



Press Contact: Katie Doral

Phone: 734.433.7782 x18

Email: KDoral@purplerosetheatre.org

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“The Nominees Are...”

Jeff Daniels receives Tony Award nomination for best lead actor in a play

CHELSEA, Mich. (May 5, 2016)— Chelsea native Jeff Daniels has been nominated for a 2016 Tony Award, which honors theater professionals for distinguished achievement on Broadway. Daniels, founder of Chelsea’s [Purple Rose Theatre Company](#), was nominated for best lead actor in a play for his role as Ray in David Harrower’s “Blackbird.” His costar Michelle Williams was nominated for best lead actress in a play.

“Blackbird,” the story of an uneasy reunion between a young woman and middle-aged man 15 years after he sexually abused her when she was 12, is also nominated in the category of best revival of a play. Nearly a decade ago, “Blackbird” was staged off Broadway at the Manhattan Theater Project with Daniels in the role of Ray.

This is Daniels’ second Tony Award nomination for best lead actor in a play. In 2009 he was nominated for his role as Alan in the Broadway production of “God of Carnage.”

“I’m truly honored by the best actor Tony Award nomination,” says Daniels. “Maybe it comes with getting older, but after forty years as an actor, this kind of recognition is topped only by the heartfelt appreciation that comes after pinching yourself because you still can’t believe you’re on Broadway.”

Daniels’ mentor, Marshall W. Mason, whom he credits with giving him his professional break in show business at New York City’s Circle Repertory Company, will receive a Tony Award for lifetime achievement in theater. Daniels’ time as a Circle Rep apprentice was the foundation for a similar program at the Purple Rose.

Purple Rose Artistic Director Guy Sanville says, “Jeff is—in his heart of hearts—an old school theatre guy. He started there and goes back. From spending a couple of years playing both male roles in Yasmina Reza’s ‘God of Carnage,’ to his second pass now at ‘Blackbird,’ he is loyal to the play and the work. He sets the bar high for us at the Purple Rose. He leads quietly and by example. He is the consummate professional, talented, hard working and generous.”

Also extending his congratulations to Daniels is fellow actor and playwright, Matt Letscher who began his

professional career at the Purple Rose in Daniels' play, "The Tropical Pickle."

"There isn't an actor working today who cares more about the American theatre," says Letscher. "His brilliant performance in 'Blackbird' utterly qualifies him for his Tony nomination, but his entire body of work as actor, playwright and Purple Rose Theatre founder makes him all the more deserving of the award."

The Purple Rose Theatre's current production is the world premiere of Letscher's "Gaps in the Fossil Record," which received the 2015 Edgerton Foundation New Play Award. The play tells the story of Jane, a college student who brings home the much older, soon-to-be father of her unborn child. What starts as a practical joke turns into a thoughtful exploration of what we pass down through the generations.

The show runs through Saturday, May 28. For more information or to make reservations call The Purple Rose Theatre Company box office at (734) 433-7673 or go online at www.purplerosetheatre.org.

Then on Sunday, June 12, tune in to CBS for the 70th Annual Tony Awards.

About the Purple Rose Theatre Company

Founded in 1991 by actor, playwright, musician and Chelsea native Jeff Daniels, the Purple Rose Theatre Company is a creative home for original American plays. In the 168-seat theatre, patrons experience an intimate encounter with live theatre.

The PRTC also provides an apprenticeship program, performance classes, readings, lectures and tours. It commissions new work from established and early-career playwrights. As a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit professional theatre, the PRTC operates under a Small Professional Theatre agreement with the Actors' Equity Association.

For more information contact PRTC Managing Director Katie Doral at (734) 433-7782, kdoral@purplerosetheatre.org.