

## Legislation Text

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Recognizing and congratulating the Wilma Theater for receiving the 2024 Regional Theatre Tony Award, and celebrating the Wilma's outstanding contributions to the world of theatre and Philadelphia's diverse and vibrant arts and cultural landscape.

WHEREAS, The Wilma Theater was founded in 1973 as the Wilma Project, an avant-garde theater project that challenged the Philadelphia cultural community to create theatrical productions of original material and to develop local artists; and

WHEREAS, Blanka and Jiri Zizka, political refugees from Czechoslovakia, forged a creative relationship with the Wilma in 1979 as artists-in-residence and gained acclaim for their bold, innovative productions. The Zizkas assumed artistic leadership of the organization in 1981 and began the theater's trajectory of growth; and since then, the Wilma has been renowned for its experimental, boundary-pushing work. The theater has worked with cutting-edge playwrights including Paula Vogel, Tom Stoppard, and Danai Gurira; and

WHEREAS, In 1996, the Wilma Theater opened its 300-seat theater on Broad and Spruce streets, the first new theater built in Philadelphia in 40 years as a cornerstone of Philadelphia's new Avenue of the Arts; and

WHEREAS, In 2016, the official Wilma HotHouse Company was formed and opened the doors for the Wilma to become an incubator for artistic experimentation, and in 2020 adopted a shared leadership artistic governance structure, modelling collaboration and shared decision-making for the field of non-profit theater; and

WHEREAS, In 2021, The Wilma premiered FAT HAM, a Black, Queer spin on Hamlet by local playwright James Ijames which went on to win the 2022 Pulitzer Prize for Drama. And in 2023, The Wilma became the first and only independent Philadelphia theater to receive a Tony Award nomination for serving as a coproducer of Fat Ham's Broadway run, which received five nominations including Best Play; and

WHEREAS, Through their suite of youth programs, the Wilma strives to cultivate the artists and audiences of tomorrow through meaningful engagement with the art of today. Wilmagination has served over 10,000 Philadelphia high school students, and the AllStars after-school program provides students with an opportunity to become more involved in the Wilma's programming and artistic work. The Wilma partners with local organizations such as Broad Street Love, the Free Library of Philadelphia, and Philly House to facilitate spaces to invite community groups to create, workshop, or perform work; and

WHEREAS, The Wilma shares theatrical work on digital streaming platforms to create access to theater, and to gather audiences from across the nation and the world to see plays performed on the Philadelphia stage; and

WHEREAS, Tony Awards Administration Committee announced that, based on the recommendation by the American Theatre Critics Association, The Wilma Theater in Philadelphia will be the recipient of the 2024 Regional Theatre Tony Award at the 77<sup>th</sup> annual Tony Awards, an annual ceremony that recognizes excellence in live Broadway theatre; and

WHEREAS, The Wilma shares theatrical work on digital streaming platforms to create access to theater, and to gather audiences from across the nation and the world to see plays performed on the Philadelphia stage; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia recognizes the Wilma Theater, managing director Leigh Goldenberg, co-artistic directors Morgan Green, Lindsay Smiling, and Yury Urnov for this honor, as well as Artistic Director Emeritus Blanka Zizka, recognizing a Philadelphia theater and cultural institution that has displayed a continuous level of artistic achievement contributing to the growth of theatre nationally, and the first theater in Pennsylvania to get this recognition; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Recognizes and congratulates The Wilma Theater for receiving the 2024 Regional Theatre Tony Award, and celebrating the Wilma's outstanding contributions to the world of theatre and Philadelphia's diverse and vibrant arts and cultural landscape.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to Leigh Goldenberg, Managing Director of the Wilma Theater, further evidencing the sincere respect of this legislative body.