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Barton Community College Theatre presents “The Diviners” under new director Miller James

September 23, 2019

Story and photos by Joe Vinduska

The Barton Community College Theatre Department will present “The Diviners,” by Jim Leonard, Jr at 7:30 p.m. Oct. 4 and 5, with a matinee at 2 p.m. Oct. 6 in the Fine Arts Auditorium. Tickets are \$5 at the door; students admitted free with a valid student ID.

The play is the story of a disturbed young man and his friendship with a disenchanted preacher in Southern Indiana in the early 1930s. This comedic drama highlights well-intentioned friends and neighbors and small-town life.

Barton’s new Theatre Director Miller James moved to Great Bend at the beginning of the school year and said his relocation here inspired him to choose this play.

“I drove here from California, and, sight unseen, moved into a parsonage house on a church property in Albert,” he said. “Your big sky, the vastness of the land, the grand church, and the kindness of your community reminded me of ‘The Diviners.’ I felt instantly at home and accepted. This play is about community and accepting folks for who they are or who they want to be. The characters are people we know and I felt that was important.”

James said his play invokes a strong emotional response.

“This is a piece of theatre sure to delight and move you,” he said. “It’s meant to earn your sentiment. I suspect you may fall in love with the young boy. You may relate to many of the characters. That’s what we are working toward as an ensemble.”

Great Bend Native Marcus Mull who plays CC Showers, a former preacher who is down on his luck, said the show has something for everyone.

“It’s very nuanced,” he said. “You start to feel very comfortable with the characters and you feel hope for them, and at times it feels very heartwarming before it turns tragic. There are just a lot of different emotions that you will feel and they’re conflicting and I think it will take some time to process afterward. It’s just a lot of drama, but also soft, feel-good moments.”

As the premiere for his first show at Barton nears James said that although moving from Santa Barbara was a big life decision, he’s already enjoyed a positive environment and his cast members are happy to have him here.

“I’m thrilled to be at Barton,” he said. “The theatre students are serious about their craft and they want to create and learn. The staff has been welcoming, and Great Bend – to quote a line from the show – ‘It’s a nice town.’”

Mull said James’ professionalism has been exceptional.

“It’s been great to work with someone who was a professional actor and director because he’s really good at working with actors and understands the process,” he said. “He knows how to steer you in right direction without telling you exactly how to interpret your character. He doesn’t micromanage. He trusts us.”

For more information, contact James at millerj@bartonccc.edu (620) 792-9205.



(From left) Cast members Grady Bolding, Delaney DeSpain, Luella Bennett, Aiden Gantenbein, Caden Rowan and Hayden Honomichl rehearse a scene in the Fine Arts Auditorium on Sept. 17.



College News

Barton Community College Theatre presents “Clue, On Stage”

September 22, 2021

Story by Joe Vinduska

Photos by Brandon Steinert

WHO DONE IT?! No piece of pop-culture asks and answers this question better than the classic board game “Clue” and Barton Theatre will bring all the nostalgia to life with its production of “Clue, On Stage,” featuring multiple showings over two weekends in October. Ticket information can be found at shows.bartonccc.edu. The shows are being sponsored by MindSculpt Games and free Clue-related games will be given out at each show.



Theatre Director Miller James said he chose this production to entertain and appeal with a story that’s been told many times with many different endings in millions of households across the world for decades.

“I love the freshness of the show and the awesome willingness of the actors to take risks,” he said. “I have played the board game since I was a kid, and I played it with my kids and yeah, I have my own strategy for trying to win that I’ve developed over the years. I think everybody can kind of relate to it in that way.”

Freshman Barton Student Eladio Luna plays Mr. Green and is ready to share the play with the world.

“It’s a fun and exciting show full of comedic moments and unexpected twists,” he said. “The audience members are really going to see all the hard work that the cast, crew, and everyone else involved has put into this production.”

Freshman Sara MacMahon said she was ready to push herself when she was cast for the show.

“I wanted to be in the show because I thought it would be a really fun experience and I knew the show would be funny and a new challenge,” she said. “This show is the first one back on a real stage since I moved schools and the pandemic started. It is very special because it just reminded me how much I love performing and being within the community of theatre.”

The show also includes community members like Aprille Ullerick who plays Mrs. Peacock.

“This show in general is just so funny!” she said. “Why not be a part of such an iconic game turned into a play? I’m really excited to be involved with it alongside my oldest daughter, Emery. She always adds another layer of fun when we get to do shows like this together!”

James said he’s been very focused on building the theatre program & is excited to see his students learn their craft.

“Six of the 12 cast members are theatre majors and it’s been amazing to watch them grow,” he said. “We have a relatively young cast for the most part. This year we launched a new Voice and Diction class that has certainly come in handy for the students and it has been a joy to watch them implement what they’ve learned in the classroom onstage in a real-life theatre situation and the Intro to Costume Design class has designed all the costumes.”

“Clue” the board game also spawned a movie and a Broadway show and James said even for those not familiar with the

spin-offs or the game will enjoy this show.

"It's fun, entertaining and fast paced at only 90 minutes," he said. "We have veteran actors and amazing fresh talent, the set looks fantastic and we are just excited to be in front of an audience. You don't want to miss this show. 'Who done it?' ... just wait till you see the ending."

For more information, contact James at millerj@bartonccc.edu (620) 792-9205.

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