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# the arts

## 2010 B. Iden Payne Awards

Honoring last season's Fab Four of theatre

BY ROBERT FAIRES, FRI., NOV. 12, 2010

Voters for this year's B. Iden Payne Awards may have had 56 productions to choose from, but when the honors were handed out at the Long Center's Rollins Studio Theatre on Monday, Nov. 1, it looked like they only had eyes for four. Collectively, *The Drowsy Chaperone*, *The Jungle*, *Murder Ballad Murder Mystery*, and *The Taming of the Shrew – Original Practices* took home almost half of the 35 awards distributed during the ceremony. Members of the Austin Creative Alliance (formerly the Austin Circle of Theaters) really, really liked elements of other shows, but between the number of honors and the enthusiastic reception that greeted the artists accepting them, these were the shows from last season that folks liked best overall.



Connor Hopkins

The faux Twenties musical *The Drowsy Chaperone* took top honors, taking the award in six of the seven categories in which it was nominated: production of music theatre, director of music theatre for Nick Demos, ensemble performance for the entire cast, choreographer for Robin Lewis, music director for Allen Robertson, and costume design for Susan Branch Towne. But while there was a lot of love in the room for the show, there was no one in the room from the show to receive that love. An awkward silence fell every time a winner from *Chaperone* was named. And it wasn't until the last prize was announced that anyone even affiliated with production company Zach Theatre – two cast members from its production of *Rent* – stepped forward to accept on Zach's behalf.

Other big winners were well represented, though. *The Taming of the Shrew – Original Practices* director Beth Burns gleefully claimed the comedy production prize for the show and her own award for directing it, and Ryan Crowder, who starred as Kate and presented the event's first awards in costume, accepted the prize for lead actor in a comedy, albeit sans dress. Megan Reilly was there to receive her award for lighting the Tutto Theatre/Vortex Repertory Company co-production of *Murder Ballad Murder Mystery*, and Vortex Producing Artistic Director Bonnie Cullum accepted the featured actor in music theatre awards for that show's Robert Pierson and Content Love Knowles. (Cullum also accepted Knowles' award for writing the original score to the musical version of *Sleeping Beauty* on which they collaborated.)



Tickled co-PADs: The Rude Mechs' Sarah Richardson (l) and Lana Lesley

The crowd saw a lot of Trouble Puppet Theater Company Artistic Director Connor Hopkins, who made repeat trips to the podium to accept awards for his direction of *The Jungle*, his script adapted from Sinclair Lewis' novel, and a special certificate for the show's puppetry. (Eliot Haynes won for the show's sound design as well.) And Hopkins managed the nifty trick of resurrecting the awards' namesake, B. Iden Payne himself, as a puppet, who introduced

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your humble correspondent to present this year's Special Recognition Award to the Rude Mechanicals.

Members of that collective mobbed the stage to accept the honor, with more than a dozen looking on as the six co-producing artistic directors took turns at the microphone, describing how lucky they feel to live and work in the city they do. Their heartfelt appreciation for their hometown was perhaps the most articulate expression of a feeling shared by many in the room that night.

For a full list of award winners, visit [www.austincreativealliance.org](http://www.austincreativealliance.org).

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