



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **50<sup>th</sup> Jeff Awards Honor 4 Theatres over 50**

**CHICAGO**—The Jeff Awards will celebrate its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary by presenting four **Special Awards to theatres thriving after more than 50 years** at the **50th Annual Equity Jeff Awards on Monday, October 22 at Drury Lane Theatre**, 100 Drury Lane, Oakbrook Terrace, IL. These four award-winning theatres laid their Chicago foundations in drama, comedy, and musical theatre more than half a century ago and have endured to this day. The 2018 recipients are **Goodman Theatre** (1925), **Drury Lane Productions** (1949), **Court Theatre** (1955), and **The Second City** (1959). Collectively, they have received more than 1,400 nominations and 350 awards, dating back to the first ceremony.

The evening will be hosted by the Founder and Artistic Director of Chicago Shakespeare Theatre **Barbara Gaines** and Founder and CEO of the Black Ensemble Theater **Jackie Taylor**, and directed by Porchlight Music Theatre’s Artistic Director **Michael Weber**.

The 50th Annual Equity Awards will honor excellence in equity theatre. **Performances will feature nominated casts from musical and revues.** Pre-show appetizers and a cash bar begin at 6:00 pm, the **awards ceremony will commence at 7:30 pm**, and a lavish buffet reception will follow. Advance purchase tickets, which include the ceremony and pre- and post-show parties, are \$85 (\$65 for members of Actors’ Equity Association, United Scenic Artists, Stage Directors and Choreographers Society, Stage Managers’ Association, IATSE, The Dramatists Guild of America, and the American Federation of Musicians). Tickets at the door, if available, will be an additional \$10. The evening is black tie optional, and the public is invited to attend. To purchase tickets, visit [www.jeffawards.org](http://www.jeffawards.org). For more information, contact Jeff Awards Equity Ceremony Producer Merrill Prager at [producer@jeffawards.org](mailto:producer@jeffawards.org).

***The complete list of Equity Jeff Awards nominees is available at***  
***, [www.jeffawards.org](http://www.jeffawards.org)***

### **About The Four Special Award Recipients**

**Goodman Theatre**, founded in 1925: America’s “Best Regional Theatre” (Time magazine), Goodman Theatre is a premier not-for-profit organization distinguished by the excellence and scope of its artistic programming and civic engagement. Led by Artistic Director Robert Falls and Executive Director Roche Schulfer, the theater’s artistic priorities include new play development (more than 150 world or American premieres), large scale musical theater works and reimagined classics (celebrated revivals include Falls’ productions of *Death of a Salesman* and *The Iceman Cometh*). Goodman Theatre artists and productions have earned two Pulitzer



Prizes, 22 Tony Awards, over 160 Jeff Awards and many more accolades. In addition, the Goodman is the first theater in the world to produce all 10 plays in August Wilson’s “American Century Cycle” and its annual holiday tradition A Christmas Carol, which celebrates its 41st anniversary this season, has created a new generation of theatergoers. The Goodman also frequently serves as a production partner with local off-Loop theaters and national and international companies by providing financial support or physical space for a variety of artistic endeavors.

**Drury Lane Theatre**, founded in 1949: Under the leadership of President Kyle DeSantis and Artistic Director William Osetek, Drury Lane Theatre is a major force in the Chicagoland theatre scene, presenting world-class productions in collaboration with some of the nation’s leading actors, artists, writers, and directors. Drury Lane has had locations in Evergreen Park (which operated for 45 years, closing in 2003), Water Tower in Chicago, and its current operation in Oak Brook for the past 30 years. Collectively at its locations, Drury Lane has staged more than 2,000 productions and has been nominated for more than 350 Joseph Jefferson Awards. Drury Lane is committed to breathing new life into beloved classics and introducing audiences to exciting new works. Drury Lane in Oakbrook alone has employed more than 7,500 actors and 10,000 musicians, designers, and technicians to entertain upwards of nine million audience members. Originally founded by Anthony DeSantis, Drury Lane Theatre remains a family-run organization known for producing breathtaking Broadway classics, top-rated musicals, bold new works, hilarious comedies, and unforgettable concert events.

**Court Theatre**, founded in 1955: Court Theatre was founded in 1955 as an amateur outdoor summer theatre at the University of Chicago. Nicholas Rudall, a Professor of Classics at the University, established the theatre as a professional company in 1975. As Founding Artistic Director, Rudall first conceived Court’s mission of translating and adapting classic texts for contemporary audiences. Today, Court Theatre is the professional theatre of the University of Chicago, dedicated to innovation, inquiry, intellectual engagement, and community service. Court now serves 50,000 patrons and 4,000 high school students each season through its main stage productions and its community partner and education initiatives. Charles Newell, the Marilyn F. Vitale Artistic Director, has led Court since 1994; Executive Director Angel Ysaguirre joined the theatre in 2018. In 2013, Court established the Center for Classic Theatre at the University of Chicago, dedicating the theatre to an expanded mission: curating large-scale, interdisciplinary theatrical experiences that fully access and utilize the extraordinary intellectual resources that surround the theatre. Dynamic collaborations with University of Chicago faculty and with community partners on Chicago’s South Side enable Court to re-examine classic texts in ways that pose enduring and provocative questions about the human experience. Court Theatre aims to make a lasting contribution to American classic theatre by commissioning new works—including new translations and adaptations—and by continuing to explore, expand, and re-define the canon of classic texts.



**Second City**, founded in 1959: Rooted in the groundbreaking improvisational games of Viola Spolin, The Second City opened its doors on a snowy Chicago night in December of 1959, and a comedy revolution began. The small cabaret theater has grown to become the most influential and prolific comedy empire in the world, developing an entirely unique way of creating art and fostering generation after generation of superstars. Co-founded by Spolin's son, Paul Sills, along with Howard Alk and Bernie Sahlins, The Second City was experimental and unconventional in its approach to both theater and comedy. Almost immediately, alumni of The Second City, including Alan Arkin, Joan Rivers, Fred Willard, Gilda Radner, Dan Aykroyd and John Belushi, launched the theater into the international spotlight. Today, The Second City is home to a world-class entertainment company, continuing to produce premier talent in all three of its locations--Chicago, Toronto, and Hollywood--and entertaining more than one million audience members a year.

### The Jeff Awards

The Jeff Awards has been honoring outstanding theatre artists annually since it was established in 1968. With up to 55 members representing a wide variety of backgrounds in theatre (including producers, directors, actors, playwrights, designers, professors of theatre, entertainment lawyers and agents and theatre lovers), the Jeff Awards is committed to celebrating the vitality of Chicago area theatre by recognizing excellence through its recommendations, awards and honors. Opening night judges include not only Jeff members but also the team of Artistic and Technical theatre volunteers (the "A/T Team") which is comprised of artistic directors, producers, directors from major Chicago theatres, actors and designers. The Jeff Awards fosters the artistic growth of area theatres and theatre artists and promotes educational opportunities, audience appreciation and civic pride in the achievements of the theatre community. Each year, the Jeff Awards judges 300 theatrical productions and host two awards ceremonies. Originally chartered to recognize only Equity productions, the Jeff Awards established the Non-Equity Wing in 1973 to celebrate outstanding achievement in non-union theatre.

### Image Gallery



The opening of the Drury Lane in Evergreen Park in 1964.

# 50 JEFF AWARDS

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE IN CHICAGO THEATRE



In 1922, the Goodman's gift to the Art Institute for the establishment of the Kenneth Sawyer Goodman Memorial Theatre



Nicholas Rudall (second, left) displays a scale model of the proposed Court Theatre building.



1959: Bernie Sahlins Second City Opening Night

**SPECIAL NOTICE TO NEWS MEDIA**

Your complimentary ticket to the 50th Annual Equity Jeff Awards Ceremony will be held at the News Media Table at Drury Lane Oakbrook only if you make a reservation in advance with Jeffrey Marks at 312.606.0400 or [media@jeffawards.org](mailto:media@jeffawards.org). Names of award recipients will be released immediately following the ceremony on October 22 by email and on our website under Equity Awards at [www.jeffawards.org](http://www.jeffawards.org). Photos from the event will be available on our website. A Media Curtain is available for your own photos. We will also have an interview area available to you and will assist in bringing interviewees to that area. If you need a quote or an interview with any Jeff Awards Committee member, please call or e-mail Jeffrey Marks at 312.616.0400 or [media@jeffawards.org](mailto:media@jeffawards.org). The Jeff Awards Committee website, [www.jeffawards.org](http://www.jeffawards.org), lists all the current Equity nominees and statistics, along with previous recipients and nominees and other Jeff Awards information and news.

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