

Moorpark College Theatre Arts department presents fall semester "Student One Acts"

By Sarah Graue, Belle Aguirre, and Anita Semsarha

This month, the Moorpark College Theatre Arts department presents "Student One Acts," an original showcase of student-composed one-act plays and monologues in the Black Box Theater.

Split into two sections, Bill A and Bill B, "Student One Acts" utilizes student work written in the THA M21 Playwriting class, in collaboration with student directors, actors and technical crews.

John Loprieno, the producer of "Student One Acts," emphasized that this production is almost entirely student-run, with students participating in an intense 16-week rehearsal schedule. Loprieno further stressed the significance of the department opening its doors for students to navigate these original plays.

"I've always thought that this is one of the crown jewels of the Theatre Arts program because I didn't get to work with original material until I was in graduate school," Loprieno said.

Loprieno also emphasized creating an environment of inclusion and free expression in the Theatre Arts department as a whole.

"One of the things we're really trying to do is encourage more diverse voices to come to the stage," Loprieno explained. "So we really like to get different groups of people to come in and share their personal experiences."



Jack Rogers, Crysta King, Grace Sergott and Eliza King perform in the one-act, "Romeo and Juliet Aren't Here," a new take on Shakespeare's tragedy written by Lucía Salazar-Davidson and Noe Perry-Greene on Nov. 28, 2023. Photo credit: Anita Semsarha



The cast of "Hamlet: The Musical" takes the Black Box Theater stage for the "Student One Acts" technical rehearsal on Nov. 28, 2023. Photo credit: Anita Semsarha

Bill B of "Student One Acts" opens with "Hamlet: The Musical" an original, high-octane take on Shakespeare's vindictive tragedy.

Directed by Theatre Arts student Tal Toker, the dynamic piece took nearly two months to formulate, as the writers had to streamline the lengthy play down to only 18 minutes of run-time and add in music that deepened the story's major themes.

Even after missing out on eight weeks of rehearsal time, the cast has pulled together to put on the grand showcase. Toker largely credits the "village" that has worked together to bring this work to life.

"At some point, it started to feel like the show wanted to be made," Toker said. "It was no longer something I was making, but it was just coming to life on its own. That collaborative spirit, that pushing of my actors, that's really what I wanted to go for."

In addition to acting, the performers deliver strong vocal renditions of four thrilling rock songs throughout the piece, bringing a fresh new edge to the story.

"The songs all have that 90s garage band kind of grungy feel, and Hamlet is the original emo, so those ideas just seem to work so well," Toker said.



Maiya Mendoza and Ariana Semsarha perform in "Poptart Dilemma," a one-act written and directed by Asia Villani at Moorpark College on Nov. 28, 2023. Photo credit: Anita Semsarha

Although the production largely features one-act plays, such as "Poptart Dilemma," "Bioluminescence" and "The Giving Tree: Part 2," sprinkled throughout the set are a selection of powerful student-written monologues.

"Parental Alienation," is a monologue directed by Moorpark College student Alex Latham. Set in a courtroom, the lawyer, played by Tae Bond, tells the audience about this strategic process of "Parental Alienation" which involves manipulating a child to turn against the other parent for legal purposes.

The piece aims to bring awareness to educate audiences about the "silent epidemic" that affects millions of children in the United States.



Eliza King, Jack Rogers and Crysta King perform in "Romeo and Juliet Aren't Here," a new take on Shakespeare's tragedy written by Lucía Salazar-Davidson and Noe Perry-Greene. Photo credit: Anita Semsarha

Closing out Bill B of "Student One Acts" is "Romeo and Juliet Aren't Here," a new, queer adaptation of William Shakespeare's tragic love story written by Lucía Salazar Davidson and Noe Perry-Greene.

Audiences can expect to see a refreshed version of Verona, while still maintaining the story's original topics of grief and revenge.

Salazar-Davidson also directed the piece and further explained the significance of revisiting these classic tales to add queer characters.

"I think it's so important to take on these classic stories because, over so many centuries, there have been a million different productions of 'Romeo and Juliet' done," Salazar-Davidson said. "As a queer writer and as a queer director, it's important to take these stories that so many people have enjoyed and put a new spin on them and show that we've been here this whole time."

In addition to heart-rending performances from the cast, the play features outstanding original costume design and construction by Salazar-Davidson and costuming student Cora Kulvinskaskas based on the story's time period of 1592.

These costumes also supplement the play's advocacy for queer expression, with reconceptualized characters, such as Tybalt, wearing a combination of masculine and feminine articles of clothing.

"All of these costumes are 100% accurate historically and we sewed them all ourselves," Salazar-Davidson explained. "There are so many layers to the costuming, we have even color-coded different houses so you can see sort of out of glance who is of which houses. I am so excited for the audiences to see them."

Students will be performing Bill A and Bill B of "Student One Acts" until Dec. 9 in the Black Box Theater. Tickets to "Student One Acts" are \$10 and can be purchased through the Moorpark College PAC Box Office online to save 20%.

