Seniors Create Original Musical

Lydia Marcus
Dordt College

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Faculty and Staff Awards

Theatre Arts Professor Dr. Teresa Ter Haar received this year’s Excellence in Teaching Award. Nominators highlighted Ter Haar’s dynamism as a professor, teaching prowess, and ability to relate well to students. “She has a knack for being able to help students understand ideas and progress toward important learning goals,” said Provost Eric Forseth in his award speech.

Education Professor Dr. Kathleen VanTol received this year’s Noteworthy Scholarship or Service Award. VanTol is serious about her role as a teacher and about serving the nonacademic community. She reflects Dordt’s reformational perspective by helping students see the interrelatedness of each field of study, and she has advocated for improved teaching practices for special education students in Nicaragua.

Physics Professor Dr. John Zwart received this year’s John Calvin Award for his 30 years of service. Zwart embraces Calvin’s belief that science is a valuable and appropriate endeavor for Christians and has mentored many students. He has also contributed to hands-on learning events for middle and high school students.

“John passionately believes that learning physics means students should have a strong intuition about how the physical world works, not just the ability to plug numbers into equations and get answers,” said President Erik Hoekstra in his congratulatory remarks.

Mike Byker, Dordt’s sports information director since 2001, has come to be known as the voice of the Dordt College athletic department. Byker’s enthusiasm and commitment to Dordt athletics has endeared him to students, staff, and alumni. One nominator said, “I appreciate how he interacts with the coaches and all of our student-athletes. He really cares about them and goes beyond simply broadcasting their events. He connects with them on a personal level to find out how they are doing and encourages them along the way.”

In congratulatory remarks given at the end-of-the-year dinner, Coordinator of Facilities and Services Cindy Groenweg was compared to a “musher in the Iditarod—she keeps all the dogs running in the same direction, encouraging, guiding, and sometimes speaking firmly to them when they bark.” Her organizational abilities, servant’s heart, patience, and efficiency have been a blessing to those she works with as well as those who simply need help reserving a car or reporting a plugged toilet, noted one coworker.

SENIOERS CREATE ORIGINAL MUSICAL

New graduates Kyle Fossé and Anna Krygsheld gladly took the spring theatre production and ran with it.

A Prison Called Freedom was written by Kyle Fossé, a digital media production and theatre arts major from Mozambique, and directed by Anna Krygsheld, a theatre arts major from Illinois. Performed in the New World Theatre in April, it is the first time a student-created work of this scope has been produced by the department.

“In the show, a man named Mortimer wakes up in a prison called ‘Freedom’ after his adventures have gone awry. In there, he meets Liesle, who knows nothing of the outside world,” says Fossé. “Beset by a bitter father, a frustrated narrator, and some
extras who want their own voices to be heard, the two set off on a journey to discover what true freedom is all about.”

Two years ago, Fossé wrote an early draft of the script (coined Prison by the theatre folks) for a playwriting class, and it was presented readers’-theatre style at a short play festival. Dordt Theatre Arts Professor Josiah Wallace encouraged Fossé to continue working on the play.

“Our department believes strongly that the best way for our students to grow as artists is to be given the opportunity to present their work to an audience. This means that our students not only get to act, but write, direct, stage manage, and design fully realized productions for audiences,” says Wallace.

While crafting Prison, Fossé learned something about himself and the kinds of stories he wants to tell. “I learned how I want to approach questions that I have,” says Fossé. “I loved it. Writing was fun. Collaborating with the production team was fun and sometimes frustrating. Watching it was terrifying, but really gratifying, too.”

Directing a show written by a peer gave Krygsheld an opportunity to observe the production process from beginning to end. The musical’s script was still in progress when production began.

“Our vision of the show kept changing with the revision of scripts and the addition of songs. We had to figure out how to interpret it as a whole as we were still building it piece by piece,” says Krygsheld. “But, I had my playwright right here. If I had a question, I could ask.”

The collaboration between playwright, director, and production team highlighted the many ways different people can interpret the same story.

“It was interesting to watch everyone bring their own ideas to the show,” says Fossé. In the short films he has written and directed, he was the guiding force throughout production. With Prison, he gave up artistic control when he surrendered his script to cast and crew.

“At times, I thought, ‘Oh, that’s not how I pictured it.’ But the process was really good because these people had read what I wrote and made it their own and made it a reality,” says Fossé. “Anna was the creative force behind the production. It wasn’t just my play anymore. It was our play. And that was really cool.”

After graduation, Krygsheld hopes to work as a stage manager in Chicago. “I like being organized, and I also like the creative process, which is what drew me to theatre in the first place,” she says. “In the fall of my sophomore year, after taking just one theatre course, the Theatre Arts Department allowed me to stage manage the mainstage production, Tom Sawyer. I loved the entire process, even the monotonous emails.”

Fossé would like to work in film production after graduation and eventually write and direct movies. As a director, filmmaker, and storyteller, Fossé says he found his voice during his time at Dordt. “I’ve learned to be critical of what I create and what others create—but also to analyze and respond. I’ve learned what I want to say in what I do.”

— Anna Krygsheld, student director

Krygsheld, who directed this year’s spring musical, played Anger Bird in Ash Girl, a retelling of Cinderella, in 2015.