



NEWS RELEASE

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CONTACT: Lauren Creiman

(909) 833-9853

Fontana Unified Theater Students Take Top Honors at Thespian, Shakespeare Competitions

FONTANA, CA – Like merry wanderers of the night, Henry J. Kaiser High School theater students are showing they are ready for their closeups after taking top honors in two recent Shakespeare drama competitions and, in a separate competition, qualifying two students to participate in a national thespian festival this summer.

Kaiser High seniors Caitlin Porter and Giselle Albavera Burgette were recognized as superior monologists at the California Educational Theater Association (CETA) Thespian Festival, held in early April at Upland High School, and will advance to the International Thespian Festival, held in June at Indiana University.

Burgette was also named a state finalist at the English-Speaking Union High School Shakespeare Monologue Competition, held virtually in February. Additionally, seven Kaiser teams advanced to the semifinals at the recent Drama Teachers Association of Southern California (DTASC) Shakespeare Festival, with five Kaiser teams ultimately ranking in the top 10 and winning honorable mentions.

“Everything this year has gone beyond my expectations,” Kaiser theater instructor Wendi Johnson said. “I have been astounded by their hard work and dedication. After a year off, the students have returned with renewed commitment and are focused on kindness and taking care of each other. It’s a wonderful thing to see. I am truly honored to be a part of their journey.”

At the DTASC Shakespeare Festival, held April 23 at Royal Oak Middle School, Kaiser students performed scenes from “A Midsummer Night’s Dream,” “Romeo and Juliet” and “Coriolanus,” all of which were cited for their excellence. Kaiser Technical Production students were recognized for set and costume design for “A Midsummer Night’s Dream,” also winning an honorable mention.

“For me, it was a great experience to learn from,” said Kaiser High senior Aleksus Barajas, who performed in a scene from “Romeo and Juliet” at the DTASC Festival. “It gave me and my group a sense of achievement that we could work so hard and go so far.”

At the CETA Thespian Festival, Porter and Burgette reprised their roles from “Coriolanus,” with Porter reciting Coriolanus and Burgette reciting Volumnia. The students also performed monologues from “Dinner Play,” with Porter as Olivia and Burgette as Viola.

Earlier in the school year, Kaiser High was recognized for its stellar production of Shakespeare’s Coriolanus, earning third place in CETA’s 2021-22 High School Theater Festival. Although the festival was cancelled due to COVID-19, the Kaiser theater students were undeterred, perfecting their Shakespeare routines and monologues in advance of highly competitive drama contests.

For its spring musical show, Kaiser staged the Lin-Manuel Miranda production “In The Heights,” with performances on May 6 and 7.

“Congratulations to our Kaiser Cat theater troupe for their inspired performances and unbridled enthusiasm in returning to live theater,” Kaiser High Principal Jose Espinoza said. “We have such a tremendous leader in Wendi Johnson, who is brilliant in recognizing the talent in our students and allowing them to flourish creatively.”

PHOTO CAPTION:

FUSD_DTASC: Henry J. Kaiser High School theater students took top honors at the recent Drama Teachers Association of Southern California (DTASC) Shakespeare Festival, performing scenes from “A Midsummer Night’s Dream,” “Romeo and Juliet” and “Coriolanus,” with five Kaiser teams ultimately ranking in the top 10 and winning honorable mentions.

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