

LCC Professor Patrick Torelle



Playwrights in Search of a Play

LCC's Spring Inspirations highlights new work by students

Ever wonder what would make a person sever the head from her spouse's body and carry it around in a car? Jenna Clinkscales has.

Fortunately for Clinkscales, a student at Lane Community College, professor Patrick Torelle leads a nine-month playwriting workshop that allows budding writers to ponder life's irregularities, big and small, and stage them for our enjoyment.

Spring Inspirations, a festival of 10-minute plays, has been around in one form or another for fifteen years, making playwrights out of students like Clinkscales every spring. Torelle sets students up with the tools they need, holding the door open for their creativity to come tumbling out onto the stage. Students in his playwriting class start with a six-line play (count 'em, six!) that must encompass an entire story and the world in which it's set. From there the plays are slowly fleshed out to ten minutes each.

I caught Torelle between classes to find out how on earth he and his students manage to pull this off. For a seasoned teacher and thespian like Torelle, the formula is simple. He asks his writers to provide two basic plot elements: "What is it your character has to have beyond anything, what would they be willing to crawl through broken glass to obtain?" and "What seemingly insurmountable obstacle

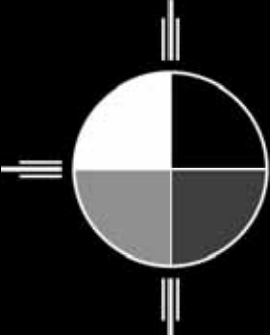
do they have to face to get it." From there, he sits back and has fun giving his students a few helpful tips and watching the newly created characters attempt to meet their goals.

Once the scripts have emerged from the hearts of his writers, Torelle helps his students find a director and a cast. "I always love this project for getting new people involved," Torelle says of the large cast, which exceeds 30 members. A revolving stage and screen projections keep the sets simple and the action rolling, all so the focus is on the new plays as they spring to life.

This year, *Spring Inspirations* includes ten original one-act plays. Playwrights range in age from those eligible for senior discounts to a few who are not yet allowed in pubs. They've explored varying themes, from a satire on airport security to the mundane details of living life on the street. The drama of domestic turmoil shares the evening with a mock bank robbery. "It's always a fantastic mix of the comedic, tragic and bizarre," says Torelle.

"I look forward to this every year," Torelle says, his voice full of enthusiasm. "There's nothing like watching the faces of my students as their work comes to life." **EW**

Spring Inspirations plays at LCC's Blue Door Theater at 7:30 pm May 6-14; tickets can be had at the door for a \$3-\$5 suggested donation.



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