

# THE PODIUM



Drama students from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, perform during the Tony Awards.

raelis getting along at a time when we need that more than ever.”

As expected, Glenda Jackson was named best actress in a play for Edward Albee’s “Three Tall Women,” and Laurie Metcalf, who won last year for “A Doll’s House, Part 2” won best featured actress. “Once on This Island” was best musical revival.

Numbers from the nominated musicals didn’t hold a candle to the performance everyone had to wait nearly three hours for, as Bruce Springsteen performed a soulful “My Hometown.” He of-

ferred thanks “for making me feel so welcome on your block,” accepting a special Tony from Billy Joel. “Being part of the Broadway community has been a great thrill,” he said, thanking “our wonderful audiences who’ve made these shows so exciting and fulfilling.”

Here are some other memorable moments:

**TEARS OF LOVE** Theater students from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, performed “Seasons of Love” from “Rent” after their teacher, Melody Herzfeld,

received this year’s award for excellence in theater education, given to a teacher who “has demonstrated monumental impact on the lives of students.” Few dry eyes in the house.

**AN HONOR TO BE NOMINATED** The first-time hosts, Sara Bareilles, a nominee herself this year as one of the “SpongeBob” songwriters, and Josh Groban, nominated last year for “Natasha, Pierre & the Great Comet of 1812,” opened the show with an ode to those who won’t “go home with that glorious ornament.” Noting that neither of them had won a Tony or a Grammy, they sang in honor of the 90 percent of those nominated who would leave empty-handed: “This is for the people who lose, both of us have been in your shoes.”

**HER SHIP HAS SAILED** Tina Fey, introducing a scene from her nominated musical “Mean Girls,” noted that all four of the nominees were based on movies. But, she quipped, only one “paid for my boat.”

**SAY AGAIN?** Robert De Niro was onstage to introduce the long-awaited performance by Bruce Springsteen, but there were no words. Turns out it’s because the actor was getting bleeped, as he hurled multiple profanities at President Donald Trump. The audience, meanwhile, was cheering wildly.

## LI stars honor The Boss, women

“New York State of Mind” played as Billy Joel took the stage Sunday night at the Tony Awards, but he was in more of a New Jersey state of mind. The Hickville native paid tribute to Bruce Springsteen as he presented The Boss with his special award for his bio-concert “Springsteen on Broadway.”

“It is my pleasure to present a special Tony Award to my good friend Bruce Springsteen,” said Joel, who also offered some backstory on how Springsteen’s show made the journey. The Boss then thanked the Broadway community for welcoming

him to “their neighborhood.”

Also representing Long Island was Northport’s Patti LuPone, who remarked, “I have a deep appreciation for outspoken women,” paying tribute to the women of the American Theatre Wing, which was started by suffragettes.

Amy Schumer, a nominee for best actress in a play for “Meteor Shower,” introduced a performance by the “My Fair Lady” cast. The Rockville Centre-raised comedian, incidentally, lost the Tony to Glenda Jackson for Edward Albee’s “Three Tall Women.” — DANIEL BUBBELO



Joel presented Springsteen’s Tony.

## Audit: Excess schools cash in Mt. Sinai

BY JOHN HILDEBRAND  
john.hildebrand@newsday.com

Mount Sinai has joined the growing ranks of school districts on Long Island and statewide cited by state auditors for amassing millions of dollars in cash reserves beyond regulated limits.

The state comptroller’s office reported, in an audit posted this past week, that Mount Sinai repeatedly overestimated expenditures and underestimated tax revenues over three years, allowing the district to build overall reserves by 35 percent to a total of \$16.6 million as of June 2017.

Mount Sinai’s unrestricted reserves — sometimes known as “rainy day” funds — grew to \$11.5 million, which is equal to 19.8 percent of the system’s entire budget, state auditors reported. The overall reserve figure also includes money earmarked for specific purposes such as capital projects.

Under law, unrestricted funds are supposed to total no more than 4 percent of district budgets.

Mount Sinai officials said they intend to comply with the law. They noted, however that some of the district’s surplus reserves will be used to strengthen local security in the wake of the Feb. 14 school shootings in Florida.

“This year we were fortunate to have funds available to increase our security needs after the incident in Parkland, Florida,” the district stated in a letter addressed to the comptroller’s regional headquarters in Hauppauge.

The letter was signed by Gordon Brosdal, superintendent of Mount Sinai schools, and Lynn Capobianco, the school board president.

The district’s \$60.2 million budget for the 2018-19 school year includes money for four armed guards and other safety measures. Mount Sinai is among the first districts on the Island to include such guards in its security force.

Mount Sinai, located in northern Brookhaven Town, operates during the current school year on a \$59.3 million budget and enrolls 2,328 students, according to the state.

The comptroller’s office, which serves as the state’s fiscal watchdog, said Mount Sinai’s accumulation of cash is no isolated incident. Mount Sinai is the 29th district in the Nassau-Suffolk region flagged for such practices since January 2014.

“We continue to find a pattern, not only on Long Island, but also around the state, where districts tend to overestimate expenditures,” said Brian Butry, a spokesman for Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli. “This leads to a situation where you have accumulating excessive fund balances. While districts may not see this as a problem, there is a statutory limit.”

Butry said districts could apply these unused funds to useful purposes — for example, reducing homeowners’ property taxes or, as Mount Sinai has done, hiring additional security guards.

Mount Sinai school officials informed the state that they were also restructuring their reserves, and would reduce the unrestricted portion of those funds to the state’s 4 percent limit within the next two years.

At the same time, those officials contended that expenditures were sometimes difficult to estimate in advance, because they were subject to unforeseen circumstances.

Mount Sinai officials said they budgeted “conservatively,” especially in such areas as special education, building operations and maintenance that, they asserted, were “subject to large increases in costs during the school year.”

State auditors found, however, that Mount Sinai’s estimates of future appropriations were often “overly conservative.” Auditors said the district’s actual expenses were relatively stable over three years, but that the system repeatedly overestimated those costs.

