



Off Broadway's Highest Honor

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**THE 53<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL VILLAGE VOICE OBIE AWARDS**  
**ANNOUNCE JUDGES FOR MAY 19, 2008 CEREMONY**

**Awards honor Off -Broadway and Off-Off Broadway Productions**

**New York, NY** – *The Village Voice*, the nation's first and largest alternative weekly newspaper, announced the judges for the 53rd Annual *Village Voice* Obie Awards. The *Voice's* chief theater critic **Michael Feingold** will again chair the Obie Awards committee for this season. Joining him will be *Voice* critic **Alexis Soloski** and the following guest judges: *Variety* critic **Mark Blankenship**; *Bloomberg News* editor and critic **Jeremy Gerard**; playwright-director **Robert O'Hara** (2007 Obie winner for *In the Continuum*); set designer **Neil Patel** (twice an Obie winner for sustained excellence of design); and *Time Out New York / New York Sun* critic **Helen Shaw**. Clint Allen will serve as secretary to the committee. The awards ceremony will be held on May 19, 2008 in New York City.

For more than half a century, *The Village Voice* Obie Awards have honored the best of Off-Broadway and Off-Off Broadway. Unlike most theater awards, the Obies do not publicize nominations or employ rigid categories in which a "Best" is selected. In the conviction that creativity is not competitive, the judges select outstanding artists and productions in each category, and may even invent new categories to reward artistic merit. Past winners include well-known stars such as Dustin Hoffman, Meryl Streep, William Hurt, Morgan Freeman, Mos Def, Amy Irving, Kevin Kline, Nathan Lane, Olympia Dukakis, Robert Duvall, Kevin Bacon, Alec Baldwin, Kathy Bates, James Earl Jones, Felicity Huffman, and Harvey Fierstein to name a few.

Producer **Eileen Phelan** and publicist **Gail Parenteau** joyously return to serve the *Village Voice* Obies for the 15<sup>th</sup> consecutive year. Ms. Phelan will produce and direct the Obie Awards Ceremony and will also stage the event and coordinate the presenters, hosts and entertainment for the ceremony. Ms. Parenteau will handle publicity and media relations and will assist with promotion and event execution.

### **About the Chairman and Judges:**

#### **Michael Feingold**

A contributor to the *Voice* since 1971, Michael Feingold has been its chief theater critic for the past two decades and has frequently served on the Obie Awards committee since 1974, taking over its chairmanship in 2006. A Pulitzer Prize finalist and winner of the coveted George Jean Nathan Award in Theater Criticism for his *Voice* reviews, he has also sustained a second career in the theater as a playwright, translator, and dramaturg, particularly celebrated for his translations of Brecht, two of which, *Happy End* and *3Penny Opera*, have been produced on Broadway.

#### **Mark Blankenship**

Mark Blankenship is currently a theater critic and reporter for *Variety*. Additionally, his work has appeared in *The Village Voice*, *The New York Times*, *American Theater*, and *Time Out New York*.

#### **Jeremy Gerard**

Jeremy Gerard is presently a critic and culture editor at *Bloomberg News*. He has been a staff writer for *New York Magazine*, *Variety*, *Soho Weekly News*, *The New York Times*, and the *Dallas Morning News*. He is the author of the forthcoming *Wynn Place Show* (Smith & Kraus), a biography of Wynn Handman and the American Place Theatre. He previously served as a guest judge on the Obie Awards committee in 1993.

#### **Robert O'Hara**

Playwright-director Robert O'Hara received a 2006 Obie Award for his direction of the world premiere production of *In the Continuum*, which has just completed a second international tour following its acclaimed Off-Broadway run. He wrote and directed *Insurrection: Holding History*, produced at the Public Theater, which received the Oppenheimer Award for Best New American Play.

#### **Neil Patel**

Neil Patel is a New York-based scenic designer working in theater, opera, dance and film. Twice a winner of the Obie Award for Sustained Excellence of Set Design, in 1996 and 2001, he numbers among his credits the Broadway productions of *Sideman*, *'night*, *Mother*, and *Ring of Fire*, along with work at such notable Off-Broadway venues as, Manhattan Theatre Club, Roundabout Theatre, BAM, New York Theatre Workshop, Playwrights Horizons, Second Stage, and Vineyard Theatre. He has designed productions in London at the RSC, Bush Theater, and in the West End, while his work for Anne Bogart and the SITI Company has been seen in numerous international venues. He previously served as an Obie Awards judge in 2000, and is a recipient of the 2000 EDDY Award and numerous Drama Desk nominations.

#### **Helen Shaw**

Helen Shaw writes theater criticism for the *New York Sun*, *Time Out New York*, and the *Jewish Daily Forward*. As a dramaturg, she has worked for artists including Martha Clarke, Simon McBurney, the Waterwell ensemble and Lear deBessonet / Stillpoint

Productions. She studied anthropology at Harvard and dramaturgy at the A.R.T./Institute under Robert Brustein and Arthur Holmberg.

### **Alexis Soloski**

Alexis Soloski is a theater critic for *The Village Voice* and a regular member of the Obie Awards committee.. Her criticism has also recently appeared in The New York Times, Theater magazine, and Modern Painters. She teaches literature at Columbia University.

### **How to Contact the Obies**

The Obies are awarded with the conviction that creativity is not a competition. As such, there are no nominations. Those interested in having their work considered by the Obie Judges should send invitations and press materials to OBIE AWARDS c/o *The Village Voice* Obie Awards, 36 Cooper Square, New York, NY 10003

For sponsorship: Eden Chen, [echen@villagevoice.com](mailto:echen@villagevoice.com)

For promotional tie-ins and product placement: Mauro DeCeglio, [mdeceglgio@villagevoice.com](mailto:mdeceglgio@villagevoice.com)

To contact the Obie Awards Committee: Clint Allen, secretary, [Obie08@gmail.com](mailto:Obie08@gmail.com)

### **About The Village Voice:**

Founded by Dan Wolf, Ed Fancher, and Norman Mailer in October 1955, The Village Voice introduced free-form, high-spirited and passionate journalism into the public discourse. As the nation's first and largest alternative newsweekly, the *Voice* maintains the same tradition of no-holds-barred reporting and criticism it first embraced when it began publishing over fifty years ago. The recipient of three Pulitzer prizes, the National Press Foundation Award, and the George Polk Award, among others, the *Voice* has earned a reputation for its groundbreaking investigations of New York City politics, and as the premier expert on New York's cultural scene. Writing and reporting on local and national politics, with opinionated arts, culture, music, dance, film and theater reviews, daily web dispatches, comprehensive entertainment listings, and unrivaled classifieds, the *Voice* is the authoritative source on all that is New York.

*The Village Voice* has also created such celebrated events as the Obie Awards, Siren Music Festival, "Voice Box" Emerging DJ series, Choice Eats, as well as the most anticipated issues and guides of the year including the annual Pazz and Jop music poll, Best of NYC, and its Spring, Summer, and Fall Preview guides. The *Voice* is New York's most influential must-read alternative newspaper in print and online at [www.villagevoice.com](http://www.villagevoice.com) where the site averages 2 million unique users each month.

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