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Tulsa honors its own at the third annual TATE's

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Tulsa's theatre community was out in force Sunday night to celebrate the TATE's, representing the best in theatre during 2010 and 2011. Now in its third year the Tulsa Awards for Theatre Excellence acknowledges the best in youth and adult theatre categories, as well as honouring those who have made a significant contribution to theatre over the years.

Held in the impressive Cassia Hall Performing Arts Centre, the TATE's was a stylish affair held in a warm and welcoming atmosphere, beginning with an informal Q&A session with the delightful Joe Sears who proved to be both entertaining and enlightening. An hours respite for some excellent food and wine afforded a pleasant opportunity to catch up with old friends and network some new ones. Well fed, phone numbers and promises to call exchanged and then it was onto the awards ceremony.

Opened by Meredith Ellis Purgason, Chair of TATE, the programme began with series of short Nominee Statements where each company discussed their production. Eighteen statements representing the eighteen nominees were heard, four from the youth category, fourteen in the Outstanding Play category. Proceedings were then placed in the capable hands of the charismatic Bob Hendrick, who introduced the first award: the Mary Kay Place Legacy Award which went to Billie Sue Thompson for her outstanding contribution to theatre over thirty eight years. A popular winner, Thompson was generous in her acceptance and received a standing ovation. The 2011 Distinguished Artist Award was then presented to Tony nominated Joe Sears who delighted the crowd with some humorous reminiscences. A solemn interval followed during which those who have passed on were remembered during a Memorial Tribute, their names passing across a screen accompanied by a moving musical score composed by Brian Haas.

Then it was time for the main event, beginning with the Outstanding Youth Theatre Production Award which went to Clark Theatre for their production of *Annie*. The Outstanding Play category boasted three awards and third place went to Heller Theatre for their wonderful production of *Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde*. But the remainder of the night belonged to Playhouse Theatre whose excellent production of Conor McPherson's *Shining City* took second place, with their production of *Macbeth* taking the top prize on the night.

Prestige and a thoroughly enjoyable evening are not the only benefits to be had in winning a

TATE. With prize money ranging from \$2,500 to \$10,000, thanks to the generous support of the George Kaiser Family Foundation, a company can develop on a more secure financial footing during the coming year. For companies interested in learning more, or in submitting entries for next year's TATE's, information can be found at TATEawards.org.



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