

50 years for Theatre Awards

The annual Fleur du Cap Theatre Awards honours *excellence* in acting, directing, staging and technical abilities, and this landmark birthday event has hailed yet another crop of *distinguished artists* from all spheres of the theatre world to receive awards as the best in their field over the past year. Awards panel member *Eugene Yiga* reviews this auspicious event on the arts calendar.

Director Christopher Weare (a past recipient of four Fleur du Cap Theatre Awards) created a 'vintage celebration' theme, incorporating the Theatre Awards' unique role in the growth of South African theatre and celebrating the synergy and partnerships over the past 50 years between theatre spaces, actors, creatives, technicians and Distell, the sponsors of the awards ceremony. Established in 1965 as the

Three Leaf Awards, with six categories and 17 productions, the prize became known as the Fleur du Cap Theatre Awards in 1978, and this year saw 18 categories in 74 productions.

The inimitable Alan Committie was in fine form as the MC and the glamorous audience of around 1 500 guests was made up of the Who's Who of the South African theatre scene, dignitaries, and members of the public.



Actress Lizz Meiring and stand-up comedian Marc Lottering enjoying the afterparty at the Theatre Awards.

Emily Child makes her acceptance speech for winning the award for Lead Actress in a Play (for Laura in *The Pervert Laura*).

Richard Rushton, Distell's Managing Director, affirmed: "Today we live in a democratic South Africa where everyone has the right to dream. Distell helps to preserve that space in which the arts can flourish, because we believe that the arts is a catalyst for social transformation; that the arts helps people reach out and connect. Through the arts, we express our wishes, fears, hopes, and love. Throughout our country's history, the arts have given us a safe place to bare our souls and to transcend boundaries, differences, and obstacles in our everyday lives."

The awards consist of a silver medallion and a R15 000 prize, and while there wasn't a single dominant production, as was the case last year with prison drama *Rooiland* and madcap musical *The Rocky Horror Show*, one of the evening's big winners was Louis 'Uncle Loo' Viljoen. He took home the Rosalie van der Gucht Prize (for new directors) and Best New South African Script (for his political drama *The Kingmakers*). Viljoen's explicit psycho-drama *The Pervert Laura*, also nominated for its script, won Emily Child the award for Lead Actress in a Play. The award for Lead Actor in a Play went to Albert Pretorius for his performance in *Playland*, which Athol Fugard describes as the 'most emotionally exhausting play' he's ever written.

Rondomskrik, a play about the gruesome rape and murder of 17-year-old Ancene Booysen in 2013, won awards for Supporting Actor (Richard September) and Supporting Actress (Lee-Ann van Rooi).

The Sound of Music, a R28-million production that is still touring abroad with its local cast, topped the list with seven nominations and won Janelle Visagie the award for Best Actress in a Musical or Music Theatre Show. On a smaller, but no less memorable, scale, was medieval comedy *Fergus of Galloway*, with Sne Dladla (recently seen in David Kramer's *Orpheus in Africa*) winning the award for Best Actor in a Musical or Music Theatre Show.

The Cape Town-based Handspring Puppet Company took home the prize for Innovation in Theatre, with its production of *War Horse* winning the award for Best Puppetry Design. Since its creation in 1981, the company has participated in the creation of over 16 productions, presented in more than 30 countries. "Few people have an award for puppetry, so thank you for this," said artistic director Adrian Kohler and executive producer Basil Jones. "Puppetry is an ancient art, but only recently are we beginning to understand how unique and powerful it is. New plays now get to see the light of day and enjoy a long life across the world. We are hugely grateful."

The immensely talented multiple award winner theatre stalwart Marthinus Basson was the recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award for his contribution to theatre over a long and still very successful career.

The Fleur du Cap Theatre Awards is the most established event of its kind in South Africa, ranking high on the Mother City's cultural calendar each year.



Musicians Xabiso Damba and Yolanda Yawa (also a fashion designer) glamping it up at the Theatre Awards.

List of 2015 winners

BEST PERFORMANCE BY A LEAD ACTOR IN A PLAY: Albert Pretorius for *Playland* as Gideon le Roux

BEST PERFORMANCE BY A LEAD ACTRESS IN A PLAY: Emily Child for *The Pervert Laura* as Laura

BEST PERFORMANCE BY A SUPPORTING ACTOR IN A PLAY: Richard September for *Rondomskrik* as various characters

BEST PERFORMANCE BY A SUPPORTING ACTRESS IN A PLAY: Lee-Ann van Rooi for *Rondomskrik* as various characters

BEST PERFORMANCE IN A REVUE, CABARET OR ONE-PERSON SHOW: Khayaletu Anthony for *The Champion* as Thulani

BEST PERFORMANCE BY AN ACTOR IN A MUSICAL OR MUSIC THEATRE SHOW: Sne Dladla for *Fergus of Galloway* as various characters

BEST PERFORMANCE BY AN ACTRESS IN A MUSICAL OR MUSIC THEATRE SHOW: Janelle Visagie for *The Sound of Music* as Mother Abbess

AWARD FOR MOST PROMISING STUDENT: Sive Gubangxa (UCT)

BEST DIRECTOR: Jaco Bouwer for *Balbesit*

BEST LIGHTING DESIGN: Wolf Britz for *Balbesit*

BEST SET DESIGN: Patrick Curtis for *Fishers of Hope (Taweret)*

BEST COSTUME DESIGN: Leigh Bishop for *Slowly*

BEST SOUND DESIGN, ORIGINAL MUSIC COMPOSITION OR ORIGINAL SCORE: Nceba Gongxeka for *Fishers of Hope (Taweret)*

BEST PUPPETRY DESIGN: Adrian Kohler and Basil Jones for *War Horse*

BEST NEW SOUTH AFRICAN SCRIPT: *The Kingmakers* by Louis Viljoen

ROSALIE VAN DER GUCHT PRIZE FOR NEW DIRECTORS: Louis Viljoen for *The Kingmakers* and *The Pervert Laura*

AWARD FOR INNOVATION IN THEATRE: Handspring Trust for Puppetry Arts

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD: Marthinus Basson