

Nominees for 18th Annual NAACP Theatre Awards Announced

By Andrew Gans
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Jurnee Smollett, Malcolm-Jamal Warner, Eva Marcille and Henry Simmons announced the nominees for the 18th Annual NAACP Theatre Awards May 20 at a press conference in the Hollywood Ballroom of the Renaissance Hotel.

This year's distinguished honorees include:

- Harold Wheeler (music orchestrator/music director): Lifetime Achievement Award
- American Idol's "Idol Gives Back": Community Service Award
- David E. Talbert (producer/writer/director): Trailblazer Award
- Vivica A. Fox (actress/producer): Spirit Award

Kimberly Elise and Anthony Anderson will host the annual awards ceremony, which will be held June 30 at the Kodak Theatre in Los Angeles. Performers will include Grammy winner Stephanie Mills, seen on Broadway in *The Wiz*, and R&B recording artist Mario.

The theme of this year's awards is "Salute to Black Theatre," which "celebrates the evolution of the portrayal of African Americans in theatre, from unrealistic, stereotypical caricatures to a more balanced and honest reflection of the Black experience as a whole."

Nominees for the 18th Annual NAACP Theatre Awards follow:

2006-2007 Equity Nominees

Lead Female

S. Epatha Merkerson - *Come Back, Little Sheba*
Jeanette Bayardelle - *The Color Purple*
Felicia P. Fields - *The Color Purple*
Michelle Williams - *The Color Purple*

Lead Male

Michael A. Sheppard - *Master Harold... and the boys*
Robert Manning, Jr. - *Defiance*
Cedric Sanders - *A Matter of Honor*
Michael McFall - *The Tempest*
Gerald C. Rivers - *The Tempest*

Director

Steve Tomkins - *City Kid*
Claude Purdy - *Jitney*
Darin Dahms - *Butterflies of Uganda: Memories of a Child Soldier*
Ted Lange - *George Washington's Boy*
Teresa Dowell-Vest - *Flyin' West*

Director of a Musical

Denise Dowes - *Love & Other Social Issues*
Ara Dabandjian - *Love's Labor's Lost*
John Lathan - *Flirting with Morty*

Music Director

Patrick Gandy - *City Kid*
Paul Wong - *Do Lord Remember Me*
Ron Hasley - *What's Going On, The Musical*
Christian Nesmith - *Hair*
Christy Crowl - *Hotel C'est l'Amour*