

Marriott Theatre takes top Jeff honors

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Alene Robertson always wanted to play the character Mame, and when Marriott Theatre in Lincolnshire invited her to appear in their production of the musical, she thought at last she had her chance. Except they offered her the supporting role of Vera, Mame's best friend, instead.

But as Shakespeare wrote, all's well that ends well. Her performance in Marriott's "Mame," earned top honors Monday at the 33rd annual Joseph Jefferson Awards, celebrating Chicagoland's theater professionals.

"This time, being a bridesmaid paid off," said Robertson, accepting her award for actress in a supporting role - musical.

The venerable Marriott Theatre led all ensembles with 23 nominations in 10 categories, winning three for "The King and I," including Mary Ernster's award for actress in a principal role- musical and Nancy Missimi for costume design and musical production.

"Hard Times," Lookingglass Theatre Company and The Actors Gymnasium's joint production of Charles Dickens' novel, earned the most accolades, picking up five Jeff Awards, including adaptation, choreography, lighting design, director-play and production-play.

The awards for actor and actress in a principal went to Greg Vinkler, the doomed monarch in Chicago Shakespeare Theatre's "King Lear," and Carmen Roman for her performance as a professor stricken with cancer in the Goodman Theatre's production of "Wit."

An effusive Marilu Henner, a Chicago native, picked up an award for actress in a principal role-nonresident for "Annie Get Your Gun."

"I loved being here," Henner said, "and I want to come back."

In democratic fashion, the Jeff Committee spread the wealth, recognizing new works by Seanachai Theatre Company ("The Pagans") who shared the award with Steppenwolf Theatre Company ("The Ballad of Little Jo"); the Next Theatre, winner of the ensemble award for "The Incident;" David Darlow, supporting actor in American Theater Company's "Endgame" and Laura T. Fisher in Famous Door Theatre Company's "Early and Often

Caption: Alene Robertson, right, shown with Hollis Resnik, left, and Paula Scrofano, won a Jeff Award for her portrayal of Vera in the Marriott Theater production of "Mame."

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