

“I am confident this award will help identify the next generation of American playwrights who understand the special power of theatre to transform hearts and minds and that Philadelphia Theatre Company will continue to be a welcoming venue for them.”

-Terrence McNally

About Terrence McNally

Terrence McNally was an American playwright, librettist, and LGBTQ+ trailblazer, described by The New York Times as “the bard of the American Theater.” One of the few playwrights of his generation to successfully move from the avant-garde to mainstream acclaim, McNally helped redefine American playwriting over six decades.

He was the recipient of five Tony Awards — two for his plays *Love! Valour! Compassion!* and *Master Class*, two for the books to his musicals *Kiss of the Spider Woman* and *Ragtime*, and the 2019 Tony Award for Lifetime Achievement. His many honors include the 2011 Dramatists Guild Lifetime Achievement Award (he served as Vice President of the Guild from 1981–2001), the 2015 Lucille Lortel Lifetime Achievement Award, induction into the American Theater Hall of Fame (1996), and induction into the American Academy of Arts and Letters (2018). His legacy lives on through his plays, musicals, and operas performed worldwide, and through his papers housed at the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin.

Philadelphia Theatre Company mounted the world premieres of *Master Class*, *Golden Age*, *Some Men*, and *Unusual Acts of Devotion*, as well as the Philadelphia regional premieres of *Love! Valour! Compassion!*, *Lips Together*, *Teeth Apart*, *Mothers and Sons*, and *Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune*.

About the Terrence McNally Award

Terrence McNally’s storied collaboration with Philadelphia Theatre Company included four world premieres, underscoring his long-standing commitment to Philadelphia’s vibrant cultural scene and thriving community of artists.

As a continuation of that commitment — and of Terrence’s deep belief in supporting early-career playwrights — the Terrence McNally Award was established to support one Philadelphia-based early-career playwright with financial resources, artistic support, and a public reading of their play at Philadelphia Theatre Company.

Past McNally Awardees have included Pulitzer Prize–winner James Ijames, Bill Cain, A. Zell Williams, Martín Zimmerman, Donja R. Love, Stephanie Kyung Sun Walters, and most recently MK Tuomanen, recipient of the 2024 Award for their play [*Night Science*](#).

Under the stewardship of Artistic Directors Taibi Magar and Tyler Dobrowsky, and in partnership with the Terrence McNally Foundation, the Award continues with a renewed focus

on identifying and championing the most promising early-career playwrights in Philadelphia — celebrating the extraordinary artistry, diversity, and bold storytelling rooted in this city.

The submission window will open on **April 7th**, and close on **June 2nd, 2026**. The winner of the Terrence McNally Award will be announced on September 9th, 2026.

To learn more about the guidelines and eligibility for the Terrence McNally Award, please see below.

Playwright Eligibility:

- The applicant must have been raised in or currently reside in the Philadelphia area in order to be eligible for the Terrence McNally Award. The applicant will be asked how they identify as a Philadelphia writer.
- The applicant must be over the age of 18.
- The applicant must have a full-length play ready to submit for consideration.
- Playwrights may only win the award once.

Guidelines for Submission:

- Please submit a full-length play written for the stage that you think best represents your work as a playwright. Terrence McNally's plays were known to focus on three themes, which we hope our winning playwright will amplify: social justice, queer rights, and the transformative power of art. Please keep this in mind when choosing your submission.
- Plays that have been fully produced more than once or published are not eligible for the Terrence McNally Award. Plays that have had a workshop, reading, or non-professional production will be considered.
- Playwrights may submit a work that is co-authored, but only the submitting artist will be eligible for the award.
- Scripts must be typed and arranged in a professional play script format. Please provide a synopsis and character breakdown with your play or sample.
- Please type your entry in a reasonable font and include stage directions where necessary.
- Please submit your work as a .pdf so that all formatting will remain intact and no edits can be accidentally made while your submission is being reviewed.
- Entries must be received by the deadline to be considered.
- All entries are final.
- If you have representation, please include your representation's contact information on the cover page of your submission, along with your preference for whom to contact (it may be the playwright directly)

Additional Information:

- Entries will be adjudicated by a panel of artists and peers drawn from Philadelphia and from around the country
- The winner will be notified by email and announced publicly.

Dates:

- April 7, 2026 - Submissions Open
- June 2, 2026 - Submissions Close
- September 9, 2026 - Winner Announced

How to Submit Your Work:

If you are a playwright who would like to submit your work for the Terrence McNally Award, please submit using this [Google form](#).

If you do not have a Gmail account or have trouble accessing the application online, you may submit your application directly by emailing literary@philatheatreco.org. Please answer the following questions within your email, making sure to number each answer accordingly, and attach a .pdf of your submission.

Application Questions:

1. Full Name of Applicant (First and Last):
2. What are your pronouns?
3. Title of submission:
4. Describe how you identify as a Philadelphia playwright.
5. Terrence McNally's work often centered around three issues: queer rights, social justice and the transformative power of art. Describe how your submission represents the spirit of Terrence McNally's artistic mission. Does it amplify, build up, expand, tell in a new way, the stories that provoke, illuminate, and hold up the core themes about which McNally wrote?
6. Briefly describe the developmental history of your submission.
7. Are you over the age of 18?