

Stockton Students to Perform Play Jan. 5 at Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival

'Death of an Anarchist' Is Only Student-Directed Play Chosen

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Galloway, N.J. - Students from Stockton University will perform "Accidental Death of an Anarchist," one of only six plays chosen from a pool of 200 for Region II of the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival (KCACTF) at Montclair State University on Thursday, Jan. 5. The play, by Nobel-Prize-winning playwright Dario Fo, is directed by senior Madelaine Welch of Atlantic City.

The Kennedy Center program offers support to improve the quality of college theater and involves 18,000 students from 600 colleges and universities nationwide, explained Welch, a Theatre Performance major with a minor in Holocaust and Genocide Studies. Representatives came to Stockton to see the play in November.

"This experience means the world to me," she said. "I am honestly still in shock that it was chosen to go. Knowing that my production is the only student-directed show going to the festival, and that it will be performed in front of 1,000 people, is a huge honor. Being able to hear feedback from festival respondents and students, after they have taught me so much, will be an amazing feeling."

The KCACTF honors excellence of overall production and offers individual recognition to student artists through awards and scholarships in playwriting, acting, criticism, directing and design, Welch said.

The cast includes Randy Stormes, a freshman from Sussex, N.J., who plays "The Officer," Joseph Hoffmann, a freshman from Burlington Township, N.J., as "The Inspector," Jeremy

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Rotolo, a sophomore from Cape May, N.J., as "The Fool," Allana Harrell, a sophomore from Long Branch, N.J., as "The Chief," John C. Wood IV, a junior from Holmdel, N.J., as "The Captain," and Jillian Pettit, a junior from Sicklerville, N.J., as "The Reporter."

Welch said of her Stockton experience: "Working full time both at the Palm Restaurant and school has really tested my sanity at times, but these have been some of the best years of my life. Stockton's small but thriving theatre community offers so many opportunities, not just on stage but behind stage.

"We learn how to work in a professional manner while still having a lot of fun," she continued. "The people I met here are going to be some of my lifetime friends. I am so grateful for my peers and professors that have inspired me to work on being the absolute best I can be."

Theatre Professors Pamela Hendrick and Mark Mallett were the producers of the production, which was performed at Stockton's Experimental Theater.

"I have taken many classes with both of them during my college career; they have contributed greatly to my education and passion for theatre," Welch said.

Fo, a multi-faceted Italian artist best known for vocalizing his political beliefs, died in 2016. His plays, including this work from 1970, are performed around the world. He won the Nobel for Literature in 1997.

The show has been adapted to present-day America and follows the shift of four New York Police Department officers involved in an investigation of the suspicious death of a man taken in for questioning. Things go awry when an important message gets intercepted by a certifiable madman who strings the aforementioned officers along on a series of mental and physical challenges, exposing holes in their alibis and highlighting their unjust abuse of power. The plot thickens when a well-versed reporter enters the scene, determined to get a good story.

Stockton's production of "Accidental Death of an Anarchist" will be performed at Montclair's Memorial Auditorium as part of the theater festival, which is not open to the general public.

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