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Campus sweeps regional theatre festival

Competing against actors from 55 colleges and universities, Fresno State Theatre Arts majors walked away with every major acting award at the 2013 Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival for Region 8 at the Los Angeles Theatre Center.

The Fresno state sweep marked the first time a single university has won all the acting awards. It also was the first time two African-American students have advanced to the national festival. This year's national festival will be April 15-21 in Washington, D.C.

More than 300 actors were nominated for the prestigious Irene Ryan Acting Competition and two Fresno State actors won: senior Myles Bullock (partnered with Molly Kelly) and junior Ryan Woods (partnered with 2012 graduate Taylor Abels). Daniel Rodriguez (with partner Matthew Schilitz, who both graduated in 2012) took two awards, first as the Regional Irene Ryan Alternate and then winner of the Classical Acting Award. Senior Jacob Rico won the award for the Best Performance by an Actor in a New Play. Dane Oliver (with partner Shelby Arts) was also a finalist.

"Our acting faculty believes our mission is to train minority actors for roles specifically written for their particular ethnicity, as well as train them to take on roles that are not racially specific and can be informed by casting a minority actor in such roles," said Fresno State Theatre Arts professor, Brad Myers. "Our two national finalists, Myles Bullock and Ryan Woods, are both African-American men. Our national alternate is a Latino male."

In the Irene Ryan Acting Competition, each actor must perform two scenes with a partner and one monologue. Both Fresno State winners, Bullock and Woods, utilized the same formula, performing one role specifically written for an African-American actor, and one role that was not.

"My approach to coaching these actors is the same as my approach to teaching any minority actor in our department – prepare them for all acting opportunities, and view their ethnicity as an advantage in any audition they may walk into," said Myers.

Of the 64 semi-finalists, eight were from Fresno State. In addition to Bullock, Woods, Rodriguez, and Oliver, the others were:

Dillon Morgan (partner Mitchell Hau)

Aubrianna Scott (partner Lauryn Moles)

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Kia Vassiliades (partner Matthew Schiltz)

Austin Yarbrough (partner Lauryn Moles)

For more information, contact Pamela Dyer at 559.278.7512 or pamd@csufresno.edu.

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