

The Naledi Theatre Awards winners announced

The winners of the Naledi Theatre Awards were announced earlier this week at the Lyric Theatre, Gold Reef City, Joburg, and Fiona Ramsay won the Best Lead Performance in a Play (Female) for two different plays: Miss Dietrich Regrets, and Doubt.

Ramsay's co-star in Doubt, Janna Ramos-Violante, won the Best Supporting Actress award.

An exciting 'first' for the Naledis was the overwhelming success of Moagi Modise's Lepatata. It won the Best Ensemble category, making South African theatrical history in the process as the first Setswana play to win a major theatre award. The play was directed by Makhaola Ndebele.

Another innovation this year by Naledi's executive director, Dawn Lindberg, was the Lesedi Spirit of Courage Award, which went to Gaynor Young who was seriously injured during a production of the musical Camelot at the SA State Theatre some years ago.



Multiple winners

Top honours this year went to Lara Foot's staging of Fishers of Hope (four awards), including Best Production Of A Play. The dark musical Sweeney Todd, The Demon Barber of Fleet Street won three awards, and Nataniël's musical After Animals took home five awards. Janice Honeyman's musical Sister Act garnered three awards, and Greg Homann's Alan Paton drama, A Voice I Cannot Silence, also won three awards.

Ralph Lawson, who portrayed controversial author and poet Alan Paton in *Cry the Beloved Country*, took the top acting accolade for Best Lead Performance In A Play (Male). Bright new face Menzi Mkhwane won The Brett Golden Award for Best Newcomer/Breakthrough award for the same production. Gregg Homann and Lawson also won the award for Best New SA Script.

Apart from winning the Best Production Of A Play category, *Fishers of Hope* also provided other winners: Phillip Tipo Tindisa (Best Supporting Actor), Patrick Curtis (Best Set Design) and Grant van Ster (Best Original Choreography).

Khayelihle Dominique Gumede was named Best Director Of A Play for his vivid interpretation of the evergreen *Crepuscule* about love across the colour line.

The versatile Jonathan Roxmouth once again shone on *Naledi* night, winning the Best Performance In A Musical award for his captivating lead role in *Sweeney Todd, The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*. Director Steven Stead was voted Best Director Of A Musical/Revue for this production, which also received The Joan Brickhill Award for Best Production Of A Musical, sponsored by Carolyn Steyn.

Stunning Nataniël

Veteran musical maestro Nataniël once again stunned audiences with his out-of-the-box production of *After Animals*, which received a host of technical awards. These were for Best Lighting Design (Kevin Stannet), Best Sound Design (Larry Pullen) and Best AV/Animation (JanHendrik Burger), and the Best Score/ Arrangement/ Adaptation, while the award for Best Costume Designer went to Floris Louw.

Sister Act allowed singer and actress Candida Mosoma to show her true mettle and she danced off with Best Performance In A Musical, while Rowan Bakker, no stranger to award ceremonies, won Best Musical Director. Phumi Mncayi was named Best Support/Featured Performance for her part in *Sister Act*.

The award for Best Production For Children (under 12) (Supported by Assitej SA) went to *Shrek, The Musical JR*, which was staged by Jill Girard and Keith Smith's People's Theatre, while *Making Mandela* took the honours in the Best Production For Young Audiences (13 to 17) (Supported by Assitej SA) category.

Gamelihle Bovana was recognised for his performance in James and the Giant Peach and received an award for Best Performance In A Children's Theatre Production (Supported by Assitej SA).

Johnny Boskak is Feeling Funny received the Best Production: Cutting Edge nod for writer and co-director Craig Morris.



Lifetime Achievement Awards

Lifetime Achievement Awards were given posthumously to the late Taliep Petersen and to Cape Town's illustrious entertainer Alvon Collison, while the World Impact Award went to the internationally renowned a capella group, Ladysmith Black Mambazo.

Thembi Mtshali, who has made a vast contribution to the arts over the years, and in particular to the empowerment of women, was given the Executive Director's Award.

Executive director, Dawn Lindberg, says of this year's awards: "The standard of excellence gets higher and higher each year, making the judges' job of selecting winners almost tortological; ALL the nominees are winners in our eyes!"

"The panel sees over 70 productions each year, with over 300 nominees on the list of excellence," says Lindberg. "Judging takes place over several days with everyone on the panel allowed space to debate and discuss each and every of the 27 categories. The final votes are by secret ballot and verified by Zeridium."

"The process of seeing, analysing and assessing all professional productions staged in Gauteng during each year is a full-time job which is not always acknowledged," Lindberg continues. "Lack of sufficient financial support from Government and commercial sponsors is a constant battle, but Naledi is proud to be internationally recognised as the bench mark of excellence in SA live theatre."

For more information, visit www.naleditheatreawards.org.za