

June 9, 2015

Mr. Leslie Moonves
President and Chief Executive Officer
CBS Headquarters
51 W. 52nd Street
New York, NY 10019-6188

Dear Mr. Moonves:

Congratulations on the 2015 Tony Awards Telecast. As president of the Dramatists Guild, I applaud CBS for continuing to champion live theater on national television.

That said, we are increasingly dismayed that the awards in the major writing categories have been presented off-camera. In doing so, the broadcast marginalizes the roles of playwrights, composers and lyricists in forging the American Theater. And yet, theater begins with the dramatists who face down the blank page.

A list of great theater writers includes some of the most enduring names in popular culture: George and Ira Gershwin, Irving Berlin, Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, and Stephen Sondheim. Exciting new writers are joining their ranks every season on Broadway, but by failing to grant them visibility; CBS is regrettably erasing them from the historical record. This is a shame not only for the telecast, but also for our national musical and literary heritage.

We understand that your mission is two-fold: to honor our art form, but also to create entertaining television. Nevertheless, the omission of writers is patently arbitrary. Surely the names of many Broadway actors, directors and producers are no more familiar to the average viewer than those of our members.

This year, arguably, the exclusion of authors made the event less thrilling. The “Best Book” category featured two legends: Craig Lucas (a librettist, screenwriter, and a three-time Tony nominee whose Broadway work includes the play *Prelude to a Kiss* and the musical *The Light in the Piazza*), and Terrence McNally (a seven-time nominee who won for *Ragtime* and *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, as well as a two-time Tony winner for “Best Play”). The “Best Score” contest boasted giants in our field: John Kander and the late Fred Ebb, with over a dozen nominations apiece for iconic works ranging from *Cabaret* to *Chicago*, and a certain globally renowned rock-star named Sting. Audiences would no doubt find this information educational and dramatically engaging; these figures are titans on Broadway and elsewhere. Shockingly, on the broadcast, they were rendered invisible.

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Maury Yeston

In fact, Jeanine Tesori, Lisa Kron and Alison Bechdel made history when they became the first all-female writing team to take home awards for Best Score, Best Book and, ultimately, Best Musical. Yet audiences were not privy to this milestone, because two out of these three honors were supplanted by commercials.

Every year, the Academy Awards faithfully includes screenwriters in not one but two categories. And it's not just the Oscars; the Grammys, Emmys and Golden Globes all award the writers in their respective industries *on the air*. Ironically it's the theater that most esteems writers; we are generally recognized as the principal artistic force behind new work, and we even retain ownership and control over the material we create. Yet on the very awards show intended to celebrate our craft, we are effectively negated.

The Dramatists Guild strongly urges you to reconsider this policy in future years and, instead, make the Tony Awards truly reflective of the artists who create the magic that fills American stages.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Doug Wright". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending from the end of the name.

Doug Wright
President, Dramatists Guild of America

cc: Heather A. Hitchens, American Theatre Wing
Charlotte St. Martin, The Broadway League