

[Sample nomination letter, 2011 Awards]

Governor General's Performing Arts Awards for Lifetime Artistic Achievement

I nominate Paul Thompson for his contributions to Canadian theatre, notably for bringing the stories of ordinary Canadians to the stage, and for bringing theatre to the people through performances held in rural communities, as well as large cities across the country.

His love for theatre began from experiences he had while working as a youth on his grandparents' farm near Listowel, Ontario. From there he began a theatrical career based on, and filled with, the intricate details and happenings of everyday Canadian lives.

Paul Thompson is ideally suited for this Award as he has actually spent a lifetime pursuing his love of the theatre.

As a creator, he is known for a form of collective theatre that has brought to life more than 30 new Canadian plays. This style of work relies on a string of independent-minded performers and the process has produced several well known actors (David Fox, Miles Potter, Janet Amos and Eric Peterson, to name a few). His plays have originated in all parts of Canada and many of them have had commercial runs and national tours. Some of his most recognized pieces include the trail-breaking production of the *Farm Show*; an essential piece of Canadian history entitled *1837: The Farmers' Revolt*; an outrageous sexual study called *I Love You Baby Blue*, for which Paul was arrested and put on trial; a trans-Canadian hit play about our former Prime Minister entitled *Maggie and Pierre*; and a political satire for the Quebec people in bad French named *Les Maudits Anglais*. Paul Thompson represents a very Canadian kind of success as his type of theatre finds its value in the community.

As a director, Paul Thompson has worked with the First Nations People to develop their own voice, and in the process has helped to create such important works as *Jessica*, a passionate play about Saskatchewan Métis; *The Manitoulin Incident* for De-bah-jeh-mu-jig Theatre; and *Generic Warrior and No-Name Indians* for Toronto's Native Earth Performing Arts.

As a producer, Paul Thompson has helped to stage more than 200 original productions and in this process has assisted in the establishment of a number of influential Canadian theatre companies, including Newfoundland's CODCO Theatre, Saskatchewan's 25th Street Theatre, and Toronto's Nightwood Theatre.

Paul is also a former Artistic Director and Co-Founder of Toronto's prestigious Theatre Passe Muraille and a former Director General of The National Theatre School of Canada. Paul is identified as a leader of the nationalist movement in Canadian theatre. He has received a number of awards, including the prestigious Toronto Theatre Alliance Silver

Ticket Award, four Canada Council for the Arts Awards, a Dora Mavor Moore trophy and several Chalmers Awards. He is also the only playwright to have been honoured with a tribute evening in conjunction with Toronto's world-renowned International Festival of Authors. Most recently he was awarded the Order of Canada (2008).

A commissioned, first-person video portrait of Paul Thompson, presented by Moses Znaimer, (founder of City TV and Zoomer's 740 AM radio), opens with the following voice-over: "You are about to watch an investigation into the unique qualities of those who probe the unlimited possibilities of the human imagination, the search for originals in art."

In the introduction, Znaimer says that not many people nowadays would be able to identify the apartment building near the corner of Bloor and St. George in Toronto as the former Rochdale College, the very epicentre of Canada's counter-culture for over a decade. He goes on to say that long after Yorkville was set on its gentrified path, the Rochdale high-rise, its activities conveniently hidden from the street, persisted as a home and place of business for drop-outs of every variety. The most important and longest-lasting offshoot of Rochdale is Theatre Passe Muraille, and part of the reason for that is Paul Thompson and his commitment to communal theatre.

About Paul Thompson, Moses Znaimer says: "An artist builds an audience for his or her work, creating an audience for the unpredictable and the untried. To do that for as long as Paul Thompson has is remarkable and qualifies him as an 'original in art.'"