

As we step into September, the Division of Theater at Missouri Southern State University is already buzzing with activity, energy, and creativity. August brought an exciting start to the semester with new faces, auditions, and collaborations that set the stage for a dynamic season ahead.

### **Kicking Off the Term**

Classes are officially underway, and we were thrilled to welcome our incoming freshman into the MSSU Theatre family. Their enthusiasm, combined with the dedication of returning students, promises a semester filled with learning, growth, and artistic exploration.

### ***River Stories: Remembering the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn***

Auditions for our fall children's production, *River Stories: Remembering the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, written and directed by Professor NaTasha J. O'Brien with music arranged by Nathan Lee McAlister, saw approximately 20 talented students. We are proud to announce the cast:

- Mazie Bogart
- Matthew Bragg
- Payton Nelly
- Mio Haggard
- Taylor Stevenson
- MJ Long
- Edgar Hernandez
- Grace Chang
- Lauren Ha
- Faculty member JP Dickey

We look forward to welcoming area schools to our weekday performances and are excited to open the production to the public on November 15 at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. In addition, a special workshop will be hosted in November to further engage students and community audiences in the themes and artistry of this work.

### **Faculty and Student Achievements**

Adjunct instructors are bringing new dimensions to the Division: Shirley Gollhofer is making important makeup and contributions in costuming, while Kristen Stremmel is advancing the program's work in theatrical dance. Faculty member JP Dickey continues to guide students in innovative design projects, and Professor O'Brien is working closely with actors, directors, and area theaters to strengthen our creative network and collaborative opportunities.

## **Community & Cross-Campus Collaborations**

- September: We are delighted to host our community's own Joplin Little Theatre as they perform Grease on the MSSU stage.
- October 4 & 9: In partnership with the Missouri Southern English Department and the West Africa Study Abroad Semester, MSSU Theater will participate in engaging events that include readings for young audiences and mask-making demonstrations.
- October 17: We will provide technical support for Connect2Culture during their production with The Lord Chamberlain's Men.

## **Departmental Changes & Growth**

Stay tuned for announcements about new certificates and program updates from the Division of Theater. We are committed to providing innovative academic pathways that prepare students for both artistic excellence and professional success.

The MSSU Division of Theater is proud to continue serving as a hub for creativity, performance, and community connection. We look forward to seeing you at our upcoming events and performances!