



Fontana Unified School District

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Fontana Unified Drama Program Earns Invitation to California Educational Theater Association Festival

FONTANA, CA – The Kaiser High School Artistic and Theatrical Society (KATS) wowed judges and won numerous accolades for their repertory fall stage performances, earning a main stage invitation to the California Educational Theater Association (CETA) 2022-23 High School Theater Festival, to be held Jan. 13 to 15 at Los Osos High School.

After staging two separate plays on alternate nights, the CETA judges rewarded the KATS actors and crew members for their hard work, selecting both plays to be performed in their entirety at the festival, with “Mojada, a Medea in Los Angeles” earning a second-place finish and a spot on the festival’s main stage. The second play, “Lazarus Rising,” earned a ninth-place finish and will perform on the festival’s second stage. Additionally, every KATS member who participated received a CETA certificate of merit, a first for Kaiser High School.

“I want my students to be completely prepared for all aspects of theater, so we decided to go with a repertory company, where students act in one play and work as crew members on the other,” Kaiser drama teacher Wendi Johnson said. “It’s very challenging but our kids were up to it. They knocked it out of the park. For both plays to be chosen by CETA is an amazing honor. I am so proud of our KATS.”

“Mojada,” written by Los Angeles-based playwright Luis Alfaro, is a modern-day reworking of Euripides’ “Medea,” combining Greek tragedy with Mexican folklore. Taking place in Boyle Heights, “Mojada” follows border crossers through a perilous tale of immigration, assimilation and gentrification.

The staging was so impressive, a CETA judge wrote in their comments that they thought they were watching a professional performance: “If I didn’t know better, I would think that I was viewing a play at the Mark Taper Forum. I can honestly say I don’t remember being as impressed at any other high school performance. The ensemble acting of this young group of actors was tremendous. They all inhabited the characters they were living perfectly.”

The subject matter of “Mojada” greatly resonated with the students, many of whom shared their own stories about immigration and culture that informed the production. The six-person cast included a student from Southridge Tech Middle School.

“It’s an amazing feeling to tell a story so closely connected with my culture,” Kaiser senior Luis Ramirez said.

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“Lazarus Rising” is a zombie thriller that echoes the classic horror film “Night of the Living Dead,” with a group of small-town citizens taking refuge in a shelter and having to come to terms with their own prejudices while they wait out a zombie attack.

“Our kids do amazing things. They are so committed to their craft,” Johnson said. “Our fall performances dealt with a lot of issues that Kaiser students face every single day. With their intense focus and discipline, KATS staged performances that moved many people, and they will get the chance to do it all over again at the CETA festival.”

Kaiser High theater students continue to build on their reputation for delivering stellar performances. In 2022, two Kaiser seniors were recognized as superior monologists at the CETA Thespian Festival and advanced to a national competition. In 2021, the KATS staging of Shakespeare’s “Coriolanus” was awarded third place in the CETA High School Theater Festival.

PHOTO CAPTION:

FUSD_KAISERTHEATER: Kaiser High School Artistic and Theatrical Society performers Luis Ramirez, Ezekiel Gries, Ashley Beltran and Gaily Garcia take their bows after a fall 2022 performance of “Mojada, a Medea in Los Angeles,” earning the actors an invitation to reprise their performance on the main stage at the upcoming California Educational Theater Association 2022-23 High School Theater Festival, to be held Jan. 13 to 15 at Los Osos High School.

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