



Los Angeles Southwest College, 1600 W. Imperial Hwy., Los Angeles, California

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#### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Los Angeles Southwest College theatre professor earns  
Kennedy Center award for leadership in student success**  
For Fourth Year, Student Acting Troupe Selected for Regional Competition

LOS ANGELES—Jonathan Pope Evans much prefers his students to be in the spotlight, but the Los Angeles Southwest College (LASC) Assistant Professor of Theatre now finds himself “center stage” with well-earned accolades from the Board of Governors of The Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival, Region VIII, for his dedication to student success in theatre.

This year, Evans is being recognized with the prestigious “Excellence in Theatre Education” honor from the Washington, D.C.-based Kennedy Center for his tireless efforts in creating a powerhouse theatre program at LASC. Thanks to Evans, and the theatrical talents of his students, the program itself has been honored yearly by the Region VIII Festival since he was hired by LASC in 2016.

Evans’ students will once again perform at the annual Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival, Region VIII competition on Thursday, February 13, 2020. Production performances are at 6 p.m., 7:30 p.m. and 9 p.m. at California State University, Fullerton, 800 N. State College Blvd., Fullerton, 92831. The LASC troupe, the Experimental Theatre Laboratory, will perform its original production of “Criminal” featured as a Participating Entry at the Festival.

Out of the scores of colleges and universities in the U.S. Western Region, LASC was one of only six schools selected to perform, a source of great pride for Evans. The competition will help determine who from Region VIII will travel back to Washington, D.C. for the national competition later this year.

“My goal is to allow the students to find their voices as individuals and as artists. Not everyone who works with me will go on to be professional actor, but mastering this art form can bring students personal awareness, the ability to deal with internal emotions and the strength to face the rigor and difficulties of real life,” Evans said. “To be an actor is to be an individual with courage — and I try to bring all my students into that space of learning, a courageous and adventurous space!”

In previous years, the LASC theatre students have also been nominated for acting, directing, and community leadership awards. The theatre troupe was awarded “Best Ensemble” in the “Devised Theatre” category from 2017 through 2019 at the Region VIII festival.

“Professor Evans has been changing lives and has created so many opportunities for his students to enjoy a better tomorrow,” LASC President Dr. Seher Awan said. “He is here for his students and their successes can be directly attributable to his dedication to them. He is creating real, lasting change at our college and, most importantly, within our students.”

In honoring Evans with the “Excellence in Theatre Education” award, Region VIII officials said Evans has shown vision, knowledge, high intention, and sincere effort in fostering, supporting and developing greater respect and appreciation for theatre, theatre education, and all who participate in it.

Evans’ students, the majority of whom have had minimal if any theatre experience prior to LASC, note his talents are matched only by his kindness and dedication to their success.

“Professor Evans is a creative genius with a heart of gold,” student Lacrechia Bowyer said. “He doesn't just teach theatre, he teaches each individual to be the best version of themselves.”

Evans, an Alabama native, started his career singing and dancing in professional theatre, most notably on tours of “Will Roger’s Follies,” “Crazy For You,” and “Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat.” He performed standup and improvisational comedy in Chicago prior to moving to Hollywood and earning his Masters in Fine Arts in Theatre and Film Directing at California Institute of the Arts. He has worked as a director's assistant to acclaimed filmmakers Nina Menkes and Nicole Holofcener, and directed and produced theatre, commercials, independent films, and television promotions for several years.

His 2011 short film “Sepulte (The Buried)” won numerous awards and his 2014 film “Hoover Road” opened at the Oscar-qualifying Rhode Island International Film Festival. Evans’ films have also been shown at the Cannes Film Festival, Curta Cinema festival in Brazil, Nashville Film Festival, New Orleans Film Festival, and others throughout the world. He has also won awards in playwriting and screenwriting, and, most recently, was chosen as a semifinalist for the prestigious Nicholl Fellowship In Screenwriting.

Evans trained for two summers in Poland earning him an advanced certificate in Physical Theatre and almost a mastery of the works of Jerzy Grotowski and his “Poor Theatre” technique, which received its name because it deliberately avoids expensive costumes or scenery. This form strips theatre down to its core --sound, movement, voice, writing -- and challenges its performers to dig deep within themselves to find stories and themes that are true and alive. Rather than performing a produced play, “Poor Theatre” creates theatre from scratch.

For the past four years, LASC’s theatre students have organized into a unique group – simply calling themselves the “LASC Experimental Theatre Laboratory” – that utilizes the Grotowski technique to create their own brand of social justice theatre for the South Los Angeles community. The students’ aim is always to create social justice theatre for their community and for people who have been forgotten by mainstream society.

“Four years ago, when we began, we not only decided to focus on issues of social justice and community but we also started to create a unique form of storytelling involving rigorous movement, creative staging, and student-led projects,” Evans said. “To see a group go from very little or no experience to being presented on a national stage is exciting and transformational -- for myself and the students. This is what makes LASC so unique and why I believe LASC is the place to be!”

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### **About Los Angeles Southwest College**

Founded in 1967, Los Angeles Southwest College (LASC) serves more than 8,000 students with associate degree programs in more than 30 disciplines, occupational certificates in more than 45 disciplines as well as community services and ESL/citizenship classes. Coupled with a strong focus on student success, the campus has recently undergone a massive expansion and technological upgrades that will make it a model for community college education in the 21st Century. Los Angeles Southwest College is part of the Los Angeles Community College District. For more information, visit [www.lasc.edu](http://www.lasc.edu).

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LASC Theater Professor Jonathan Pope Evans

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The LASC troupe, the Experimental Theatre Laboratory