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NEWS

For immediate release

Ouachita students earn honors in regional theatre festival

By Rachel Gaddis

March 15, 2016

For more information, contact OBU's news bureau at newsbureau@obu.edu or (870) 245-5208.

ARKADELPHIA, Ark.—Ten Ouachita Baptist University students recently attended the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival for Region 6 held in San Angelo, Texas, Feb. 24-27. Esther Atkinson and Hailey Weiner earned finalist recognitions, and Weiner and Hunter Brown earned semi-finalist recognitions.

The festival brings together students and faculty from Arkansas, Louisiana, Missouri, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas to celebrate both the educational and creative process of university and college theatre. The festival also honors achievements in diversity and excellence in all areas of theatre.

Representing Ouachita's Department of Theatre Arts, students presented prepared works in acting, design and musical theatre competitions. Atkinson and Weiner were finalists in the Musical Theatre Intensive Competition, and Weiner and Brown were semi-finalists in the Irene Ryan Acting Competition.

Atkinson, a junior musical theatre major from Rogers, Ark., performed "We Can Never Go Back to Before" from *Ragtime* and "I Don't Know What I'd Do Without You" from *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder*.

"Since it was my first time participating in MTI, it was an honor to represent Ouachita as a finalist," Atkinson said. "It was amazing to be listed with the same group of people who had a great range of talents and displayed much versatility in their performances."

Weiner, a senior musical theatre major from Maumelle, Ark., performed "You Don't Know This Man" from *Parade* and "Watch What Happens" from *Newsies*.

"It was really educational to be a finalist," Weiner said. "After the first round, we received feedback from professionals. Once I found out I made it to the finals, I applied some of the notes that they had given me, and I felt that it was one of my stronger performances. I learned so much in just one day, and I truly felt as if I grew as a performer."

Weiner and Brown, a senior musical theatre major from Central City, Ark., competed together in the Irene Ryan Acting Competition. They performed a monologue from William Shakespeare's *Othello*, a scene from John Cariani's *Almost, Maine*, and a scene from Neil Labute's *The Shape of Things*.

"I was honored to be a semi-finalist for the Irene Ryan Competition," Weiner said. "It was such a fun experience, and I am so appreciative that I had an amazing partner like Hunter alongside me."

Brown also competed in the Musical Theatre Intensive Competition. Other students who competed together in the Irene Ryan Acting Competition included Mattie Bogoslavsky, a senior musical theatre and psychology double major from North Little Rock, Ark., and Stacy Hawking, a senior musical theatre major from Sherwood, Ark.; Kathleen Suit, a senior theatre arts major from Hot Springs, Ark., and Walter Dodd, a senior theatre arts major from Little Rock, Ark.; and A.J. Valdez, a junior musical theatre major from Terrell, Texas, and Tyler Lewis, a senior theatre arts major from Fayetteville, Ga.

Tara Clem, a senior musical theatre major from Texarkana, Texas, competed in the Design/Tech/Management Competition Showcase. She presented costume designs from *Render*, one of the two Muse Project productions at Ouachita this year.

In addition to competing at the festival, students had the opportunity to attend workshops and post-production roundtable discussions with peers from the six-state region. The ability for students to interact is what Eric Phillips, professor of theatre arts and chair of the theatre department, said makes the festival great.

“They share their work and see the good work that others are doing and get a sense of the community of artists that they will be working with in their future,” Phillips said. “They practice being critical about the works they see while also learning how to be constructive in how they approach their art.”

“My hope is that each year at festival, faculty and students will get to engage with intriguing new productions and work with like-minded artists who are also working to find their place in theatre art,” he added.

For more information about Ouachita’s Department of Theatre Arts or the festival, contact Eric Phillips at phillipse@obu.edu or (870) 245-5562.