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Rio Hondo College Student Production Seasons the Summer with a Little Christmas Spirit

WHITTIER – Summer heat and Christmas spirit go head to head in Rio Hondo College’s summer show, “The Hollywood Summer Christmas Show,” an original play with songs and dancing inspired by a child’s love of the mid-winter holiday.

The show, which stars an ensemble of nearly 20 Rio Hondo College students, will be performed in the College’s Black Box Theater at 8 p.m. Aug. 3, 4, 9-10, and at 2 p.m. Aug 4, 5 and 11. Admission is free and attendees will receive a holiday surprise at the show’s end.

“Our summer plays are a wonderful tradition at Rio Hondo College,” Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss said. “They offer our students a chance to experiment with formats and provide the community with entertainment and insight into our tremendous theatre arts program.”

Theatre arts Professor William Korf wrote the play after his daughter, Ava, recreated Christmas in July 2017.

“I always wanted to do a Christmas show, but the timing never worked out,” Korf said. “And then Ava created this cardboard Christmas tree and wrapped presents last summer and I thought someone should do a Christmas show in summer.”

The play is set at a Los Angeles radio station where actors are forced to perform a Christmas show in mid-summer – something not all of them are eager to do at first. Ava Korf plays one of the actor’s daughters, a recognition of her influence in the play’s creation.

Students acting in the play are a mix of current Rio Hondo College students and graduates who are taking the summer theatre arts class so they can perform.

Phone Tha, for example, received his Associate of Arts in theatre arts this spring. He has acted in more than eight plays during his time at Rio Hondo College.

MORE

Rio Hondo College, located in Whittier, California, is committed to the success of its diverse students and communities by providing dynamic educational opportunities and resources that lead to degrees, certificates, transfer, career and technical pathways, basic skills proficiency, and lifelong learning. For information on the College or its programs, please call 562-692-0921 or visit www.riohondo.edu.

“I decided to come back for my last Rio Hondo College theater performance,” said Tha, who hopes to become a producer.

Tha is experimenting with voices for the show.

“Out of all the shows I’ve done, I’ve never done a radio show. What I love about this is the perspective using mostly sound effects, which I’ve never done before. It’s such a fun experience to play around with sound,” he said.

Elijah McWherter has completed two years at Rio Hondo College. He has used his time at Rio Hondo College to explore his interests, switching his major from electrical engineering to nursing and now theatre arts.

He learned to swing dance for the show.

“I’m getting more into my dancing,” he said. “Dancing is such a new thing for me. I probably never danced before I was 16 years old.”

The show has been entered into the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival. Adjudicators from the program will attend a performance and decide whether to nominate actors to represent Rio Hondo College at a regional festival. If the show does well, students could be asked to perform the show for the regional audience and be nominated for an Irene Ryan Acting Scholarship.

“Rio Hondo College provides an extraordinary range of academic and career opportunities for our students to explore as they are discovering their personal passions,” Board of Trustees President Madeline Shapiro said. “Our theatre arts program is a great example of a program that allows students to discover creative ways of expressing themselves.”

PHOTOS:

RHC_SUMMER_1-3: Rio Hondo College student actors prepare for their upcoming summer show, “The Hollywood Summer Christmas Show,” an original play to be staged Aug. 3-11 at the College’s Black Box Theater.

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