



News Release

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Editor's Note:

A complete list of recipients can also be found online in the Non-Equity and News and Events sections at www.jeffawards.org.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

52nd ANNIVERSARY JEFF AWARDS FOR NON-EQUITY THEATERS ANNOUNCED

Prestigious awards honor Chicago theater excellence among dozens of dedicated artists, behind the scenes teams and theater companies during the 2025 Non-Equity season

(March 23, 2026 - Chicago, IL) – At the 52nd anniversary celebration of Non-Equity theater excellence, the Jeff Awards recognized 36 award recipients selected from among 157 nominees across 28 categories of excellence in theater production among shows from 27 producing entities. The awards show was co-hosted by award-winning Chicago entertainment power couple Alexis J. Roston and Kelvin Roston, Jr., under the direction of Adrian Abel Azevedo with music direction under Dr. Michael McBride. Jeff Awards Non-Equity Wing Chair Brittany Chhutani produced the awards show program that featured performances from 10 nominated productions and dozens of local theater artists as presenters.

Two theaters tied for the most awards with eight each and top production (seven). Invictus Theatre Company received awards for two productions including “Angels in America” and “The House that Will Not Stand.” Its “Angels in America” was leading production of the season with seven awards including Production (Play), Ensemble, Director, Performers in a Principal Role and Supporting Role, and Projection Design. The theater also captured a scenic design award for “The House that Will Not Stand.” Recognized for their musicals, Kokandy Production took home awards for “Jekyll & Hyde” and “Amélie.” The “Jekyll & Hyde” team garnered awards for Production (Musical), Ensemble, Director and Musical Direction, Performer in a Principal and Supporting Role, and Lighting Design. “Amélie” was also awarded honors for Performer in a Principal Role rounding out the theater’s recognition this past season.

The Jeff Awards New Work category recognized three authors including Zach Barr (“The Pilon” at Red Theater), Omer Abbas Salem (“One Party Consent” at First Floor Theater), and Chase Wheaton-Werle (“The Curious Circumstances of Louis Le Prince” at The Factory Theater) where his production also garnered an award for Artistic Specialization for Properties Design.

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Among Short Run Productions, the Impostors Theatre Co. took four of the six honors in this category for its production “Helena & Hermia in the Enamored Odyssey” including Production, Direction, New Work, and Costume Design. Open Space Arts earned the remaining two awards for Performer in a Principal Role (“Mr. Parker”) and Performer in a Supporting Role (“Gangsta Baby”).

Performers in productions at Theo Ubique Cabaret Theatre, Story Theatre and Griffin Theatre received honors for Principal and Supporting Roles for “Diana: The Musical,” “At the Wake of a Dead Drag Queen” and “Girls & Boys.”

Additional technical awards were presented to theater artists at Theo Ubique for Choreography (“Urinetown”), Costume Design (“Diana: The Musical”), along with Sound Design to the City Lit Theater Company in association with Black Button Eyes Productions team (“Strange Cargo: The Doom of the Demeter”), and Artistic Specialization honors for Fight Choreography (“Superior Donuts” – The Artistic Home) and Wig Design (“The School for Scandal” – Idle Muse Theatre Company).

Kendyl Meyer, who has worked with First Floor Theater and Kokandy Productions, was the second recipient of the Non-Equity Jeff Impresario Award, honoring excellence in stage management. This award was based on nominations by theater companies to recognize this key role that has been a vital part of the behind-the-scenes work bringing Chicago productions to life over the past season.

The Non-Equity Special Award was presented to Kathy Scambiatterra, actor, director, theater co-founder and extraordinary educator who has shaped generations of artists. Scambiatterra is Artistic Director and co-founder of award-winning The Artistic Home where, for more than two decades she has overseen dozens of productions, festivals, workshops, acted and directed, and led a training program that has impacted nearly 1,000 students.

In its 52nd Anniversary season, January 1, 2025 through December 31, 2025, the Jeff Awards membership judged the opening nights of 102 productions. From these, 47 productions became “Jeff Recommended” which made them eligible for award nominations. In accordance with Jeff Awards criteria and policies, ballots compiled throughout the entire Non-Equity season are comparatively analyzed to determine the nominees who will be represented in each category, and the voting members of the Jeff Awards committee are unaffiliated with any theater companies or producing organizations to ensure awards integrity.

THE 2025 NON-EQUITY JEFF AWARD RECIPIENTS

The Michael and Mona Heath Fund PRODUCTION – PLAY

“Angels in America” – Invictus Theatre

The Michael and Mona Heath Fund PRODUCTION – MUSICAL

“Jekyll & Hyde” – Kokandy Productions

ENSEMBLE – PLAY

“Angels in America” – Invictus Theatre Company

ENSEMBLE – MUSICAL

“Jekyll & Hyde” – Kokandy Productions

NEW WORK

Zach Barr – “The Pilon” – Red Theater

Omer Abbas Salem – “One Party Consent” – First Floor Theater

Chase Wheaton-Werle – “The Curious Circumstances of Louis Le Prince” – The Factory Theater

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DIRECTOR – PLAY

Charles Askenaizer – “Angels in America” – Invictus Theatre

DIRECTOR – MUSICAL

Derek Van Barham – “Jekyll & Hyde” – Kokandy Productions

PERFORMER IN A PRINCIPAL ROLE – PLAY

Terry Guest (Courtney / Anthony) – “At the Wake of a Dead Drag Queen” – The Story Theatre

Ryan Hake (Prior Walter) – “Angels in America” – Invictus Theatre

PERFORMER IN A PRINCIPAL ROLE – MUSICAL

David Moreland (Dr. Henry Jekyll and Mr. Edward Hyde) – “Jekyll & Hyde” – Kokandy Productions

Aurora Penepacker (Amélie Poulain) – “Amélie” – Kokandy Productions

SOLO PERFORMER

Cynthia Marker (Woman) – “Girls & Boys” – Griffin Theatre Company

PERFORMER IN A SUPPORTING ROLE – PLAY

Michael D. Graham (Roy M. Cohn) – “Angels in America” – Invictus Theatre Company

Anne Trodden (Harper Amaty Pitt) – “Angels in America” – Invictus Theatre Company

PERFORMER IN A SUPPORTING ROLE – MUSICAL

Jacqueline Grandt (Queen / Barbara) – “Diana: The Musical” – Theo Ubique Cabaret Theatre

Ava Lane Stovall (Lucy Harris) – “Jekyll & Hyde” – Kokandy Productions

MUSIC DIRECTION

Nick Sula – “Jekyll & Hyde” – Kokandy Productions

SCENIC DESIGN

Kevin Rolfs – “The House That Will Not Stand” – Invictus Theatre

COSTUME DESIGN

Patty Halajian – “Diana: The Musical” - Theo Ubique Cabaret Theatre

CHOREOGRAPHY

Brenda Didier – “Urinetown” – Theo Ubique Cabaret Theatre

SOUND DESIGN

Joe Griffin – “Strange Cargo: The Doom of the Demeter” – City Lit Theater Company and Black Button Eyes Productions

LIGHTING DESIGN

G. "Max" Maxin IV – “Jekyll & Hyde” – Kokandy Productions

PROJECTION DESIGN

G. "Max" Maxin IV – “Angels in America” – Invictus Theatre

ARTISTIC SPECIALIZATION

David Blixt – Fight Choreography – “Superior Donuts” – The Artistic Home

Victoria Jablonski – Wig Design – “The School for Scandal” – Idle Muse Theatre Company

Rachel Livingston – Properties Design – “The Curious Circumstances of Louis Le Prince” – The Factory Theater

PRODUCTION – SHORT RUN

“Helena & Hermia in the Enamored Odyssey” – The Impostors Theatre Co.

DIRECTOR – SHORT RUN

Stefan Roseen – “Helena & Hermia in the Enamored Odyssey” – The Impostors Theatre Co.

PERFORMER IN A PRINCIPAL ROLE – SHORT RUN

Andrew Kain Miller (Terrence) – “Mr. Parker” – Open Space Arts

PERFORMER IN A SUPPORTING ROLE – SHORT RUN

Josh Odor (Senior) – “Gangsta Baby” – Open Space Arts

NEW WORK – SHORT RUN

Dominick Alesia - “Helena & Hermia in the Enamored Odyssey” – The Impostors Theatre Co.

DESIGN – SHORT RUN

Toria Olivier, Costume Design – “Helena & Hermia in the Enamored Odyssey” – The Impostors Theatre Co.

IMPRESARIO AWARD – Excellence in Stage Management

Kendyl Meyer – First Floor Theater and Kokandy Productions

SPECIAL NON-EQUITY AWARD

Kathy Scambiatterra

MULTIPLE NOMINATIONS

By Company

Invictus Theatre Company	8
Kokandy Productions	8
The Impostors Theatre Co.	4
Theo Ubique Cabaret Theatre	3
The Factory Theater	2
Open Space Arts	2

By Production

“Angels in America”	7
“Jekyll & Hyde”	7
“Helena & Hermia in the Enamored Odyssey”	4
“The Curious Circumstances of Louis Le Prince”	2
“Diana: The Musical”	2

By Individual

G “Max” Maxin IV	2
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About The Jeff Awards

The Jeff Awards is one of the most active and engaged theater awards organizations in the country evaluating hundreds of theatrical productions annually and holding two awards ceremonies highlighting work over the past Equity and Non-Equity seasons. Through our recommendations, awards, fellowship grants and honors we help foster the growth of companies, encourage artists, bring new appreciation for diverse storytelling, and cultivate civic pride in the achievements of the Chicago theater community. Originally chartered in 1968 to recognize Equity productions, the Jeff Awards Non-Equity Wing was established in 1973 to celebrate outstanding achievement in non-union theater. The Jeff Awards is professionally independent and voting members of the committee are unaffiliated with any theater companies or producing organizations. For more information, visit www.jeffawards.org.

NOTE FOR MEDIA:

*Photos from the event will be available within a few days of the ceremony on our website at www.jeffawards.org for download and use. Please credit **Joe Mazza/BraveLux**.*

The Jeff Awards website lists all the award recipients and nominations as well as other Jeff Awards information and news. Visit www.jeffawards.org.

The Special Awards category has been presented since 1969. Learn more [here](#) about previous recipients.

A list of award recipients is released immediately following the program on March 23rd by email and on our website under Non-Equity Awards at www.jeffawards.org.

Media may contact theaters and artists directly for interviews. For quotes or an interview with any Jeff Awards committee members, please call or e-mail Suzanne Ross at 312-953-6987 or suzanne@suzanne-ross.com or media@jeffaward.org.

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