In The News

HCC theater program wins six Kennedy Center awards

HOLYOKE - Once again, the Holyoke Community College Theater Department was recognized with multiple awards at the annual Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival.

HCC earned a total of six awards for two 2021 productions: four for “In These Times,” an original work presented remotely that recounts the experiences of students during the COVID-19 pandemic; and two for “Jesus Hopped the A Train,” a traditional stage play set in the Rikers Island prison.

HCC belongs to KCACTF Region I, whose festival was held virtually in January. KCACTF Region I includes colleges and universities in northern New York and all six New England states. Awards are based on the recommendations of respondents, who travel around the country to view college theater productions and offer critiques.

This year, three HCC students were honored with Merit awards in the category of Playwriting for their contributions to “In These Times,” Nicole Couture of Southampton for “Apollo,” a story about adopting an ailing shelter dog; Andre Rodrigues of Ludlow for “Racially Profiled,” a piece about his interactions with black and white police officers; and Alin Alabd of Northampton, a 2021 HCC graduate now at Smith College, for her poem “Capacity to Prevail.”

“We’re very pleased to have student work recognized by the Kennedy Center,” said HCC theater professor Pat Sandoval, who co-conceived of and directed “In These Times,” which was presented in spring 2021. “It’s an incredible accomplishment for HCC students to receive awards for playwriting.”

For “In These Times,” Sandoval asked students from all areas of the college to write first-person accounts of their lives during the pandemic. She auditioned students and theater alumni to perform those stories, and complemented the monologues with music and art contributed by other members of the HCC community. The cast included 18 actors performing different monologues during the 90-minute online show. Eight student and alumni musicians pre-recorded performances, including original music. More than 40 students and alumni contributed art that was displayed between the monologues and music.

Sandoval said it was particularly meaningful that HCC’s Theater, Stage Management for their work on the fall 2021 production of “Jesus Hopped the A Train,” a play by Stephen Adly Guirgis, was directed by HCC theater alum Axel Cruz.

The HCC Theater Department has now won 18 KC ACTF awards over the past decade for individual acting, ensemble acting, dedication to a script, stage managing, best original music, playwriting and collaboration.

The HCC Theater Department puts on two full productions each academic year, one in the fall and one in the spring. Rehearsals are now underway for the HCC Theater Department’s spring 2022 production of Shakespeare’s “A Midsummer Night’s Dream.” Directed by HCC theater professor Tim Cochran, the show will be presented in HCC’s Leslie Phillips Theater April 21-25.

Children’s Museum hosting Dueling Pianos Event

HOLYOKE - Children’s Museum at Holyoke is hosting a Dueling Pianos event to benefit the museum. Everyone is welcome to come and enjoy this fabulous night of entertainment.

The event will take place at Wyckoff Country Club on Saturday, April 23. Doors open at 6 p.m. Show starts at 7:30. Tickets are $30. Information included or visit our website at www.childrensmuseum-holyoke.org.