

Press Clippings 01/04/2019

---The Courier-News---01/04/2019

Larkin, South Elgin student plays earn invite to state festival

By: Rafael Guerrero

Two of the 21 high school productions being performed next week at the state theater festival are from School District U46 schools.

Larkin High School's drama/dark comedy "Faculty Portrait" and South Elgin High School's adaptation of "The Addams Family" were selected for the Illinois High School Theatre Festival.

Frank Rose, the Larkin drama teacher who directed the school's selected production, said he believes it is the first time Larkin has had a play chosen to be part of the festival in more than 30 years. The event will be held Jan. 10-12 at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

In order to qualify, the school's production had to have been performed by mid-November, the school had to register to attend the event regardless of if its entry was chosen or not, and school officials had to agree to have judges view and evaluate the production.

Larkin's "Faculty Portrait" was written by a colleague of Rose's while they were in college. The play's characters grapple with grief, trauma and healing in the aftermath of a school shooting.

Rose said the story line is relevant to both students and adults, and allows the actors to portray teens their own age, which is unusual for school productions.

"It's a great play not just because it's about a school shooting, it's a great story because it addresses trauma and grief," he said.

"The story, the message it tries to (convey) is the way to recover from grief is to not do it alone. It's to reach out others, to the community. It's about the community."

South Elgin's production of "The Addams Family" features similar characters and story lines from the television series, movies and Broadway play. The plot deals with issues of family, secrets and honesty as an adult Wednesday Addams, daughter of Gomez and Morticia, falls in love with a young man from a respectable family who has not met her family.

The play was directed by Jessica Smith, Karen Brhel and Andrew Brhel.

Both productions will be staged at their respective schools next week. Larkin will host two encore performances of “Faculty Portrait” at 7 p.m. on Tuesday and Wednesday. South Elgin will hold a rehearsal performance open to the public at 7 p.m. Monday.

“Those rehearsals are more for us than for (the audience). We haven’t done this production in months,” Rose said.

The performances are free to the public but donations will be accepted. Proceeds will help fund the trip to U of I and future production costs.

According to the state theater festival itinerary, the South Elgin group will perform at 9 a.m. and 12:45 p.m. Friday. The Larkin group will perform at 10:15 a.m. and noon Saturday.

“After a rigorous selection process, having two productions chosen from our district as featured performances is a great honor,” U46 fine arts coordinator Jaimie Giraldo said. “Performing their shows on such a grand stage in front of knowledgeable and appreciative audiences is a phenomenal opportunity for our students and their directors.”

In addition to the plays, the state festival will be attended by more than 4,000 students from nearly 170 high schools in the state participating in 150 workshops.

There will also be an all-state production of “In the Heights” with students from across the state. Bartlett High School senior Naomi Latta and South Elgin High School senior Andrea Michel were selected as cast members, with Latta in the lead role of Vanessa and Michel part of the ensemble cast.

Streamwood High School theater director and math teacher Hector Hernandez has been chosen as a prop designer for the production.