

The Paulies 2016 - The Nominations!

IT'S the one you've all been waiting for as the Gazette's theatre critic Paul T Davies picks his nominations for this year's Paulies, the awards that don't really exist but acknowledge the very best in community theatre in and around our town.

IT'S been another excellent year for local amateur theatre - which has meant that short listing the Paulies this year has been very difficult. Just a reminder that the awards are for those productions I consider to be the best of the best, and the awards themselves do not exist in physical form. Rather, it's an extra round of applause to the many people who work hard to bring us great theatre all year round. The rules are simple - I don't nominate any production I have been involved in, and I nominate only shows that I have seen. Therefore, some excellent productions are not here because I missed them - and some productions on the long list got very close to being shortlisted. So, here are my nominations for this year, and make sure you get next week's paper when I will announce the winners.

BEST PLAY

Blue Remembered Hills (Colchester Theatre Group)

Constellations (Headgate Theatre Productions)

Di and Viv and Rose (Headgate Productions)

The House of Bernarda Alba (Gallery Players)

The Play What I Wrote (Headgate Productions)

BEST DIRECTOR OF A PLAY.

Ian Amos for Constellations

Steve Dunt for Blue Remembered Hills

Michael Platt for The House of Bernarda Alba

Anthony Roberts for The Play What I Wrote

Steve Wooldridge for Di and Viv and Rose

BEST MUSICAL

Carousel (Colchester Operatic 2)

On the Twentieth Century (Platform musicals)

Sister Act (Colchester Operatic)

Spring Awakening (Gallery Players)

Urinetown (Mad Hatter)

BEST DIRECTOR OF A MUSICAL

Wade Ablitt for Urinetown

Andrew Hodgson for On The Twentieth Century.

Nikki Mundell-Poole for Carousel

Nikki Mundell-Poole for Sister Act

Steve Wooldridge for Spring Awakening

BEST ACTOR

Les Chisnall for Under Milk Wood (Platform)

Michael Cook for Constellations.

Brian Malone for Blue Remembered Hills.

Kevin Topple and Luke Eversley (joint nomination) for The Play What I Wrote.

Will Parrick for Mindgame (Colchester Theatre Group)

BEST ACTRESS

Shelly Clempson for The House of Bernarda Alba

Eleanor Kent-Dyson for Di and Viv and Rose

Charlotte Still for Constellations

Phoebe Stringer for The Importance of Being Earnest (Chameleon's Web)

Danielle Tile for Blue Remembered Hills

BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR

Jack Biggs for As You Like It (Priory Players)

Dave Burn for Romeo and Juliet (Lakeside Theatre)

David Elliot for As You Like It (Priory)

Gareth Gwyn-Jones for Under Milk Wood

Stuart Williams for The Play What I Wrote

BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS

Rebecca Ashforth for As You Like It (Priory)

Suzanne Bailey for The Importance of Being Earnest (Chameleon's Web)

Sally Scurrall for The House of Bernarda Alba

Annie Simcox for Under Milk Wood

Jo Lewis for The House of Bernarda Alba

BEST MUSICAL THEATRE PERFORMANCE.

Chi Chi Armstrong for Sister Act

Sara Green for On The Twentieth Century

The ensemble of Urinetown

Will Mugford for Carousel

Molly Scurrall for Spring Awakening

21st December 2016

And the winners are...Paul T Davies' pick of the best in amateur theatre 2016

SO, here it is.

After hours of deliberations and long conversations with myself, here are my picks of the very best of amateur theatre this year. As always, the point of the Paulies is to celebrate the strength of community theatre, and if you took part in any way in making productions

happen this year, then thank you! We punch above our theatrical weight in this region, so well done all of you. And step forward for one final bow.

BEST PLAY.

Constellations. (Headgate Theatre Productions.) A challenging play, beautifully performed and staged, bringing all the elements together to make perfection.

BEST DIRECTOR.

Ian Amos for Constellations. A crystal clear vision for the production and a brave and risky choice of play.

BEST MUSICAL.

Urinetown (Mad Hatter) A madcap, highly original musical, given a pitch perfect, (both in singing and comedy), production by a huge ensemble full of talent.

BEST DIRECTOR OF A MUSICAL.

Wade Ablitt for Urinetown. How did he move so many people around the stage without them clashing into each other? His perfect understanding of the material had the audience rolling in the aisle.

BEST ACTOR.

Brian Malone for Blue Remembered Hills. (Colchester Theatre Group) He has been delivering excellent performances for years, but here Brian captured perfectly the mind and body of a young boy, both amusing and tragic.

BEST ACTRESS.

Eleanor Kent-Dyson for Di and Viv and Rose. (Headgate Theatre Productions) Covering years in the life of activist Di, a funny and moving portrayal of friendship contributed to an excellent year for this actress.

BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR.

Gareth Gwyn Jones for Under Milk Wood. (Platform). Wonderful versatility in a range of roles in this homage to Welsh poetry and life.

BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS.

Jo Lewis for The House of Bernarda Alba. (Gallery Players) An unforgettable portrayal of a bitter woman, whose act of revenge on her sister leads to tragedy. Powerful work.

BEST MUSICAL THEATRE PERFORMANCE.

Will Mugford for Carousel. He broke through the dated nature of the material and delivered the strongest performance of his career so far. Mesmerising.

So, there you have it. This year, local theatre lost some people who have been instrumental in supporting young talent and contributing to the vitality of our theatre scene. So this year's special award goes to those who we have lost, but who will always be remembered.

As for next year, my hope is to see more risky choices of plays and musicals, but I'm sure that I am going to love being an audience member as always.

Happy Christmas everyone.

PAUL T DAVIES