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ST. LOUIS THEATER CIRCLE TO PRESENT SPECIAL AWARDS TO MICHAEL HAMILTON AND JACK LANE OF STAGES, KEN AND NANCY KRANZBERG

Awards to Be Given at March 28, 2022 Virtual Event Streaming on HEC Media

ST. LOUIS, February 23, 2022 – Special lifetime achievement awards to Michael Hamilton and Jack Lane, co-founders of Stages St. Louis, will be given by the St. Louis Theater Circle at its March 28 virtual event, which will be streamed by HEC Media. Ken and Nancy Kranzberg, who received a special award from the Theater Circle at the 2020 virtual streaming ceremony, will make an acceptance speech for that award, as will Lane for this year's special award, for the 2022 ceremony.

After a hiatus due to the coronavirus pandemic in 2020 and 2021, the St. Louis Theater Circle Awards are returning in 2022 in a 'virtual' ceremony. That event will be streamed at 7 p.m. on Monday, March 28, 2022 on HEC Media's Facebook page, YouTube channel, and web site (www.hecmedia.org).

Nominees in more than 30 categories will vie for honors covering comedies, dramas, musicals and operas produced by local professional theater and opera companies in the combined calendar years of 2020 and 2021.

Hamilton, who served as artistic director for Stages since its founding in 1987, retired at the end of the company's 2021 season. He directed both of Stages' productions in 2021, "Always...Patsy Cline" and "Jersey Boys." Hamilton has been nominated for both productions for Outstanding Director of a Musical. Stages St. Louis has been nominated for a total of 16 awards, 11 for "Jersey Boys" and five for "Always...Patsy Cline."

Lane, who serves as executive producer of Stages and co-founded the company with Hamilton in 1987, was instrumental in the development and eventual opening of the Kirkwood Performing Arts Center, which held its first productions by local companies in 2021.

Because the pandemic brought about the cancellation of so many productions by virtually all local professional theater companies, approximately 75 productions have been considered for nominations for the combined years of 2020 and 2021. This compares to roughly 110 to 120 productions normally considered in one year alone.

The eighth annual award ceremony, which was to have been held 'live' at the Loretto-Hilton Center on the campus of Webster University, was cancelled in February 2020 due to the escalating number of cases of COVID-19. Instead, that event was held virtually in a highly polished presentation produced by HEC Media and streamed on HEC's Facebook page, YouTube channel and web site. There was no ceremony of any type by the Theater Circle in 2021.

HEC's 2020 production of the St. Louis Theater Circle Awards was one of the first major productions of any awards ceremony in the United States after the coronavirus pandemic shut down nearly all theatrical activities in mid-March 2020. The ceremony had one of the largest viewership figures for any virtual streaming event of HEC at that time.

For this ninth annual ceremony, members of the St. Louis Theater Circle considered nominees from shows produced in the first three months of 2020 and the last eight months of 2021 combined. In addition, a few shows produced between April 2020 and May 2021 were included. The total number of shows considered from the years 2020 and 2021 combined amounted to about 75 shows.

The mission of the St. Louis Theater Circle is simple: To honor outstanding achievement in St. Louis professional theater. Other cities around the country, such as Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, San Diego, San Francisco and Washington, D.C., pay tribute to their own local theatrical productions with similar awards programs.

Members of the St. Louis Theater Circle include Steve Allen (stagedoorstl.com); Mark Bretz (*Ladue News*); Bob Cohn (*St. Louis Jewish Light*); Tina Farmer (KDHX); Michelle Kenyon (snoopstheatrethoughts.com); Gerry Kowarsky (*Two on the Aisle*, HEC-TV); Chuck Lavazzi (KDHX); Rob Levy (Broadwayworld.com); Judith Newmark (judyacttwo.com); Ann Lemons Pollack (stlouiseats.typepad.com); Lynn Venhaus (*PopLifeSTL.com*); Bob Wilcox (*Two on the Aisle*, HEC-TV); and Calvin Wilson (*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*). Eleanor Mullin, local performer and arts supporter, is group administrator.

For more information, contact stltheatercircle@sbcglobal.net or like the St. Louis Theater Circle on Facebook.

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