

'Louis & Keely' Leads L.A. Drama Critics Circle's Awards

by Les Spindle

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Louis & Keely Live at the Sahara, which returns in a retooled version this week at the Geffen Playhouse's Audrey Skirball Kenis Theatre, continued its stellar showing in the L.A. theatre awards arena. The hit bio-musical by writer-performers Jake Broder and Vanessa Claire Smith earned four wins at the 40th anniversary Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle Awards, held March 16 at the El Portal Theatre in North Hollywood. This production, which previously earned a best musical Ovation Award and six Back Stage Garland Awards, received the most honors. Productions earning three awards apiece were the Fountain Theatre's Gem of the Ocean, Elephant Theatre Company's Anything, and Rogue Artist Ensemble's The Tragical Comedy or Comical Tragedy of Mr. Punch.

Following is a complete list of winners and special award recipients. The Circle also announced a new special honor, the Milton Katselas Award, sponsored by Camelot Artists, to be awarded beginning next year for career or special achievement in directing.

Production

Anything, Elephant Theatre Company at the Lillian Theatre

Gem of the Ocean, Fountain Theatre

Louis & Keely Live at the Sahara, Sacred Fools Theater Company at Sacred Fools and at the Matrix Theatre

McCulloh Award for Revival

Of Mice and Men, Theatre Banshee

Direction

Jeremy Aldridge, Louis & Keely Live at the Sahara, Sacred Fools Theater Company at Sacred Fools and at the Matrix Theatre

Ben Bradley, Gem of the Ocean, Fountain Theatre

David Fofi, Anything, Elephant Theatre Company at the Lillian Theatre

Writing

Athol Fugard, Victory, the Fountain Theatre

Writing (Adaptation)

Sean T. Cawelti with Miles Taber and the Rogues, The Tragical Comedy or Comical Tragedy of Mr. Punch, Rogue Artists Ensemble at Bootleg Theater

Music Direction

Dennis Kaye, Louis & Keely Live at the Sahara, Sacred Fools Theater Company at Sacred Fools and at the Matrix Theatre

Choreography

Andy Blankenbuehler, 9 to 5: The Musical, Center Theatre Group at the Ahmanson Theatre

Lee Martino, Kiss of the Spider Woman, Havok Theatre Company at Bootleg Theater

Musical Score

Michael Friedman, Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson, Center Theatre Group at the Kirk Douglas Theatre

Dolly Parton, 9 to 5: The Musical, Center Theatre Group at the Ahmanson Theatre

Lead Performance

Sean Branney, Of Mice and Men, Theatre Banshee

Jake Broder, Louis & Keely Live at the Sahara, Sacred Fools Theater Company at Sacred Fools and at the Matrix Theatre

Ellen Geer, Long Day's Journey Into Night, Theatricum Botanicum

John Glover, Secrets of the Trade, the Black Dahlia Theatre

Louis Jacobs, Anything, Elephant Theatre Company at the Lillian Theatre

Judy Kaye, Sweeney Todd, The Demon Barber of Fleet Street, Center Theatre Group at the Ahmanson Theatre

Featured Performance

JD Cullum, Don Juan, A Noise Within

Beth Kennedy, As U2 Like It, Troubadour Theater Company at the Falcon Theatre

Sharon Lawrence, Orson's Shadow, Pasadena Playhouse

Adolphus Ward, Gem of the Ocean, the Fountain Theatre

Ensemble Performance

Assassins, West Coast Ensemble at the El Centro Theatre

Set Design

Laura Fine Hawkes, Snake in the Grass, Salem K Theatre Company at the Matrix Theatre

Lighting Design

Steven Young, Thrill Me: The Leopold & Loeb Story, Havok Theatre Company at the Hudson Backstage Theatre

Costume Design

Shigeru Yaji, An Italian Straw Hat: A Vaudeville, South Coast Repertory

Sound Design

Ken Rich, The Common Air, SoulArt and Elephant C.A.F.E at Theatre Asylum

Solo Performance

Nilaja Sun, No Child..., Center Theatre Group at the Kirk Douglas Theatre

CGI/Video

Brian White, The Tragical Comedy or Comical Tragedy of Mr. Punch, Rogue Artists Ensemble at Bootleg Theater

Puppet and Mask Design

Joyce Hutter and Patrick Rubio, The Tragical Comedy or Comical Tragedy of Mr. Punch, Rogue Artists Ensemble at Bootleg Theater

Fight Choreography

Ned Mochel, On an Average Day, VS. Theatre Company at the Elephant Theatre Lab

Special Awards

The Ted Schmitt Award for the world premiere of an outstanding new play was awarded to EM Lewis for *Song of Extinction*. The award was accompanied by an offer to publish and a \$1,000 check funded by Samuel French Inc.

The Polly Warfield Award for an excellent season in a small to midsize theatre was awarded to Sacred Fools Theater Company. The award was accompanied by a \$500 check, funded by the Nederlander Organization.

The Angstrom Award for career achievement in lighting design was awarded to Lisa D. Katz. The award was accompanied by a \$1,000 check, funded by Angstrom Lighting.

The Margaret Harford Award for sustained excellence in theatre was awarded to the Los Angeles Women's Shakespeare Company. The award was accompanied by a \$500 check from Camelot Artists.

The Joel Hirschhorn Award for outstanding achievement in musical theatre was awarded to Nick DeGruccio. The award was accompanied by a \$500 check from David Elzer/Demand PR.

The LADCC Awards cover productions in Los Angeles and Orange Counties. The members of the Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle include F. Kathleen Foley, Shirle Gottlieb, Hoyt Hilsman, Wenzel Jones, Mayank Keshaviah, Amy Lyons, Dany Margolies, Terry Morgan, David C. Nichols, Amy Nicholson, Sharon Perlmutter, Melinda Schupmann, Madeleine Shaner, Les Spindle, Bob Verini, and Neal Weaver.