

HCC brings back 24-hour theater festival

HOLYOKE — After a three-year pandemic pause, the annual Leslie Phillips Festival, an evening of short plays written, directed and staged in 24 hours, returns this weekend to Holyoke Community College.

HCC theater alumni and students will assemble on the evening of Friday, Oct. 7, to begin brainstorming ideas and writing plays they will perform the next night, Saturday, Oct. 8, beginning at 7:30 p.m. in HCC's Leslie Phillips Theater.

The annual benefit, last held in 2019, honors the legacy of Leslie Phillips and raises money for the Leslie Phillips Theater Fund for Arts and Education.

The festival was first organized in 2016 by HCC alumni working with HCC theater professor and 1984 graduate Pat Sandoval as a tribute to Phillips, founder of the HCC theater program, who died in 1988 after inspiring legions of HCC students.

"This is an evening of creativity and collaboration for the HCC theater community and the community at large," said 1984 HCC alumna and festival coordinator Lisa Poehler. "It's also a chance to invest in the future generation of HCC's theater program and students — all in the name of our beloved mentor, Leslie Phillips."

After the show, festival attendees are invited to help commemorate the 50th anniversary of the HCC Players, the theater group founded in 1972 and led by Phillips until her



HCC alumni actors perform at the fourth annual Leslie Phillips 24-hour theater festival in September 2019. The festival returns to HCC this weekend after being cancelled in 2020 and 2021. (SUBMITTED / HCC)

Funds raised from the festival enable the HCC Theater Department to hold master classes, make capital improvements, and hire guest artists — "Anything to enrich, enable, and expand the educational experience of HCC students," Poehler said.

The annual Leslie Phillips Festival was suspended in 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

To participate in the festival as an actor or director, please register at hcc.edu/24-register or send an email to Lisa Poehler at hccplayers@gmail.com

Festival tickets can be purchased in advance at brownpapertickets.com (Search for "Phillips Festival"). Advance tickets are \$12.50 general admission, \$10 students and seniors; at the door, they are \$15 general admission, \$10 students and seniors.

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