

Arts & ENTERTAINMENT

Roosevelt Theatre Sails Ahead

State, National awards fall on school's success

BY CARI HACHMANN
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Donations are needed to help your local school drama group.

Roosevelt Theatre Troupe is elated about a state championship win and a national selection that grants their production of "the Yellow Boat," a spot on the main stage of the International Thespian Festival June 19-26, however trip expenses place them in a financial bind.

Early in the school year, Roosevelt High School's advanced acting class wanted a challenge, and after sifting through countless plays, their teacher and theatre director, Jo Lane, finally presented a script that moved the entire group to tears.

Chosen for production was David Saar's play "The Yellow Boat," based on a true story of the author's son and uniquely gifted visual artist, Benjamin Saar; born with congenital hemophilia, he lived until the age of 8 while suffering AIDS related complications.

Since auditions for the play, the troupe has performed one successful show after another, bringing home a state championship at the Oregon Thespian State Conference in April and winning Portland's first-ever chance to perform on the main stage of the International Thespian Festival this summer in Lincoln, Neb.

"We are thrilled and honored to be the first PPS School to represent on the main stage," said Lane, who has worked with most of the senior drama students for about four years now.

The success is a significant leap for Roosevelt; bearing in mind that prior to Lane's arrival in the fall of 2007, no theatre program existed for 10 years at the north Portland school. As freshman, many of Lane's first-time theatre students were clueless as to how to even sign up for a play, and in what usually takes six to eight years to build a program, Lane's drama group accomplished in less than four.

When the cast and crew heard that Yellow Boat was picked to compete against other schools from the United States, Canada, and around the world, they screamed and jumped



Roosevelt student actors Pablo Saldana (from left) Jonhnathan Keomoungtai and Brittany Lerner perform in the true story of *The Yellow Boat*, based on a Scandinavian folksong that affirms a child's life, and the strength and courage of all children.

into the air.

Now however, though still stunned by the victory, the troupe faces the reality of a huge financial roadblock, with nearly \$30,000 needed for the entire trip expenditure.

The most cost-efficient route would fly the cast and crew from Portland to Omaha, where a shuttle bus would take them to Lincoln. The total breakdown includes \$12,000

for airfare, \$12,000 for registration, \$800 for shuttle service, and at least \$3,000 for hotel, food, stage reconstruction, and miscellaneous traveling expenses.

"No one could have budgeted for this expense, although as a village we are proud and honored to support our award winning youth," said Lane.

To help send the cast and crew over the rolling hills to Nebraska,

the troupe is requesting your donation in the form of frequent flyer miles, gas cards, or Visa gift cards.

Fundraising for the trip is well underway, and the theatre troupe plans to perform excerpts of their play for those willing to provide financial support.

In the meantime, the cast and crew, all seniors except for one junior, are focused on graduation. Shortly after the thespian seniors

throw graduation caps up in the air, they will begin fine-tuning the play that has been on and off, the center of their young lives for almost a year now.

"Every day-- morning, noon, and night - we will have practice rehearsals," said Lane, who graduated from Central Washington with a Masters in Theatre Production and has been teaching theatre for over 15 years in Oregon.

If and when the Roosevelt Theatre Troupe arrives to the festival in Lincoln, they will only have 90 minutes to unload props and reconstruct the stage set up before curtains go up, but in viewing the talented group's winning-streak record, there is little doubt that Yellow Boat will suffer anything short of success.

The community is invited to a fundraising encore performance set for Wednesday, June 15 at 7 p.m. at the Roosevelt High School auditorium. Tickets can be purchased online at roosevelttheatre.org.

To request a donation form and for further information, contact Jo Lane at Roosevelt High School, 503-916-5260 extension 71424 or via email at jolane@pps.k12.or.us.

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