

Year of the Booster

The 2015-16 Austin Critics Table Awards

By Robert Faires, 9:00AM, Wed. May 25, 2016

For anyone feeling down about the state of our city, the 24th edition of the Austin Critics Table Awards would have been a tonic. Even as attendees bemoaned the loss of arts venues and mourned lost colleagues, honorees took time at the mic to talk about how they came to Austin and found it a welcoming place, open to new ideas and to collaboration.



Acting in a Supporting Role winner Amber Quick, accepting the award for her performance in A Streetcar Named Desire
Photo by John Anderson

Jill Schroeder of grayDUCK Gallery was almost overcome with emotion in accepting the Gallery, Body of Work award, but on collecting herself, the transplanted Minnesotan cracked up the crowd by recalling how strange this place felt upon arriving here "from up north, where people didn't talk to each other in grocery checkout lines," they just "did their own shit." Very soon, though, she came to appreciate the friendliness and support that came with all that chat, all over the city but especially in the arts community. Nick Mayo, director of She Loves Me, the Mary Moody Northern Theatre production that was one of two shows honored this year with the outstanding musical prize, echoed Schroeder in acknowledging the warmth and support he's received as a newcomer to the city and how it's fueled his work with the students at St.

Edward's University. Even the inductees into the Austin Arts Hall of Fame – Ballet Austin's Stephen Mills and Cookie Ruiz and the Austin Symphony Orchestra's Peter Bay, giving perhaps the most eloquent speeches ever made by new Hall of Famers – told tales of their early impressions of the city and how its collaborative character has impressed itself on their cultural careers.



Ballet Austin Executive Director Cookie Ruiz, being inducted into the Austin Arts Hall of Fame
Photo by John Anderson

Turnout for the ceremony was lighter than usual; the Cap City Comedy Club showroom was less than half full, perhaps owing to the fact that the ceremony was held before Memorial Day for the first time in 15 years. The number of winners present to accept their awards was similarly reduced, with so many people who came to the stage announcing that they were not the person just named as the winner that by the time Amber Quick showed up to collect her award for performance as Stella in A Streetcar Named Desire, she got a laugh by saying, "I am Amber Quick."

But the relatively small attendance did little to diminish the effusiveness of the winners or the playful tone of the ceremony as this informal affiliation of arts writers from the Austin American-Statesman and Austin Chronicle handed out honors in 40 areas. Three theatre productions took home three awards apiece: Capital T Theatre's dark cockfighting comedy Year of the Rooster, Mary Moody Northern Theatre's exxx-cellent apocalyptic consideration of The Simpsons, Mr. Burns, a post-electric play, and Vortex Repertory Company's time-tossed drama of the past's impact on the present, Terminus.

Eight more works were recognized for notable artistic achievements in two areas: Austin Playhouse's Disgraced, Austin Shakespeare's Medea, Butler Opera Center's At the Statue of Venus/Three Decembers, Kathy Dunn Hamrick Dance Company's True Story, Hyde Park Theatre's The Night Alive, Ebony Stewart and the Vortex's Hunger, Tapestry Dance Company's In Your Shoes, and Zach Theatre's Sophisticated Ladies. Below is the complete list of winners.

VISUAL ART

Museum Exhibition

"Strange Pilgrims," The Contemporary Austin

Solo Gallery Exhibition (tie)

"Seth Orion Schwaiger: Complex I," Pump Project

"Jade Walker: Four Cornered," Galleries I & II, Texas State University

Group Gallery Exhibition

"The Contemporary Print," Print Austin

Work of Art: Independent or Public Project

Field Constructs Design Competition, Rachel Adams, Catherine Gavin, and Igor Siddiqui

Work of Art: Installation

Hurly Burly, Orly Genger, Waller Creek Conservancy/The Contemporary Austin

Gallery, Body of Work

grayDUCK Gallery

THEATRE

Production, Drama

Terminus, Vortex Repertory Company

Production, Comedy

Year of the Rooster, Capital T Theatre

Production, Musical (tie)

She Loves Me, Mary Moody Northern Theatre

Tortoise & Hare, Summer Stock Austin

Nick Mayo, director of the award-winning musical production She Loves Me, speaking of behalf of three of that show's actors being honored with the Deacon Crain Award for Outstanding Student Work

Photo by John Anderson

Direction

David Long, Mr. Burns, a post-electric play

Acting in a Leading Role

Franchelle Dorn, Medea

Jason Liebrecht, Year of the Rooster

Jennifer Underwood, Terminus

Ben Wolfe, Disgraced

Acting in a Supporting Role

Crystal Bird Caviel, Disgraced

Tom Green, The Night Alive

Afra Hines, Sophisticated Ladies

Amber Quick, A Streetcar Named Desire

Michael Stuart, The Norwegians

Ensemble Performance

Mr. Burns, a post-electric play, Mary Moody Northern Theatre

Music Direction

Austin Haller, Sunday in the Park With George

Movement

Natasha Davison, The Wild Party

David Mark Cohen New Play Award (tie)

Hunger, Ebony Stewart

Tender Rough Rough Tender, Sarah Saltwick

DANCE

Dance Concert

True Story, Kathy Dunn Hamrick Dance Company

Short Work

"Motherwell Amor," Erick Hawkins Dance Company/Shay Ishii Dance Company

Choreographer

Charles O. Anderson/Kathy Dunn Hamrick/Lisa Nicks/Kate Warren, More Than One Complication

Dancer

Michael Love, In Your Shoes

D. Poet Powell, True Story

Ashley Lynn Sherman, "Desire"/Hamlet

Duet

Matt Shields & Tony Merriwether, Sophisticated Ladies

Ensemble

Tapestry Dance Company, In Your Shoes

DESIGN

Scenic Design

David Molina-Garza, The Diary of Anne Frank

Costume Design

Jenny McNee & Jennifer Rose Davis, The History of King Lear

Lighting Design

Patrick Anthony, Year of the Rooster/Hunger/Terminus/Medea/Marie Antoinette

Sound Design

Robert S. Fisher, The Night Alive/Gusev/The Realistic Joneses

Video/Projection Design

Eliot Gray Fisher, The Warriors: A Love Story

Eliot Gray Fisher, accepting the Video/Projection Design award for his work on Arcos Dance's The Warriors: A Love Story

Photo by John Anderson

CLASSICAL MUSIC

Symphonic Performance

Compassion, Austin Symphony Orchestra with Lior

Chamber Performance

Traffic Jam, Steve Parker

Choral Performance

Considering Matthew Shepard, Conspirare

Opera

At the Statue of Venus/Three Decembers, Butler Opera Center

Singer

Karen Slack, Aida

Julia Taylor, Three Decembers

Original Composition/Score

In the Face of Trouble, Graham Reynolds

Instrumentalist

Keith Womer, Start the New Year With Bach

Ensemble

La Folli

SPECIAL CITATIONS

John Bustin Award for Conspicuous Versatility

Marc Pouhé

W.H. "Deacon" Crain Award for Outstanding Student Work

Cheyenne Barton, St. Edward's University

Matt Buzonas, St. Edward's University

Maureen Fenninger, St. Edward's University

Outside the Box (and String) Award

Physical Plant and Parallelogramophonograph, for their pioneering collaboration in improvisational drama

Site for Sore Eyes Award

Illusory Impressions and Lumen, for their invigorating collaborations of dance and music in site-specific performance

Best Face on It Award

Tara Cooper, for her exquisite masks of the Simpsons characters in Mr. Burns, a post-electric play

Taking part in the Critics Table award process this year were the Austin American-Statesman's Andrew J. Friedenthal (theatre), Claire Canavan (theatre), Luke Quinton (classical music/visual arts), Claire Spera (dance), and Jeanne Claire van Ryzin (arts), and the Chronicle's H.C. Arnold (visual arts), Elizabeth Cobbe (theatre), Jonelle Seitz (dance), Shanon Weaver (theatre), and Robert Faires (arts).