



And The Winner Is

**A Gleefully Entertaining Dive into
Fame, Fate and the Red Carpet**

Venue: Wine Country Theater at SLO CTE Foundation, Downtown Paso Robles

Date: April 10, 2026

Director Cynthia Anthony and Wine Country Theater have done it again. *With And The Winner Is*, they've delivered a brisk, sharply funny comedy that skewers ambition, vanity, and Hollywood ego with mischievous delight. Mitch Albom's play follows self-obsessed actor Tyler Johnes, who drops dead just moments before he's set to win his first Oscar. What follows is a witty, purgatorial romp that feels like a backstage pass to the afterlife — and the company dives into it with pure relish. We caught opening night, and the show is an absolute hoot. At the center of it all is Gregory De Martini as Tyler Johnes. He's magnetic — equal parts charm and insufferable entitlement. De Martini nails the rhythm of a man who genuinely believes the universe owes him an Oscar, delivering a fearless, volatile performance that keeps you laughing even as you're shaking your head at him. He's the kind of anti-hero you can't look away from. The supporting cast is equally strong in this clever, limbo-bar setting. Russell Snow brings just the right wry knowingness to Seamus, the gatekeeper who holds Tyler's fate in his hands, balancing levity and gravity with effortless charm. Edgar De La Cruz, a Wine Country Theater favorite, adds sly depth and versatility to his role, keeping every moment grounded and genuinely funny without ever tipping into caricature. Geoff Higgins is a standout as Kyle Morgan, Tyler's ruthlessly competitive rival. Higgins makes that "if you have it, I want it" energy feel dangerously contagious — the perfect foil that cranks up the play's deliciously competitive tension. Brianna Oliveros shines as Serenity, the ditsy blonde bombshell, landing her entrances with perfect comic timing and turning the character into a gleeful, self-aware archetype, rather than a cheap stereotype. Amanda Robinson delivers the emotional heart of the piece as Sheri, Tyler's long-suffering wife. Her layered, quietly powerful performance reminds us of the real human cost behind all the spotlight-chasing and ego-stroking. The new venue at the SLO CTE Foundation in downtown Paso Robles feels like a stylish, intimate fit for this production. The design is polished, the pacing is tight and energetic, and the whole evening moves with the brisk rhythm that keeps you fully engaged from the first entrance to the final bow. Cynthia Anthony's direction is, as always, crisp and flawless — she clearly demands (and gets) the very best from her cast. My friends and I left the theater smiling and buzzing. The humor lands consistently, but there's enough heart underneath to make the stakes feel surprisingly real, even in a heavenly comedy setup. It's a sharp, witty look at the entertainment industry that never takes itself too seriously.

Recommendation: If you're craving a playful, high-spirited night at the theater that pokes fun at fame while showcasing terrific performances, *And The Winner Is* is a winner. It's smart, funny, well-cast, and exactly the kind of lively, entertaining production Wine Country Theater does best.

Notes for potential attendees: Highly recommended — don't miss it!

- Expect sharp dialogue, quick scene changes, and plenty of character-driven laughs.
- Dress comfortably — the venue's relaxed-yet-stylish vibe matches the play's celebratory-yet-sardonic tone perfectly.
- Bring friends who appreciate a clever mix of humor and heart in a backstage-theater world.