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Wednesday, October 17, 2007; Posted: 6:56 PM - by [Adrienne Onofri](#)

Inside Broadway, a theater producing and educational organization that grew out of the *Cats* student ticket program, held another event for its 25th anniversary on October 15, when it presented its annual Broadway Beacon Awards to theater professionals who have advocated for getting more people — especially young people — to attend live theater.

This year's recipients were stars [Bebe Neuwirth](#), [Rebecca Luker](#), [Danny Burstein](#) and [Roger Bart](#) (all, incidentally, Tony winners or nominees). Special Beacon Awards for service to the organization were given to [Michael Presser](#), founder and executive director of Inside Broadway, and William G. Tung, a member of its board of directors. Honorees were feted at a cocktail reception and awards ceremony held in the McGraw-Hill Building in Rockefeller Center.

Presenters at this year's Beacon Awards included [Karen Ziemba](#) and playwright [A. R. Gurney](#). Presser's award was presented by Shannon O'Bryan, who costarred in Inside Broadway's 2005 production of *On the Town* and will play Judy (the Vera Ellen role) in *White Christmas* at the Sony Centre in Toronto later this year. Tung, the managing director, Asia/Pacific, of the Rockefeller Group and an Inside Broadway board member for over five years, was presented his award by his son William Christopher, an 11th grader. David Weprin, a New York City Council member, also made a brief speech congratulating Inside Broadway and the award winners.

Inside Broadway serves more than 25,000 students in 75-plus New York City schools every year. It produces hourlong versions of classic musicals that are presented in schools, and sometimes in public performances. Inside Broadway provides study guides and lesson plans related to its shows. It also conducts classes and activities that involve students in all aspects of creating a show, and it



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ABOUT US

brings professional actors, directors, playwrights and choreographers to schools as guest artists to teach youngsters about performing, writing and designing for theater.

The group was established in 1982 when the Shubert Organization asked Presser to set up student ticket discounts for *Cats*. Inside Broadway held a 25th anniversary concert last November at the Winter Garden Theatre (where *Cats* ran for 18 years), featuring performances by Broadway casts. During its 25-year existence, Inside Broadway estimates it has entertained and educated more than half a million schoolchildren, many in communities otherwise underserved by arts education. For more information, go to insidebroadway.org.

Photos by Adrienne Onofri



On their night off from *Mary Poppins* and *The Drowsy Chaperone*, respectively, Rebecca Luker and husband Danny Burstein received a Broadway Beacon Award.

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Bebe Neuwirth with Inside Broadway's executive director, Michael Presser.



In his presentation comments, A.R. Gurney (left) commended Danny Burstein for holding his own opposite Sigourney Weaver and John Lithgow in Gurney's *Mrs. Farnsworth*, done in 2004 at the Flea Theater.

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QUICK POLL

When first introduced in 1977, the Tony Award for revivals was called Most Innovative Production of a Revival with plays and musicals competing in the same category. Which of this year's revival nominees would you call the most innovative? **6 comments**

- Boeing-Boeing
- Grease
- Gypsy
- The Homecoming
- Les Liaisons Dangereuses
- Macbeth
- South Pacific
- Sunday in the Park With George

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Pia Lindstrom, who has covered theater for NBC in New York for many years, emceed the awards ceremony.



Entertainment was provided by students from P.S. 97 in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn, who sang "Give My Regards to Broadway"...



...and by the *Three Mo' Tenors* (from left: Kenneth D. Alston Jr., Phumzile Sojola and Ramone Diggs), who performed opera, gospel, Motown, jazz and soul. Their show is playing at the Little Shubert Theatre on 42nd St.



A.R. Gurney, currently represented off-Broadway by Keen Company's revival of *The Dining Room*, premiered his latest comedy, *Crazy Mary*, last spring at Playwrights Horizons. His 1983 play *What I Did Last Summer* will have its first New York revival next month at the Spoon Theatre.



Bebe Neuwirth was recognized in part for establishing the Dancers' Resource, an initiative of the Actors Fund that provides dancers with counseling and education on health issues.



Karen Ziemba, a past recipient of the Beacon Award, stands in front of a screen displaying a picture of an Inside Broadway activity. She presented the award to Neuwirth, with whom she's danced *Chicago's* "Hot Honey Rag" at the Clinton White House and, more recently, a John Kander tribute at the Westport Playhouse.



Danny Burstein introduced his wife to A.R. Gurney while appearing in *Mrs. Farnsworth*, and Gurney later chose Rebecca Luker for a role in Primary Stages' 2006 production of his play *Indian Blood*. The playwright presented the Beacon Award to the couple.



How 'bout some mo' *Three Mo' Tenors?*



Roger Bart (who had to leave before the awards ceremony), Bebe Neuwirth, Michael Presser, Rebecca Luker and Danny Burstein all were honored during the evening.



One last reminder from the kids of P.S. 97 of what Inside Broadway is all about:

bringing youth and theater together!



Adrienne Onofri, one of BroadwayWorld's original columnists, is a member of the Drama Desk. She was a longtime contributor to OOB (The Off-Off-Broadway Review) and theater editor of The Greenwich Village Press. She is also a travel writer and recently served as acting managing editor of Travel Agent magazine. Her first book, *Walking Brooklyn*, was published last summer by Wilderness Press.

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