The 64th Annual Tony Awards

June 15, 2010 By POZ Staff

By Dennis Daniel (Comptroller, Smart + Strong)

Admitted theater queen that I am, I eagerly await that special Sunday night in early June...Tony Night, Broadway's Night To Shine. I don't think I've missed a single broadcast since my college days, in the late '70s, and have actually attended one live. It's always a surreal combination of the sublime and the ridiculous.

The 64th Annual Tony Awards, broadcast from Radio City Music Hall this past Sunday night, did not disappoint in either respect, from major sound problems in the opening to a bizarrely quirky performance by Best Actress in a Musical winner Catherine Zeta-Jones to a charming and delightful musical presentation from The Menier Chocolate Factory's stripped down revival of "La Cage Aux Folles."

But something else was stripped away last Sunday night. Noticeably missing from these Tony awards was any mention of HIV or AIDS. No red ribbons. No tearful remembrances of talent gone too soon. No fervent pleas for a cure.

It occurred to me that the Broadway community--which was struck early and hard when AIDS made its world debut, and which marshaled its forces quickly to provide support, with an often strident call for attention and resources--has, in some way, moved past AIDS. The disease has now become just one of many issues facing the professional theater world: selling tickets, luring Hollywood stars who will help sell those tickets, and keeping patrons from terrorist bombs in Times Square.

The only mention of disease Sunday night was Kelsey Grammer's congratulating David Hyde Pierce on the occasion of his special award saluting his great work for the Alzheimer's Association. (In their own Alzheimer's moment, the Tony producers neglected to broadcast the special award granted to Tom Viola, the executive director of Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS. The group hasn't been honored onstage since 1993.)

And yet those living with HIV were represented well among the Tony winners. Former *POZ* cover guy Bill T. Jones took home his second Best Choreographer Tony for his work on "Fela!," a musical addressing the life and times of Nigerian civil-rights activist Fela Kuti. (Jones was also nominated for Best Book and Best Direction.) Jones won his first Tony in 2007 for his choreography of "Spring Awakening."

And "La Cage Aux Folles," with music and lyrics by another former *POZ* cover guy, Jerry Herman, walked away with three Tony Awards. The original 1983 production won six Tonys. Sunday night the 2010 production received Tonys for Best Revival of a Musical, Best Direction of a Musical and Best Performance by a Leading Actor in a Musical. That actor, Douglas Hodges, led the "La Cage" cast in performing Herman's anthem for living in the moment, "The Best of Times":

"The Best of Times is now.

What’s left of summer but a faded rose.

The Best of Times is now.

As for tomorrow, well, who knows, who knows, who knows."

In these supposedly better times for people living with HIV, we can only hope that tomorrow will bring a renewed commitment by the creative forces of Broadway to keep educating audiences about HIV and to never let the legacy of those lost fade.

Here’s a YouTube video on “Fela!” with Bill T. Jones:

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.

http://beta.docker.poz.com/blog/the-64th-annual-tony