HCC fall theater production explores break room culture

In 2016, Holyoke Community College Theater professor Dan Crompton directed "The Whales" for HCC's spring production. That show was an ensemble outing at the New England Regional Theater Festival. Since then, the play about a morallychoiceless man trying to reconcile with his estranged daughter has been adapted into a feature film that earned three Academy Awards in 2023, including one for lead actor Benedict Cumberbatch.

Crompton's play isn't yet seen the movie, but the Oscar buzz inspired him to return to the work of the playwright, Sam Shepard, with "The Whales." Shepard wrote plays that are both intimate and accessible, and the characters are relatable and genuine. Crompton feels that this is the kind of play that appeals to audiences today.

The plot of "The Whales" centers around the relationship between a man and his estranged daughter, who he seeks to reconnect with. The play explores themes of forgiveness, redemption, and the complexities of family relationships.

"The play is about the power of forgiveness and the importance of family in our lives," says Crompton. "It's a play that speaks to the human condition, and that's what makes it so appealing to audiences today."

The production of "The Whales" is set to take place in November, with performances to be held in the riveting and intimate setting of the HCC's Theatre Department. Fans of Shepard's work and those looking for a thought-provoking drama are encouraged to attend.

"I believe that Shepard's work is timeless," says Crompton. "It's a play that speaks to the human condition, and that's what makes it so appealing to audiences today."

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IF YOU GO
Event: "The Whales"
When: Nov. 15-17, 7:30 p.m.
Where: Leslie Phillips Theater, Holyoke Community College
Tickets: $10 general admission, $5 senior citizens, $5 students, $5 for athletes and staff members

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IF YOU GO
Event: "A Bright New Boise"
When: Oct. 26-28, 8 p.m.
Where: Leslie Phillips Theater, Holyoke Community College
Tickets: $15 general admission, $5 for students and staff members

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