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## CTG, Road lead Ovation Awards

By **Evan Henerson**  
Staff Writer

Center Theatre Group's production of August Wilson's "Gem of the Ocean" and the Road Theatre Company's ghost story "The Woman in Black" were the top winners at the 2003 Ovation awards Sunday, taking six and five awards respectively.

In addition to all but sweeping the technical awards (for sets, lighting and sound design), the NoHo-based Road company took the award for best play in a smaller theater (under 99 seats). Burbank's Colony Theatre won two awards, including best play at a larger theater for "Toys in the Attic."

The Ovations, decided on by members of the L.A. Stage Alliance, recognize Los Angeles stage productions. More than 391 productions were eligible this year.

During Sunday's three-hour ceremony at downtown's Orpheum Theatre, the hit Mel Brooks musical "The Producers" didn't win the one category in which it was nominated. Lily Tomlin, the evening's host, won an award for her solo show "The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe."

Outgoing Center Theatre Group artistic director Gordon Davidson accepted a career achievement award and then promptly left the Orpheum to oversee a play he is directing at the Mark Taper Forum. Deaf West artistic director Ed Waterstreet, also the recipient of a special award, was his usual eloquent self without uttering a single word.

Otherwise things were largely business as usual at the Ovations: lots of rah-rah boosterism for the not-so-lucrative art of stage acting in a film and TV town; lots of people heading for the aisles once their category had been decided. Several awards -- most notably for best ensembles -- ended in a three-way tie.

Award presentations paired local theater critics, actors, playwrights and past winners. "May I call you Sleet?" actor Tony Abatemarco asked his co-presenter, Rain Pryor. "Yes," returned Pryor, the daughter of comedian Richard, "just not slut."

Audiences can still catch a couple of the winners. "The Woman in Black," which opened in October 2002, continues through February at the Coronet Theatre in Beverly Hills. Best actress in a musical winner Connie Champagne reprises her Judy Garland turn in "Judy's Scary Little Christmas" at the Court Theatre, and Bryan Davidson's "War Music," workshoped at Playwrights' Arena, comes to the Geffen Playhouse in January.

#### Other winners are below

For a complete list, visit [www.theatrela.org](http://www.theatrela.org):

World premiere play: August Wilson, "Gem of the Ocean," Center Theatre Group, Mark Taper Forum; Randy Schulman, "La Gioconda," Stages Theatre Center and the Collective; Bryan Davidson, "War Music," Playwrights' Arena and Echo Theatre Company.

World premiere musical: Mitzie and Ken Welch and Lorna Luft, "Songs My Mother Taught Me," Canon Theatricals.

Lead actor, play: David Paladino, "The Island," Camelot Artists Productions; Norbert Weisser, "Times Like These," Padua Playwrights Productions.

Lead actress, play: Beth Grant "The Trials and Tribulations of a Trailer Trash Housewife," Zephyr Theatre; Laurie O' Brien, "Times Like These."

Lead actor, musical: David Engel, "Crazy for You," Musical Theatre West.

Lead actress, musical: Connie Champagne, "Judy's Scary Little Christmas," Victory Theatre.

Featured actor, play: James Farentino, "Boy Gets Girl," Geffen Playhouse.

Featured actress, play: Nancy Linehan Charles, "Toys in the Attic," Colony Theatre.

Featured actor, musical: Larry Cedar, "She Loves Me," Reprise! Broadway's Best.

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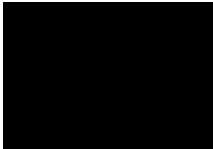
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Featured actress, musical: Sally Struthers, "Mame," Musical Theatre West.

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