroys her. LaVine's inspired staging and the work of an outstanding ensemble of deaf and hearing actors are given wings by Spoke's multilayered, richly

detailed performance as Blanche.

Kotsur's dominating physical presence as Stanley strikes a perfect balance of brooding distrust of Blanche and primal need for Stella. One of the most telling moments of the first act is Kotsur's use of his own voice to shout out a searingly guttural, animalistic mating call to Stella after he has beaten her in a drunken rage.

Terrylene effectively communicates the simple femininity of a loving woman whose only desire is to live with and be loved by Stanley. Stella's growing disillusionment with Stanley is made palpable in the final scene when Terrylene uses her own voice to express her sorrow and anguish at her failure to protect her sister as Blanche is led away to an asylum.

Robert Steinberg's evocative French Quarter set design is complimented by the lighting of Ken Booth and the accurate period costuming of Diane Graebner. A great asset to the production is the between-scenes live trumpet improvisations of musician Ted Schumacher.



NORTH HOLLYWOOD, CALIF.

## DESIRE AND DIFFERENCE



ED KREIGER

Outside looking in: Terrylene and Troy Kotsur in Deaf West's *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

Translating Tennessee Williams's poetic cadences into sign language may seem a risky undertaking. But the challenge was a familiar one for Ed Waterstreet, artistic director of Deaf West Theatre, the first professional resident sign-language theatre in the western United States. Formerly an actor with the National The-

atre for the Deaf, Waterstreet founded Deaf West a decade ago and has subsequently shepherded the company and its guest directors through sign-language versions of numerous classics—*Equus*, *Medea*, *Of Mice and Men* and *The House of Bernarda Alba*, among others.

In March, Deaf West celebrated its 10th-anniversary season and inaugurated its new home in North Hollywood with a sign-language production of *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Waterstreet had approached award-winning Los Angeles-based director Deborah LaVine with a deaf/hearing conceptual framework he felt accentuated the play's "outsider" theme: Stella Kowalski, who is deaf, has found a home within a deaf-dominated, signing New Orleans community. Her husband, Stanley, and the majority of their friends are deaf. Entering this world, the hearing Blanche DuBois finds the verbal charms she has so depended upon are useless. No

one can hear her. She attempts to express herself using sign-language, but her tentative skills merely frustrate those around her. Misunderstandings multiply. As a deaf man, Stanley is well aware of the persecution encountered by anyone "different." Nevertheless, he finds Blanche's weakness threatening and despises her for it.

This *Streetcar's* intriguing interplay of deaf and hearing cultures is symbolized by Robert Steinberg's brilliantly compact two-tiered set. Hearing actors often make use of the upper-tier to voice lines for the signing actors below them. The production, scheduled for a Sept. 6–Oct. 8 reprise, has some other unique touches, as well. For instance, Blanche brings the deaf actor playing Mitch over to her radio and places his hand on it so that he can "feel" the music. And, in the play's most poignant moment, the non-speaking Stanley calls out for Stella with a heart-piercing scream. —Irene Oppenheim

# DAILY TROJAN

Student newspaper of the University of Southern California

E-mail: dtrojan@usc.edu

LIFESTYLE

## Theater: Deaf actors portray classic play

### "A Streetcar Named Desire"

Director: Deborah LaVine  
Location: Deaf West Theatre  
Cost: \$20

It took a few extra months to open its doors, but now that Deaf West Theatre is thriving in its new home in North Hollywood, the theater district is more complete. The first two produc-

tions of its inaugural season, Tennessee Williams' "A Streetcar Named Desire" and Lionel Bart's musical "Oliver," have been nominated for a total of 17 Ovation Awards between them.

Their first production, "A Streetcar Named Desire," has reopened for a second run. This is a great inaugural production — a real gem that now shines brighter than ever.

Deborah LaVine exquisitely directs an ensemble that is flawless. Suanne Spoke, the only hearing actress, is magnificent as Blanche Dubois. She learned sign language for the first time in January to play this part and never misses a beat. Dubois encounters problems unlike any other, because she enters a non-hearing world that she has not been accustomed to for many years. Learning to sign again is difficult for her.

Although it gradually becomes easier, the overall communication between Blanche and the others breaks down. Her loneliness, melancholy and bouts of madness have a heightened sense of reality and take on special meaning in this hearing-impaired environment. Williams himself would be inspired to see how beautifully his poetry plays in this diverse setting.

Troy M. Kotsur is raw sensuality as Stanley and his scenes with Suanne are electric. Hearing-impaired, Troy uses his voice most effectively in calling for Stellaaaaa — it is a painful cry like that of a wounded animal.

No one can forget Brando in this role, but, comparisons aside, Kotsur goes for broke with his imposing physicality and creates a rather awesome portrait. Terrylene is sweet and compassionate as Stella. She uses her radiant beauty and smile most effectively to create a woman who is most content to be the wife and mother that Miss Blanche can never be.

Hiltermann provides just the right combination of manliness and confidence in his basic interpretation of Mitch. Urike Stanley, Mitch possesses tremendous sensitivity and Hiltermann is both strong and vulnerable.

The main action is played on the first level and the second is used for the actors that provide the voices for the hearing-impaired actors. The atmosphere created here, with a musician and vendors and other tenants moving around the set, is near-to-perfect.

Spoke is a brilliant Blanche and leads a formidable company. The current mounting is stronger and more passionate than when it first opened last March.

"A Streetcar Named Desire" is playing at the Deaf West Theatre, 5112 Lankershim Blvd., until Oct. 15. Show times are at 8 p.m. Thursday through Saturday, 2 p.m. on Saturday and 3 p.m. on Sunday. Tickets are \$20. Call: (818) 762-2773 for reservations.

— Don Grigware | Contributing  
Writer

# ENTERTAINMENT TODAY



## Ticket holders

by Travis Michael Holder

century: Tennessee Williams' lyrical *A Streetcar Named Desire*. This unforgettable mounting of his great classic once again proves that a true artist need not speak or hear to bring startling theatrical poetry to an audience.

In this interpretation, Blanche (in a pivotal *tour de force* Magnani-sized performance by the remarkable Suanne Spoke) is the only speaking inhabitant of Elysian Fields, the end of the line in more ways than one for the namesake real-life New Orleans streetcar line. Scripted lines such as "Open your pretty little mouth and speak" or "I had forgotten how quiet you are" happily remain unaltered without notice, but the connection between Blanche and her sister's hearing-impaired husband and friends takes on a fascinating new meaning. At the beginning, Spoke "signs" somewhat clumsily until she gets used re-acclimated into the deaf culture of Stella's world. To quote a presskit handout: "The early prejudices and stigma attached to being deaf in 1947 (before ASL was even formally acknowledged and accepted as a legitimate language) resonate in the dialogue, i.e. Blanche's repugnance toward Stanley and 'his kind.'"

### *A Streetcar Named Desire* Deaf West Theatre

When I saw Deaf West's magical and ambitious *Romeo and Juliet: Circus Verona* last year, I was stunned to find that a work, thought to have survived through the ages because of Mr. Shakespeare's poetic dialogue, could remain equally poetic translated into American Sign Language. It was an amazing feat, as was Deaf West's visually mesmerizing *Equus* the season before. But with the inauguration of their new permanent home in a lovingly renovated NoHo storefront, nothing could be more appropriate to launch it than the best play written by the man who brought poetry back to the theater in the mid-20<sup>th</sup>

In the highly capable hands of director Deborah Lavine, Deaf West's unique interpretation is fresh and compelling. Ken Booth's atmospheric lighting spills onto and over the wrought iron balconies of Robert Steinberg's impressive two-story New Orleans rowhouse set. From this place, speaking actors perform the text as they watch the movements of the hearing-impaired actors below, making the alienation of William's poignant characters even more pronounced. And when Troy M. Kotsur (the prolific often-leading man of so many Deaf West productions) takes over for his voiced counterpart John Ireland to intone the familiar wail "Stella!" up the stairs to the balcony above, it is a chilling moment, coming out more like a guttural and eerie "Sta-Dah!" Bob Hiltermann is excellent as Blanche's fleeting beau Mitch and the single-named Terrylyne is sweet and oddly alluring as the faithful Stella. Both Ireland and Maureen Davis do admirable jobs as the voices of Williams' most tragically touching married couple and indeed the entire supporting cast is a wonderful asset to this fine presentation. They are handsomely complimented by the seductive wailing jazz musicianship of Ted D. Schmacher — although I kept thinking he once played the horn for a production at an all-deaf theater would surely take some explaining.

If he were alive in the flesh and

not just living on for eternity in the extraordinary body of his work, Tennessee Williams, who loved to show up at small productions of his plays, would have been proud to have attended this one. He would have been, if you'll excuse the expression here, totally speechless. For tickets, call (818)



*A Streetcar Named Desire*

762-2773 for a voice response or (818)  
762-2782 for TTY.

# LAW WEEKLY

VALLEY EDITION

P I C K S O F T H E W E E K

**A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE** "I don't want realism; I want magic," declares tainted heroine Blanche Du Bois in Tennessee Williams' classic about solitude, hypocrisy and subterfuge. And this production delivers magic as the lonely and manipulative Blanche is portrayed by hearing actress Suanne Spoke, with the balance of the cast being hearing impaired. Director Deborah LaVine's superb staging is complemented by Robert Steinberg's two-tiered set, with the main action unfolding below, and the balcony above serving as a parallel universe for the voice actors. This device heightens Blanche's isolation when she descends on New Orleans and her younger sister, Stella (Terrylene, voice by Maureen Davis), from her family's foreclosed Mississippi plantation. It also boosts the tension between the genteel Blanche and her sister's brutish husband, Stanley (Troy M. Kotsur, voice by John Ireland), Blanche's tormentor and object of suppressed desire. Kotsur is a commanding Stanley whose limited speech makes the delivery of the trademark "Stellaaaaaa!" all the more compelling. Spoke is luminous during the delivery of Blanche's monologue about the shattered illusions that signal her approaching mental collapse. Deaf West Theater, 5112 Lankershim Blvd., N. Hollywood; Thurs.-Sat., 8 p.m.; mats Sat., 2 p.m.; Sun., 3 p.m.; thru April 9. (818) 762-2773; TTY, (818) 762-2782. (Martín Hernández)

# Articles

# Calendar weekend

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LAWRENCE K. HO / Los Angeles Times



Troy Kotsur and Terrylene star in "A Streetcar Named Desire," left. Michael Richards will be at the Hollywood Improv. "Multnomah Falls" is among the Carleton Watkins photographs on exhibit at the Getty Center.



Courtesy of Getty Center

## Itinerary: Not the Oscars

By ROBIN RAUZI  
TIMES STAFF WRITER

**G**eez. You'd think the way some people are carrying on (look left and right), the Oscars are going to swallow the whole universe. Or at least the better part of Southern California.

Yeah, yeah, we make a lot of movies in Los Angeles. But we make other artistic things too—like music and plays and art. Really.

So when those relatives in the Midwest call Sunday and want to know if you've spotted any stars or if you have the inside track on Oscar winners, you can say, "Oh? Is it Oscar weekend? I was just going to the museum."

In fact, this may be the perfect weekend to check out non-movie things going on around town. With so many people staying home to watch the awards—an average of 45.6 million Americans were tuned in last year—you might be able to get a same-day parking reservation at the Getty Center.

### Thursday

Turn off "ET" and get thee to a jazz club.

There are plenty of them, but if you're looking for recommendations, how about the **Jazz Bakery** (3233 Helms Ave., Culver City, [310] 271-9039)? The legendary **Oscar Brown Jr.** performs today through Sunday.

The septuagenarian Brown is tough to categorize—and he seems to like it that way. Part jazz singer, part poet, part songwriter—perhaps *The Times'* jazz writer, Don Heckman, put it best when he hailed Brown as "a national treasure, a compelling entertainer, and a voice of reason in a musical world that vacillates between excess and political correctness."

### Friday

Little-known fact: Los Angeles has more theaters than New York.

Not movie theaters (though that may also be true). *Theater*

theaters.

For a new spin on a Tennessee Williams classic, try **Deaf West Theatre Company's** revival of "A Streetcar Named Desire" (Deaf West Theatre, 5112 Lankershim Blvd., North Hollywood, Thursday-Friday, 8 p.m.; Saturday, 2 and 8 p.m.; Sunday, 3 p.m. Ends April 9. \$20. [818] 762-2773; [818] 762-2787 [TTY]). The cast features a mix of speaking and signing actors—and that creates a powerful subtext showing how Blanche is further isolated from Stella and Stanley's world. The production also inaugurates Deaf West's new home in North Hollywood.

### Saturday

Here's one for your star-searching relatives in Ohio: **Michael Richards** at the **Hollywood Improv**.

Richards, best known as Jerry Seinfeld's oddball TV neighbor Kramer, has also been in films such as "Unstrung Heroes." Like several

comedians who got plucked into sitcoms, Richards is returning to his stage act, honing it at the **Hollywood Improv** (8162 Melrose Ave., [323] 651-2583) on Saturday nights at 8:30 and 10:30.

### Sunday

Ah, spring at the Getty. The gardens are blooming, the courtyards pleasant and warm.

Seasonal attributes aside, there are several compelling shows on view right now worth a tram trip up the hill to the **Getty Center** (1200 Getty Center Drive, Brentwood. Call to see if same-day parking reservations are available, [310] 440-7300). Late afternoon, once the Oscar preview shows start, might be a good bet. Check out "Departures," where local contemporary artists created works inspired by things in the permanent collection. Fans of photography and the history of the American West will enjoy the landscapes of "Carleton Watkins: From Where the View Looked Best."