



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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The San Diego Theatre Critics Circle announces the winners of the 2023 Craig Noel Awards for Excellence in Theatre

The awards returned to a full slate of categories after presenting a reduced program in 2022 following the two-year pandemic break

(2/13/24) SAN DIEGO -- The San Diego Theatre Critics Circle is pleased to announce the winners for its 2023 Craig Noel Awards for Excellence in Theatre. Now in its 21st year, the Craig Noel Awards honor the achievements at professional theaters in San Diego County.

This year's awards were presented before an audience of nearly 375 guests at the annual ceremony on Feb. 12th, 2024, at the SES Portuguese Hall of San Diego.

For the 2023 awards year, the Circle returned to a full slate of awards categories for the first time since the 2019 awards program.

Backyard Renaissance Theatre's production of "August: Osage County" won the award for Outstanding Dramatic Production. La Jolla Playhouse's "The Outsiders" won Outstanding New Musical, and CCAE Theatricals' "Sunday in The Park With George" won the year's Outstanding Resident Musical award.

The Outstanding Achievement by a Small Theater Award, formerly known as the Don Braunagel Award, was presented to Loud Fridge Theatre Group for its body of work in 2023.

The 2023 Actors of the Year are Farah Dinga and Giovanni Diaz de Leon, who both performed admirably in multiple productions through San Diego County last year.

In 2023, the Critics Circle presented its inaugural Reviewers of Tomorrow writing contest for students from grade 7 through community college. The awards were created to encourage a love of theater and the performing arts, as well as to reinforce the importance of critical discourse via writing. The three winners are Zoe Liberman, Eli Ander-Biegelsen, and Kairi Peralto.

The first-ever San Diego Champions of Theatre Award was presented to Jay and Julie Sarno, who have been supporting theaters as philanthropists, season ticket holders and volunteers for more than 40 years.

The 2023 nominees were chosen by a 9-member body of professional critics who write year-round for San Diego newspapers, magazines, and online publications.

More information about the group is available on our website at sdcriticscircle.org

The full list of winners begins on the following page.

The 2023 Craig Noel Award Winners:

Outstanding Dramatic Production

“August: Osage County” – Backyard Renaissance Theatre

Outstanding Resident Musical

“Sunday in The Park With George” – CCAE Theatricals

Outstanding New Play

“Exotic Deadly: Or the MSG Play” – Keiko Green – The Old Globe

Outstanding New Musical

“The Outsiders”- Book by Adam Rapp with Music and Lyrics by Jamestown Revival (Jonathan Clay & Zach Chance) and Justin Levine – La Jolla Playhouse

Outstanding Direction of a Musical

Danya Taymor – “The Outsiders” – La Jolla Playhouse

Outstanding Direction of a Play

Jesca Prudencio – “Exotic Deadly: Or the MSG Play” – The Old Globe

Outstanding Lead Performance in a Musical

- Gerilyn Brault – “Head Over Heels” – Diversionary Theatre
- Brody Grant – “The Outsiders” – La Jolla Playhouse

Outstanding Lead Performance in a Play

- Richard Baird – “Public Enemy” – New Fortune Theatre
- Sara Porkalob – “Dragon Mama” – Diversionary Theatre

Outstanding Featured Performance in a Musical

- George Abud – “The Untitled Unauthorized Hunter S. Thompson Musical” – La Jolla Playhouse
- Audrey Ward – “Singin’ In The Rain,” New Village Arts

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Outstanding Featured Performance in a Play

- Jessica John – “August: Osage County” – Backyard Renaissance Theatre
- MJ Sieber – “The Little Fellow (Or The Queen of Tarts Tells All)” – Cygnet Theatre

Outstanding Choreography

Jenn Freeman & Sonya Tayeh – “Is It Thursday Yet?” – La Jolla Playhouse

Outstanding Music Direction

Elan McMahan – “Sunday in The Park With George” – CCAE Theatricals

Outstanding Sound Design

Matt Lescault-Wood – “Birds of North America” – Moxie Theatre

Outstanding Costume Design

Janet Pitcher – “Sunday in The Park With George” – CCAE Theatricals

Outstanding Scenic Design

Diggle – “The Merry Wives of Windsor” – The Old Globe

Outstanding Lighting Design

Bryan Ealey – “Sharon” – Cygnet Theatre

Outstanding Projection Design

Hana Kim – “Sumo” – La Jolla Playhouse

Special award winners announced from the stage:

- **2023 Actors of the Year**
 - Farah Dinga
 - Giovanni Diaz de Leon
- **Outstanding Youth Performance**

JP Wishchuk – “Lost In Yonkers” – Scripps Ranch Theatre

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- **San Diego Champions of Theatre Award**
Jay and Julie Sarno

- **Outstanding Achievement by a Small Theater**
 - Loud Fridge Theatre Group

- **Reviewers of Tomorrow Writing Contest**
 - Zoe Lieberman
 - Eli Ander-Bieglelsen
 - Kairi Peralto

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