

《Broadway ready for dazzle and drama at 71st Tony Awards》

It's Broadway's biggest night of the year, when stars of the stage get together for a riot of an award show featuring show stoppers from the many nominees and an MC who often bursts into song: on June 11, the Tony Awards are back!

A total of 25 shows vying for awards in 24 categories; Oscar winners, Broadway stars, and Pulitzer-winning authors; plays about Middle East peace and musicals set in the 19th-century Moscow and Newfoundland, featuring cosmetics pioneers and furry Punxsatawney inhabitants: Here's a quick look at the nominees.



Host James Corden performs onstage during the 70th Annual Tony Awards at The Beacon Theatre on June 12, 2016 in New York City. /VCG Photo

Most nominations

A year after hit musical "Hamilton" scooped up a record of 16 nominations (and won 11 Tonys), the most any single show could muster this year was "Natasha, Pierre & the Great Comet of 1812" with 12 nods. based on part

of Tolstoy's "War and Peace," the rock opera has been nominated for best musical, best direction, best book of a musical and three of its actors, including recording star Josh Groban. But it faces serious competition from "Dear Evan Hansen" (nine nominations), starring a critically-acclaimed Ben Platt (of "Pitch Perfect" fame) in the main role, as well as "Groundhog Day – The Musical" and "Come from Away" (both seven nominations). All three bagged nods for best musical, best direction, best original score and best book. A revival of "Hello Dolly!", starring none other than Bette Midler, also looks like a serious contender with the 10 nominations.



Show host James Corden performs during the American Theatre Wing's 70th annual Tony Awards in New York, US, June 12, 2016. /VCG Photo

Musicals and politics

"Come From Away" has been one of the most talked about shows this year. It tells the story of a small Canadian town that hosted 7,000 stranded travelers after September 11, 2001, when planes were diverted from the US and rerouted to other airports. The feel-good musical opened on Broadway in March and its message of openness resonated at a time when US President Donald Trump was trying to push through a new travel ban. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau even invited US officials, including Trump's daughter and close adviser Ivanka, to a show.

The movie goldmine



The cast of "Hamilton" closes the show during the American Theatre Wing's 70th annual Tony Awards in New York, US, June 12, 2016. /VCG Photo

Recycling movies as musicals continues to pay off. After the success of shows like "Billy Elliott", "Mary Poppins" and "School of Rock", three new Hollywood-inspired musicals earned Tony noms this year. Aside from "Groundhog Day," based on the 1993 movie starring Bill Murray, "Anastasia", adapted from the Disney animated film, and "Holiday Inn," inspired by the 1942 Fred Astaire-Bing Crosby comedy, have also seen their hard work rewarded at the Tonys.

Drama

It's not all song and dance: Among the top nominated plays this year are "A Doll's House, Part 2", an imagined sequel to Henrik Ibsen's famous drama, and "Oslo," about the back-channel efforts to bring Israelis and Palestinians together for the 1993 Oslo Peace Accords, with eight and seven nominations respectively, including best play and best direction. New productions of "Lillian Hellman's Little Foxes" and "August Wilson's Jitney" garnered six nominations each, including best revival and best direction.

Star power



Scarlett Johansson attends the 64th Annual Tony Awards at Radio City Music Hall, June 13, 2010, in New York City. /VCG Photo

Glancing at the list of nominated actors, one might be forgiven for thinking this is the Oscars or Emmys. Chris Cooper in "A Doll's House" will be up against Kevin Kline in "Present Laughter" in the leading actor category. Cate Blanchett, Laura Linney, Sally Field and Jennifer Ehle will battle it out as best leading ladies in a play. Groban, Midler, Danny DeVito, David Hyde Pierce, "Sex and the City" actress Cynthia Nixon, and Broadway heavyweights Patti Lupone (for "War Paint") and Nathan Lane ("The Front Page") are also among the nominees.

A special achievement award will meanwhile be handed to the voice of Darth Vader himself, veteran actor and two-time Tony Awards winner James Earl Jones, for his work on the stage.

And the award goes to...



Kevin Spacey. /VCG Photo

This year's Tonys will be hosted by Oscar- and Tony-winner Kevin Spacey. This will be the "House of Cards" star's first gig as host, following in the footsteps of James Corden, Hugh Jackman and Neil Patrick Harris. Guest presenters will reportedly include Scarlett Johansson, Stephen Colbert, Anna Kendrick and Tina Fey.

The show kicks off at 8:00 p.m. local time (8:00 a.m. on June 12 BJT) at New York City's Radio City Music Hall.