Diverse Directions for MSU Theatre Department

2009-10 SEASON
The Michigan State University Department of Theatre's 2009-2010 season featured an unusually large number of guest artists, with each production including a special initiative, event or guest, and offering audiences a variety of unique theatrical experiences.

The Department made a firm commitment to offering productions that celebrated diversity. Suzan-Lori Parks delivered the College of Arts and Letters "Signature Lecture" for 2010 on April 5 and engaged with MSU students during her stay on campus following a production of her play "In the Blood." Visiting Provost Faculty Artists Jin-Wen Yu ("Dancing in Our Time") and David Furumoto ("Trojan Women") were in residence and brought their unique Asian-American perspectives to MSU.

In what was the first-ever collaborative effort among theatre departments in the Big Ten, MSU produced Joanna McClelland Glass' play "Palmer Park." Resources from this production were shared with other universities and the entire project was documented for airing on the Big Ten Network.

Numerous professionals also made East Lansing their destination in 2009. Scheduled guest directors included New York's Scott Burkell ("Rent"), Michigan Shakespeare Festival's Tommy Gomez ("Rocky Horror") and Williamston Theatre Executive Director and MSU Alum John Lepard ("You Can't Take it With You"). Guest choreographers Carolyn Pavlick and Heather Vaughan Southard contributed their artistry to "Dancing in Our Time," and the award-winning New York set designer Rob Odoriso joined the production team for "Cuckoo's Nest."

A new co-production with Wharton Center's MSU FCU Institute for Arts and Creativity of "The Jack Sprat Low Fat World Tour" offered young audiences a special musical treat.

2010-11 SEASON
Taking its theme from the MSU motto “Engaging the World,” the CAL Theatre Department’s 2010-11 season creates opportunities to explore unique eras, locales, genres and styles. “The American Clock” opened in fall 2010 with Williamston Theatre’s Tony Caselli directing Arthur Miller’s panoramic view of a country in the midst of trying economic times in the 1930s—any similarities to today were not coincidental.

Next came the campy “Evil Dead: The Musical,” based on former MSU student Sam Raimi’s definitive “Evil Dead” films, followed by a hell-raiser of a fundraiser, “The Haunted Aud.” Then came a trip to Shakespeare’s gentle Forest of Arden for “As You Like It,” followed by the red carpet event that has become known as “Freshman Showcase.”

The kick-off event for 2011, an excoriating view of secular and religious celebration in a world premiere comedy, “Happy Holy Days,” will be followed by a digitally enhanced fantasy world for “The Wizard of Oz.” The 2010-11 Main Stage Season concludes with a visit to the beleaguered dust bowl of John Steinbeck’s “Grapes of Wrath,” and from here the odyssey leads to the unique environment of modern dance for the “Orchesis Dance Concert.” The journey ends with a visit to Hispanic magical realism via “References to Salvador Dali Make Me Hot.”

For information on these and other Department of Theatre events, visit the department online at: theatre.msu.edu or check the calendar.cal.msu.edu site under the category, Theatre/Dance.

Most of the cast members of Shakespeare’s “As You Like It” fill the stage with dancing in this circus-themed production.