

Last night was a surprise nail biter. From the comfort of my attic room in my Maryland home, where I am riding out this stage of the pandemic (and I am NOT camera ready), with the birds and the sun flitting through the tree outside my window, I settled in for what I thought would be a detached viewing of a time that was. But, enveloped in the joy emanating from the Zoom windows from each member of The Boston Theater Critics Association, and seeing all the nominees and artists who were featured in the presentation, and weeping through the memorials to Johnny Lee, Gabriel Kuttner and Margarita Damaris Martinez, I fully felt -- everything. Actually receiving the Mid-size Directing and Production awards for Cloud 9 was icing.

No director does it on their own and I am super proud we were recognized for the production as well. It was a year ago Allison and I met in a coffee shop near the BCA and doodled design ideas on napkins. David was composing original tunes and Caitlin was figuring out the vocal arrangements, Elizabeth was fitting a corset to Josh Coleman and running through ridiculous wigs, Steph was balancing her school work with prop shopping, Whitney was figuring out how to light our most challenging theater configuration, my directing/dramaturg team were shepherding the Intimacy work we needed to do and instructing me in all things Churchill (and then being ... thoughtful ... when I exclaimed “that was groundbreaking 40 years ago - what does it mean today?”) Our stage management team, Becca and Kate, and the acting company, Stephanie, Josh, Sophorl, Kody, Marge, Alex, and Aislinn, had only a glimmer of what they were getting themselves into: song, sex, genders bent and fluid, Vaudeville, 2 characters each (3 for Aislinn) and attending dialects, two eras of period costumes, families torn apart and reformed, love thwarted and love found.

This is the team of artists that made the hours of work invisible to our audiences who got on the roller coaster and trusted us with the ride. Thank you for letting me not know stuff and filling in the blanks, for making me laugh and think and wrestle and breathe easy because I trusted that we would figure things out. Cloud 9 was one of the most successful collaborative experiences I've had as a director, a joy, a challenge, a hoot, and sometimes indescribably beautiful. The six seasons I have spent at Central Square Theatre have seen incredible change and growth, both for the company and me, personally. Sometimes the change has been deliberate but many times it's been an unexpected turn of events. What's been steadfast is that every unknown provided opportunity because the staff and board are the most nimble pivoters ever. Triangles provide the strongest base and I am incredibly grateful to Cathy and Debra as co-leaders. Together we hew to our mission, we are unapologetically ambitious, and we are always thoughtful.

To all the nominees, the recipients, the Norton critics, the patrons, donors, stakeholders - The awards last night were a great ending to a full year AND a bittersweet beginning to an unknown future. We will have a lot to process in the coming years and the power, the energy, the love, the grit, the humanity, the stories we bring to the empathetic and disruptive mirror that is theatre cannot be detached from each other. Artists are resilient and will always find a way to express themselves. Our producing companies will experience a metamorphosis, no doubt, but will emerge again. To quote Caryl Churchill, “it'll be fine when you reach Cloud 9.”