

Sage awards wins

All my potential dates bailed on me, but the Sage Awards still made me feel less lonely.

BREAKING NEWS BY ALAN M. BERKS | SEPTEMBER 15, 2010 | [SAVE THIS ARTICLE](#)

In the first performance at the Sage Awards, Vanessa Voskuil stood centerstage in a white sheer lacy curtain of a dress from the waist down and her gorgeous, muscular naked torso exposed but for a man's hands over her breasts. . .



Sage Awards

Though much more modest than the Iveys, the Sage Awards have bring a different kind of pleasure.

To someone with limited experience with the Twin Cities dance community, I thought that the Sage Awards did an impressive and entertaining job of highlighting what a brave and beautiful dance community lives here. Brave? They didn't start their awards ceremony with a big production number. They're dancers. I bet they could have. They started it instead with a very still piece, a piece with audio accompaniment that I think was a woman reading German poetry, and with a half-naked lady standing center stage with a mysterious man's hands over her breasts. It was, um, pretty beautiful.

Though the particulars were different--this year's award was created by local artist Amy Rice, for example-- the general feeling [Leah described in her blog](#) about last year's awards was the same. I was charmed, educated, and engaged. I was inspired. I was even shamed into wondering whether my own work in the theater was brave enough, kind enough, and truthful enough.

The list of winners is below but, as Leah did last year, allow me to highlight just a few of my favorite moments:

- Brian Evans' mother (who neither looks like a dancer nor, from far away, does she look like the woman who could be the mother of a guy who looks like Brian Evans) accepting his award for Outstanding Performance has got to be the highlight of this or any awards show, ever.

Brian had given her something to read on his behalf, and the fact that she kept improvising and filling in details was adorable; her own list of thank you's was wonderful and surprising--including Brian's Augsburg football coach. How many football coaches get credit for creating such an amazing dancer?

But the absolute best part was when she read the part in Brian's thank you letter in which he thanked her. Hearing her reading about herself from his perspective, out loud in front of us, was one of the cutest, oddest, most heartfelt, and, in some ways, most dramatic thing I've seen all year.

- Hannah Kramer, a dancer and member of the evaluation panel, on stage to present an award also explaining how the decision-making process works, acknowledging past criticism publicly, and announcing a new policy for the Sage Awards going forward. Ah, transparency. Ah, acknowledging reasonable criticism.

Then, a fly began to pester her right there center stage while she talked and as she moved her head away from the bothersome fly, it was so obviously a dancey gesture that someone in the crowd cheered and she briefly repeated it as though it might become part of someone's choreography. . .

Yes, I'm highlighting a 15 second dance duet that a presenter unintentionally did with a fly. In its spontaneity, unpretentiousness, and creativity, it seemed to get at the essence of something.

- Patrick Scully winning the award for special citation and while teasing us with the potential to do something scandalous, and gently taunting us with clear political messages (without ever getting preachy), also inspiring people to remain positive, to see how much life has improved for so many people all over the world, and to keep dancing.

- Finally, seeing the Wild Goose Chase Cloggers and DeLaSoulja Steppers perform. Last year, they received a "special citation" award for collaboration that Leah wrote about in her blog. This year, they performed, and I would try to describe it for you and even think that I might be able to -- imagine hip-hop stepping, rappers, and, well, Appalachian clogging and fiddles mashed together-- but I simply can't stop my brain from thinking, "What the fuck? Holy shit!" long enough to type complete sentences. So basically, here's my internal monologue while watching the Wild Goose Chase Cloggers and DeLaSoulja Steppers: What the fuck is this? Really? O my god. That's so great! Now they're going to do what? And he's going to throw down some rap? What the fuck? And the old guy in the flannel with a fiddle comes out too? Holy shit! I fucking love this! Holy shit!

And that's enough for now. You should have been there. You can read all the [nominees here](#).

The winners were:

3 for Outstanding Performance:

Earth by Uri Sands.
Anyendo Hwendo "Rainbow Spirit" by Francis Kofi/Hayor Bibimma
Ihrah: Sacred Water by Raneer Ramaswamy and Aparna Ramaswamy

2 for Outstanding Design:

Ode to Dolly by Deborah Jinza Thayer. Music by Mathew Smith. Costumes by Lisa Axell/Laura Adams. Lighting by Jeff Bartlett. Puppetry by Deirdre Murmane. Set by Brian Axell.

The Jury by Paul Herwig

1 for Outstanding Ensemble

Zenon Dance Company

3 for Outstanding Performer

Brian Evans
Penny Freeh
Rachel Barnes

1 for Special Citation

Patrick Scully

1 for Outstanding Educator

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About the author

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Alan M. Berks is a Minneapolis-based writer whose plays have been seen in New York, Chicago, Phoenix, Indianapolis, San Francisco, and around the Twin Cities. He helped create Thirst Theater a while back. Now, he's the co-founder of this here magazine. He's also written *Almost Exactly Like Us*, *How to Cheat*, *3 Parts Dead*, *Goats*, and more.

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