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Santa Monica College's Production of Beckett Plays Chosen for Prestigious Festival

By Lookout Staff

January 20, 2017 -- Santa Monica College's production of four short, cutting-edge plays by Nobel prize-winning author Samuel Beckett has been selected to participate in the prestigious 2017 Regional Kennedy Center/American College Theater Festival, college officials announced.

Performed in October and November by SMC's College Theatre Arts Department, "Quartet: 4 Short Plays by Samuel Beckett" will be staged on February 14 to 18 at Mesa Community College in Mesa, Arizona.

"Quartet" was among six productions selected by judges from colleges and universities in Southern and Central California, Southern Nevada, Arizona, Utah and Hawaii. It is the fifth full-performance production selected for competition at the regional festival in the past six years, college officials said.



(Left to right) Jordan Symone Barksdale (red), Joseph Dworsky (white), Brooke Jones (blue), and Sophia Avgeris (yellow) perform in "Quartet" (Photo courtesy of Santa Monica College)

"I am a big fan of Samuel Beckett's works, particularly his shorter plays, which he wrote late in life," said SMC Theatre Arts instructor Perviz Sawoski, the production's director. "These plays explore the human condition eloquently with minimal words and strange, yet powerful imagery.

"I am so proud of our students who embraced this unusual genre to produce what is quintessentially pure Beckett," Sawoski said.

In Beckett's four short plays -- "Come and Go," "What Where," "Catastrophe" and "Quad" -- the 1969 Nobel Laureate "creates a surreal world in which

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characters are propelled by undetermined forces, and humanity is revealed in unexpected ways," the production's organizers said.

"Quartet" ranges over nearly two decades of Beckett's work and exemplifies his painstaking efforts to strip drama of all but the essentials, creating stark and memorable images.

"Come and Go," the earliest play in "Quartet," was written in 1965 and is little more than 120 words long, while the last of the plays, "What Where," was written in 1983 and was Beckett's last play.

The 1982 play "Catastrophe" is considered one of Beckett's few plays to tackle a "political" theme and features a director and actor preparing to stage the final scene of a drama, while "Quad" was written for television and broadcast in 1981.

"Quad" is the centerpiece of "Quartet" and features four actors in colorful robes walking in patterns on the stage, entering and exiting, accompanied by percussion.

Fundraising performances of "Quartet" will be held Friday and Saturday, January 27 and 28 at 8 p.m., and Sunday, January 29 at 2 p.m. in the Theatre Arts Studio Stage on the SMC main campus, 1900 Pico Blvd., Santa Monica. Tickets are \$15 (plus a modest service charge). For advance tickets, please see www.smc.edu/studiostage or call (310) 434-4319 Monday through Friday. Parking is free.

The regional competition performances of the play at Mesa Community College are scheduled for Friday, February 17, at 2 p.m., 3 p.m., 5 p.m., and 6 p.m.

For more information, please call (310) 434-4319.



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