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Wisconsin Theaters Shine as Finalists for 2024 Harold and Mimi Steinberg/ATCA New Play Award

MILWAUKEE & STURGEON BAY, WI — March 26, 2024 — The American Theatre Critics Association (ATCA) recently unveiled the esteemed finalists for the prestigious [2024 Harold and Mimi Steinberg/ATCA New Play Award](#). Among the six finalists are two standout plays, *The Heart Sellers* and *I Carry Your Heart With Me*, which proudly premiered at [Milwaukee Repertory Theater](#) and [Third Avenue PlayWorks](#), respectively, as part of the groundbreaking World Premiere Wisconsin initiative.

Chosen by theater critics stationed from coast to coast and celebrating the finest new scripts that premiered professionally outside of New York City in 2023, the Steinberg/ATCA New Play Award highlights the vital role regional theaters play in fostering the development of innovative works. The award ceremony, offering a \$25,000 honorarium for the Steinberg Award winner chosen from among these six finalists, as well as citations valued at \$7,500 each for the two runners-up from among these six finalists, will take place on May 4 at South Coast Repertory in Costa Mesa, Calif., during the annual Pacific Playwrights Festival. The three award recipients will be announced at the May 4 ceremony.

"Regional theaters remain a vital incubator for the development of new works," said Cameron Kelsall, co-chair of the Steinberg/ATCA New Play Award committee, in a press release announcing the finalists. "This year's finalists represent the best that the American theater has to offer."

The plays recognized underscore Wisconsin's vibrant theater scene, its commitment to fostering original, compelling narratives, and its emergence as a significant player in new play development.

Lloyd Suh's *The Heart Sellers*, premiered by [Milwaukee Repertory Theater](#), offers a seriocomic encounter between two immigrant women, weaving a spirited and poignant tale of cultural identity and friendship. Milwaukee Rep commissioned the play through its [John \(Jack\) D. Lewis New Play Development Program](#).

Jennifer Blackmer's *I Carry Your Heart With Me*, premiered by [Third Avenue PlayWorks](#) in Sturgeon Bay, delves into the conflicted memories of a middle-aged woman and her experiences at a top-secret post during the Vietnam War, exploring themes of duty, sacrifice, and redemption.

"Commissioned just before the pandemic, we were able to hold readings and workshops over Zoom with Lloyd to bring *The Heart Sellers* script to life before programming it in our 2022/23 Season. That's when artistic worlds collided, and we were able to partner with World Premiere Wisconsin to kick off the festival with this world-class play," says Mark Clements, Milwaukee Rep Artistic Director. "We strive to produce work that features marginalized voices from different cultures, that speak to the present moment, honor the past, and delve into the celebrations and challenges facing such communities, by doing so, we broaden the horizons of our richly diverse audiences. *The Heart Sellers* delivers on all of this and more, and I'm thrilled it's getting the national recognition it so deserves."

"Jennifer's writing is full of big, bold ideas and thrilling theatricality. It took one read to know we had to produce *I Carry Your Heart With Me*," said Jacob Janssen, Third Avenue PlayWorks' Jackie and Steve Kane Artistic Director. "I hope our production is the first of many for this play, and it's an honor to have our work recognized nationally, especially when there is so much incredible work happening thanks to World Premiere Wisconsin."

The Heart Sellers and *I Carry Your Heart With Me* were among the 47 offerings staged as part of World Premiere Wisconsin, an inaugural and first-of-its-kind statewide festival celebrating new plays and musicals. The festival ran from February to June 2023.

"We are thrilled to see works that premiered as part of World Premiere Wisconsin receiving such prestigious recognition," said WPW Festival Producer Michael Cotey. "These nominations serve as a testament to the creativity and ingenuity of Wisconsin's theater companies and makers and our state's invaluable contributions to the broader theatrical canon."

For more information about World Premiere Wisconsin, its successful inaugural festival, and the upcoming 2026 festival, visit worldpremierewisconsin.com.

Milwaukee Repertory Theater

Milwaukee Rep is the largest performing arts organization in Wisconsin with three unique performance venues in the Associated Bank Theater Center – the Quadracci Powerhouse, Stiemke Studio, and Stackner Cabaret. For over seven decades, Milwaukee Rep has been a centerpiece of Milwaukee's vibrant arts and cultural scene with productions ranging from Broadway musicals to Shakespeare to American Classics and New Works that are entertaining,

inclusive and impactful. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Mark Clements and Executive Director Chad Bauman, Milwaukee Repertory Theater ignites positive change in the cultural, social, and economic vitality of its community by creating world-class theater experiences that entertain, provoke, and inspire meaningful dialogue among an audience representative of Milwaukee's rich diversity. www.MilwaukeeRep.com

Third Avenue PlayWorks

Third Avenue PlayWorks presents riveting performances of comedies, dramas, and musicals in its newly-renovated Steve and Jackie Kane Theatre. This unique space brings audiences face-to-face with powerful stories by creating the most intimate theatrical experience possible. With its ever-growing reputation, varied educational opportunities, and its long-standing presence in the community, Third Avenue PlayWorks is an integral part of Door County's vibrant arts scene. Consistently garnering rave reviews from local and regional press, Third Avenue PlayWorks is Door County's premier year-round professional theatre. thirdavenueplayworks.org

World Premiere Wisconsin

World Premiere Wisconsin is a statewide organization supporting the Wisconsin theater ecosystem through the execution of World Premiere Wisconsin's new play festivals and ongoing efforts to promote relationship-building amongst theater-makers, foster the development of new plays and musicals, and draw attention to the dynamic work being done by theaters in Wisconsin. worldpremierewisconsin.com

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