

Max Wyman Award in Critical Writing

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Theatre critic JERRY WASSERMAN takes 2023 Wyman Critical Writing prize; emerging writer and media artist ANGIE RICO named as mentee



Jerry Wasserman



Angie Rico

Theatre critic, author and actor JERRY WASSERMAN is the winner of this year's Max Wyman Award in Critical Writing.

The annual award celebrates critical commentary on the visual, performing and literary arts in the province of British Columbia. It is intended to honour informed and compelling writing that stimulates critical thinking, fosters ongoing discussion about the role of arts and culture in contemporary society and demonstrates the value of creative commentary in our understanding of the world around us.

The winner receives a prize of \$5,000 and a gold and emerald pin designed by Vancouver artist Robert Chaplin. A mentee, named by the laureate, receives a \$1,000 prize. This year's mentee is Angie Rico, an emerging writer and media artist.

The award was established in 2017 by philanthropist Yosef Wosk to honour the career and lifetime contributions of the Vancouver author, arts critic and commentator Max Wyman. It recognizes writers who have amassed a significant body of work. Eligible subjects of criticism include the visual arts, architecture and design, theatre, literature, dance, music, film and television, as well as more general cultural commentary.

Jerry Wasserman began working as a theatre critic on CBC national radio in the mid-1980s and broadcast weekly reviews on Vancouver's *The Afternoon Show* from 1987-2003. He has since served as theatre critic for *The Province* and, currently, the *Vancouver Sun*. About 400 of his articles and reviews have appeared in those papers. Since 2004, his website, www.vancouverplays.com, has received over 1.6 million visits. He taught English and Theatre at the University of British Columbia for over four decades and served as head of the department of Theatre and Film from 2007-2012. His acting resume includes stage appearances for the Arts Club, Playhouse, City Stage, Westcoast Actors, New Play Centre, United Players and Western Gold Theatre, and over 200 film and TV appearances, from *The X-Files*, *Look Who's Talking* and *Alive* to *I, Robot*, *Watchmen* and *The Last of Us*.

The jury citation reads: "Jerry Wasserman's remarkable career in many ways embodies the aims of this award. His decades as a teacher and as a performer give his writing about the theatre a sympathetic and thoughtful understanding that is expressed in language that is lively, direct and deeply informed. The jury was unanimous in its appreciation of the way he has encouraged and enhanced a wider appreciation of the richness of the Vancouver arts scene and the talents of those who make that richness possible—both through his print and media reviews and through his website, which maintains a watching critical brief on the Vancouver theatre scene."

Yosef Wosk commented: "Jerry Wasserman's voice has been a steady and trusted source of information and context about the Vancouver theatre scene for decades. He treats criticism and commentary as an integral part of the cultural fabric, and sees the role of the critic not as an antagonist to the performer and creator but as a collaborator. I am delighted that he is to receive this award."

Previous winners of the Wyman award are Dorothy Woodend, arts editor of the on-line magazine *The Tyee*, freelance art critic Robin Laurence and author, critic and former UBC gallery director Scott Watson.

JERRY WASSERMAN BIOGRAPHY

With a Ph.D. in English from Cornell University, Professor Emeritus **Jerry Wasserman** taught English and Theatre at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver for over four decades and served as Head of the Department of Theatre & Film from 2007-12. Jerry has published widely on drama and theatre, especially Canadian theatre. He is author or editor of five books, including *Spectacle of Empire: Marc Lescarbot's Theatre of Neptune in New France*, *Theatre and AutoBiography: Writing and Performing Lives in Theory and Practice* (with Sherrill Grace) and *Modern Canadian Plays*, the standard text in Canadian drama classes for over 35 years. He also wrote and hosted *Modern Canadian Theatre*, a 12-hour TV series for BC's Open Learning Agency/Knowledge Network. He has given talks at many theatre, literature, literacy and music conferences, including twice at the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.

A member of Canadian Actors Equity since 1978, Jerry has appeared on stage for the Arts Club, Playhouse, City Stage, Westcoast Actors, New Play Centre, United Players and Western Gold Theatre. He served as President of Playwrights Theatre Centre from 2004-08. As a member of ACTRA and the Union of BC Performers, Jerry has over 200 film and TV credits, from *The X-Files*, *Look Who's Talking* and *Alive* to *I, Robot*, *Watchmen* and *The Last of Us*.

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ANGIE RICO BIOGRAPHY

Angie Rico is an emerging writer and media artist based in Vancouver, B.C., on unceded Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh territory. Through her writing practice, she strives to amplify diverse perspectives in the art world and is dedicated to exploring how art writing can foster nuanced discussions that consider both the art and its broader context. Her freelance writing spans art and culture, with a particular focus on film, theatre, and visual art. Her reviews and essays have been published in various local publications, including *Reissue*, *Peripheral Review*, and *SAD* magazine. She holds a BFA in Film, Video, and Integrated Media from Emily Carr University and is currently participating in the Newworld Theatre's Critical Futures program, which aims to train and uplift BIPOC theatre reviewers.

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