University to host Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival

Regional festival expected to draw nearly 1,200 people

RENO, Nev.–Nearly 1,200 theatre students, faculty and guests from across the country will descend on Reno for the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival, a regional theatre competition Feb. 15-19, hosted by the University of Nevada, Reno.

The festival includes more than 50 theatre workshops, covering such diverse subjects as playwriting, auditioning, voice, movement, stage combat, theatre for children, scene painting and scenery construction as well as the student-playwright 10-minute play festival. Performances and workshops will be presented on the University campus and at Circus Circus Reno Hotel and Casino, the festival host hotel. Kunar Nyyal, better known as Rajesh from television's "The Big Bang Theory," will deliver the keynote address at the festival's banquet Feb. 19, 1:30-2:50 p.m. in the Mandalay Ballroom B at Circus Circus.

The University previously hosted the festival in 1980, at which its performance of Berthold Brecht's "A Private Life of the Master Race" qualified for the national festival in Washington, D.C. The University was asked to host this year's festival, one of eight regional festivals held on college campuses across the country, in part because of Reno's destination reputation.

The festival features performances of four college theatre productions selected by faculty members from schools in Alaska, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, Wyoming, Northern California and Northern Nevada. During the adjudication process, students are nominated to compete for individual grants, scholarships, internships and auditions. This year, five University of Nevada, Reno students, Aukai Almeida, Patrick Laffoon, Kate Orr, Melissa Ortiz, and Hilary Bernius, were selected to compete for the prestigious Irene Ryan regional and national scholarship awards.

Mike Fernbach, theatre design and technology specialist for the University of Nevada's department of speech, communication and theatre participated as a student the last time the University hosted the regional festival in 1980.

"Participating in the festival as a student helped me to continue on my career path," Fernbach said. "I had great hands-on experience, exposure to new ideas and it looked great on my application for graduate school and my resume."

The University's small theatre department gives undergraduate students critical experience, both on-stage and off. Undergraduates are often cast in leading roles, and have hands-on stage design/build experience, a practice seldom seen in larger schools.

"Getting my degree from the University of Nevada, Reno gave me more opportunities as a first-year student in grad school because I had experience other first-years didn't," Fernbach said. "We're excited for students from across the Western United States to be exposed to what a special program we have here."

The festival is open to the public, but attendees must pre-register online. Student registration is $95 and non-student registration is $115. For more information, visit www.kcactf.org/7/.

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Photo tagline: University of Nevada, Reno theatre student Hilary Bernius and her partner, Drew Ernhout, pore

over possible scripts to perform for the Irene Ryan scholarship auditions to be held during the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival in Reno. Photo by Kathie Taylor.

Note to editors: For photo opportunities and media events, including interview requests for Kunar Nayyal, please contact Kathie Taylor, University of Nevada, Reno media relations, 775-682-9247 or ktaylor@unr.edu.

Nevada's land-grant university founded in 1874, the University of Nevada, Reno has an enrollment of nearly 17,000 students. The University is home to one the country's largest study-abroad programs and the state's medical school, and offers outreach and education programs in all Nevada counties. For more information, visit www.unr.edu.

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