

StageGrade Polls Critics on Tony Picks *Fences*, *Memphis* and *La Cage aux Folles* favored

NEW YORK, June 3, 2010 --Are Catherine Zeta-Jones and Denzel Washington about to add some Tonys to their Oscars? Are *Fences* and *Memphis* and *La Cage* really shoo-ins to take home the top prizes on June 13? Will *Red* or *Next Fall* take the best play honors? A cross section of New York's savviest theater critics and pundits have a lot to say about these, and many other contenders, in the first ever **StageGrade Tony Poll**, released last week.

This year's Tony Awards will be the first in 45 years to exclude critics from voting, so this poll fills a gap, representing the "votes" of the uncounted. To tackle this task, StageGrade--which reports the critical consensus on all New York plays and musicals--actively reached out to the critics featured on its site every day, from the *New York Post*'s Elisabeth Vincentelli to TheaterMania editor-in-chief Brian Scott Lipton. The critics looked at the nominees in the major categories, told StageGrade who they think "will win," and who they think "should win." The responses are lively, opinionated, and wildly divergent. Still, it's striking how much consensus still emerges around certain "sure things":

- **Critics say August Wilson's *Fences* will win best revival, though they think Arthur Miller's *A View From the Bridge* is more deserving. What gives *Fences* the edge? It's still running.**
- **They're not thrilled with any of the new-musical choices--not even the likely winner, *Memphis*--and they're positively aghast at the choices for new musical score. ("Should have been scrapped," fumes the *Post*'s Vincentelli of the category.)**
- ***Fences* star Viola Davis can clear a place on her mantle for her best actress Tony--she has the strongest "will" and "should" chances of any single performer (with her co-star Denzel Washington a close second).**

As they say in the blogosphere, RTWT (read the whole thing)!

StageGrade was established in response to the common lament that a show's success or failure seems inordinately tied to what just a few (or even just one) critic wrote about it. StageGrade effectively democratizes the critical response, ensuring that every reviewer with something worthwhile to say -- from *The New York Times* to OffOffOnline -- is considered equally, thus providing readers with a uniquely trustworthy sense of the critical consensus on every show.

This simple but potent idea has already garnered key endorsements: Last month a front-page story in *The New York Times* cited StageGrade as an authoritative source for how critics respond to Broadway shows. Meanwhile, StageGrade was selected for a summer fellowship at the Yale Entrepreneurial Institute. This prestigious fellowship promotes the creation, growth, and long-term success of viable, scalable new ventures.



The StageGrade management team includes editors Rob Weinert-Kendt (*American Theatre*) and Isaac Butler (*Parabasis*); experienced entrepreneurs Doug Rand (Yale JD/MBA 2010) and Jonathan Rand (co-founders of the innovative theater publisher Playscripts, Inc.); theater marketing expert Shinhyoung Sohn (Yale School of Drama theater management MFA 2010); and enterprise software developer Martin Gordon.

It's easy to follow the latest StageGrade updates on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [RSS](#), or [email](#). Coming soon, users will be able to publish their own reviews and grades, keep track of which reviewers reflect their own preferences, and get personalized recommendations.

Whenever you're looking to see a show in New York, StageGrade should be your first stop.

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