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The Kingsbridge Armory has remained vacant since 1996. Photo by Perla Tolentino. [Page 3]



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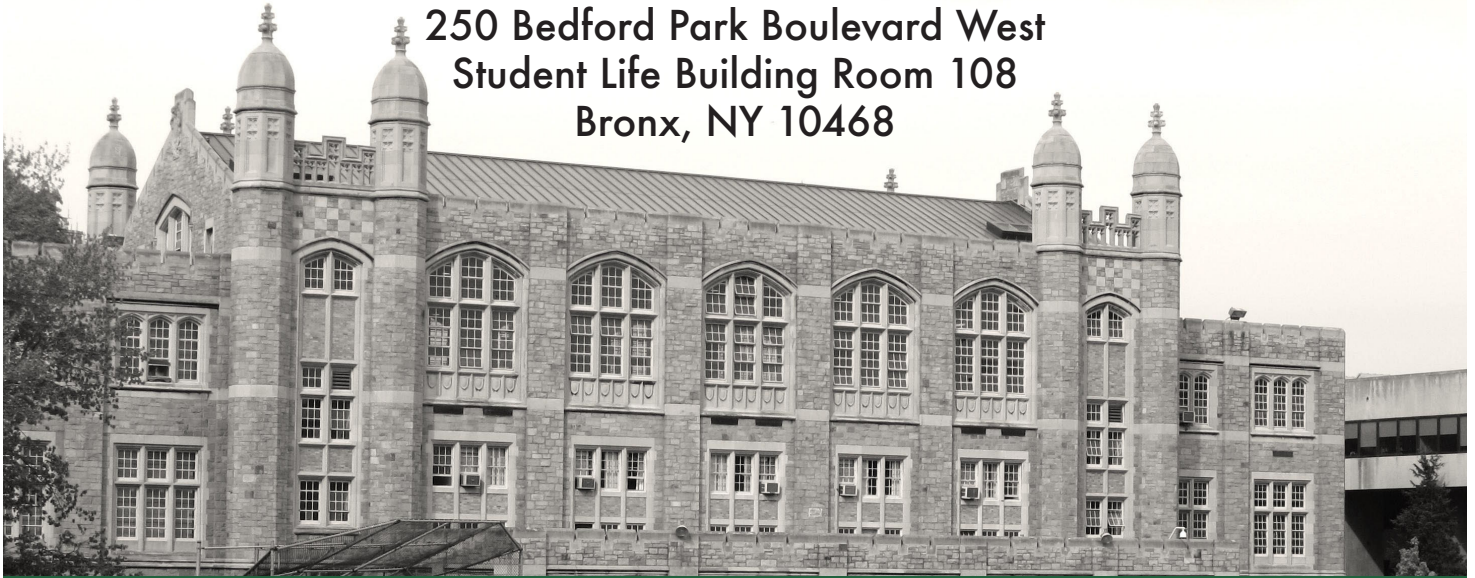
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**WRITERS: HECTOR BELLO, DEIRDRE FANZO, LEONEL HENRIQUEZ,  
ANDREA NIEVES, ZAYNA PALMER, GENESIS RAMOS, PERLA TOLENTINO**

Questions? Comments? Write us at [lehmanmeridian@gmail.com](mailto:lehmanmeridian@gmail.com)

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# Bronxites Fear New Ice Rink Will Cause Meltdown

By Perla Tolentino

After more than five years of discussions, the monumental Kingsbridge Armory will soon be drastically transformed, and many locals worry they will be on the losing end of the deal.

Built in 1910, the Eighth Regiment Armory has not been militarily active since 1996. Since then however, it has been serving the community as a city management office, and has also welcomed Lehman for special events, conferences, and even served as an arena for concerts. According to The Riverdale Press, soon it will be opening its door to the sports community, holding national games and many other sporting events. The former captain of the New York Rangers, Mark Messier, is the head of the Kingsbridge National Ice Center and is attempting to replace the 750,000 square-foot historical armory with the largest ice rink facility in the world.

The project is the main topic at monthly Kingsbridge Small Business meetings attended by many local residents and small business owners in the area. Mohamed Ali, owner of Grocery Candy Stop 1, said he attended a recent meeting in early March and received flyers from the Commercial Lease Assistant Program. "It's really happening this time," he said.

Small business owners around the armory fear they will be pushed out due to rent increases that will occur if this project is finalized. Patrick Lim, 32, has already lost one store to rent hikes. Lim owns a vegetable market with his father in front of the south part of the armory, with a current long-term lease of ten years. Originally, they owned two, with the second store located close to the diner on the north side. Lim said



Businesses across the north side of the armory currently without a lease. The closed gate on the corner is the second market Patrick Lim was forced to close. Photo by Perla Tolentino.

that when they were trying to renew the lease, the landlords refused to give them a long-term contract, and also increased their rent. Their lack of willingness to negotiate forced Lim and his father to close the second store.

"All owners across the armory are operating their businesses without a lease contract, they can ask them to leave any minute now," said Lim. He also told the Meridian he has also been receiving project newsletters regarding the new project. After closing the mini-market he said some of his employees were let go.

Yamilet Castillo, who works at the local barber shop, echoed Lim's concerns. She claims that the shop's rent has doubled, and fears rents will continue to increase,

eventually forcing it to shut down.

Some residents and business owners, however, were more skeptical about the project's chances of being completed and stated that the rumors are just speculations. Jenny Vangelatos, owner of New Capitol Restaurant located on the corner of Kingsbridge and Jerome Avenues, was not as alarmed as other business owners. "I have been attending community meetings on a monthly basis and I have heard of this situation since 2014, but it's not happening yet," she said. Vangelatos refused to comment on high rent issues.

The project has been delayed by numerous issues. The New York Post announced in 2017 that Messier and

the project's founder Kevin Parker were denied entry to the historical army house because of a lawsuit between the developers and city officials. Apparently, the city is requesting proof of sufficient funds for the project. The paper also stated that Mayor de Blasio was supporting the project.

Many residents are now beginning to believe the rumors may be true. If the project takes place, Kingsbridge will be a center of attraction for many tourists and visitors from around the U.S., but residents will also be forced to pay higher rents and the neighborhood will become gentrified.

In the meantime, according to Sergeant Ramirez of the New York National Guard, the Kingsbridge Armory remains open with activities such as the National Guard Army program. Regardless of the outcome of this project, the armory will remain a cornerstone of the Kingsbridge community and the Bronx.

# Student Panel Shines at Second Annual Activism Symposium

By Deirdre Fanzo



From left to right, Professor Jessica Yood, Lucero Luna Miranda, Zoe Fanzo, Arlinda Mulosmanaj, and Nicholas Santiago presenting at the Activism in Academia symposium. Photo courtesy of Hardik Yadav.

Lucero Luna Miranda, an undocumented student at Lehman, told her audience that she is not afraid to be herself—not anymore. Miranda was one of four Lehman students who interwove personal narrative with academic writing and research in their presentations at the second annual Activism in Academia symposium, held on Feb. 23 at The CUNY Grad Center. Organized by Lehman English professors Olivia Moy

and Dhipinder Walia, the event featured professors from across the country speaking on such panels as “Structural Insurrections in Composition and Rhetoric,” “On-Campus Activism: Protest and Performance,” and “Activist Archives and Histories.”

The highlight of the symposium was the third panel, entitled “Visibility through Scholarship: Undocumented

and Underrepresented Voices,” and composed of four Lehman students. Professor Walia stated that this panel “illustrated the way academic interests come from what is not happening in the classroom. Often, the classroom provides the theoretical approaches and sites of study...but students intersect these spaces with their own questions [and hypotheses].” Along with Miranda, Zoe Fanzo, Arlinda Mulosmanaj, and



Nicholas Santiago presented their respective research to a room full of academics. (Full disclosure: Zoe is print producer and web designer of the Meridian as well as the author's sister.) Topics ranged from DACA and DREAMers, LGBT activism on college campuses, to poetry and literature as a form of activism, and digital rhetoric and first-year composition.

Miranda discussed the idea of a model minority, whose members are stereotyped as being quiet, intelligent, and soft-spoken. She said that while that used to be what she aimed to achieve, she is now outspoken in her efforts to challenge an unfair governmental administration and advocate for DREAMers and other undocumented citizens.

Fanzo's research found similar issues with academic administrations. Her discussion focused on the lack of LGBTQ+ visibility and activism on college campuses. She found that a lack of assistance from conservative college administrations has led to a lack of queer activism. Fanzo expressed hope that Lehman's current president, José Luis Cruz, will advocate for queer students and LGBTQ+ activism on campus.

Arlinda Mulosmanaj's research included the translation and analysis of poems by her grandfather, Hysen Mulosmanaj, a prominent Albanian poet and activist. His poetry was important in uniting those forced into exile in communist Albania, highlighting the immense activist power that poetry and literature can contain.

Nicholas Santiago focused on digital rhetoric and first-year composition in his presentation, discussing that the introduction of digitalized platforms into composition classes would provide a familiar format in which students can more easily express their personal narratives, and then develop these narratives into more academic writing.

Hardik Yadav, an English major at Lehman, told the Meridian "The panel was identity-driven," noting that non-English majors Miranda and Fanzo discussed fighting "irresponsible administrations," while "Arlinda and Nicholas, both English Honors Program students, found writing to be their weapon." He added, "It fascinates me to no end how quickly their transformation into leaders happens behind the mic."

## Student Government Considers Costly Event

By Hector Bello

The Student Government Association (SGA) is deliberating whether they should spend \$17,000 of their \$30,000 budget on a concert. This appears to be the latest of a series of initiatives on which the SGA has been working during its tenure. Others include opening the library 24 hours a day during midterms and finals, establishing an SGA scholarship, and building a place for students to pray and meditate. If the SGA reaches a final agreement to have a concert, they would have to spend \$10,000 to rent the Lehman Center for the Performing Arts to host American rapper, songwriter and television personality Safaree, who would then charge seven thousand dollars to perform.

SGA president Victoria Antonetti, a physics and math double major, told the Meridian, "We want to make something good to celebrate our student body, faculty and history. So, we came up with a concert. When we're doing an event



Center for the Performing Arts at Lehman College. Photo by Hector Bello.

and it is something that we would have to spend over \$10,000, by responsibility we would have to make at least half of the money back." To earn this money back, all attendees would be charged an

admission fee.

Anthropology, biology and chemistry major and Vice-President of Internal Affairs Erick Peguero proposed the idea

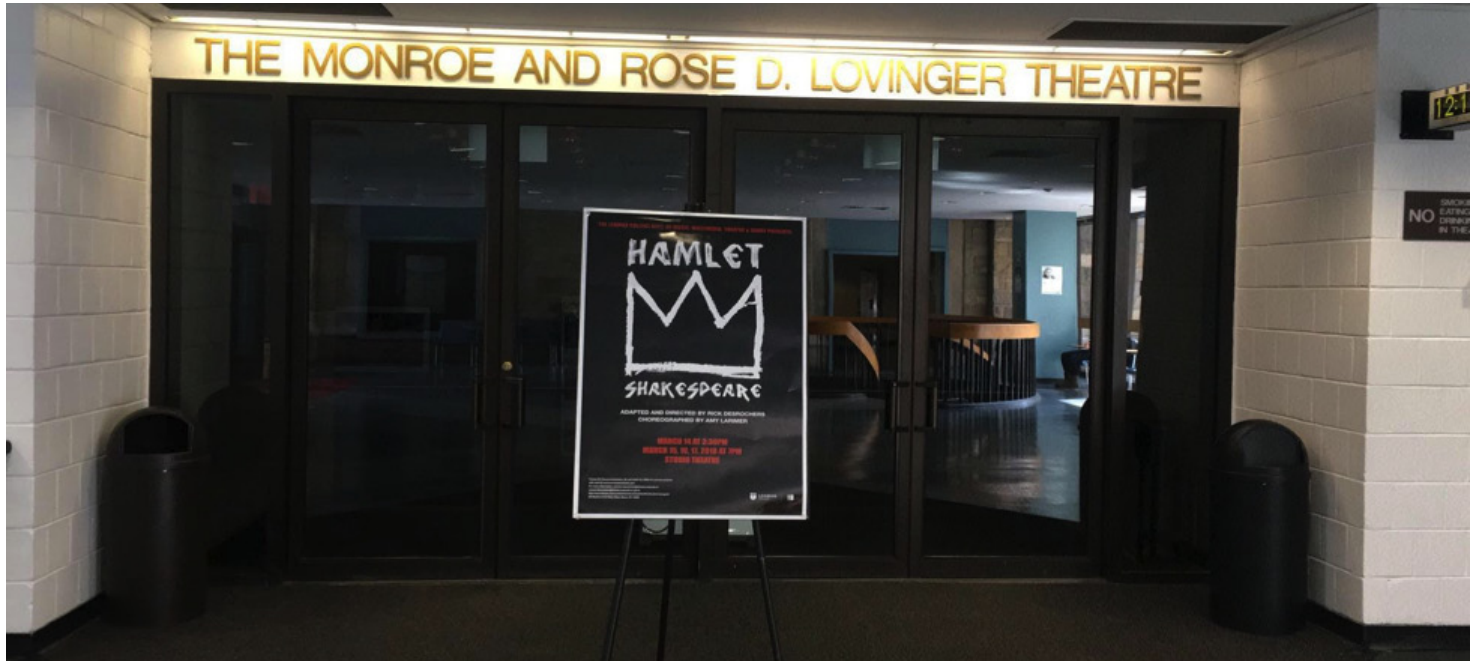
of the concert to the SGA. He told the Meridian, “We have two options. Either we bring Safaree for \$7,000 or we bring Kesha for \$20,000. The only problem with Kesha is that after singing four songs she charges us like if she is performing a full concert.”

Lehman senior Ramsey Tapia says, “I think it is a good idea to have a concert

on campus. Many students want to get involved but don’t know how to do it.” Tapia also expressed doubts about the event. “I don’t know Safaree, so I don’t think that bringing him is going to be useful. I am all for the concert idea, but we should bring a popular artist instead.”

Until the SGA decides to spend it, the money will stay on reserve. Although

a concert would be a way of using the reserve money for perhaps a large number of students to participate in an extracurricular activity, the concert idea is still being negotiated and will not be confirmed until after their April 16 meeting. SGA elections have also been held, April 17-19. Please log in to our website for the latest update on the concert.



The Monroe and Rose D. Lovinger Theatre at Lehman College. Photo by Hector Bello.

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# Student-Led Celebration Praises A Fuller Spectrum of Black History

By Genesis Ramos

In celebration of Black History Month, an event called “Lift Every Voice: A Celebration of the Black Diaspora” was held on Feb. 21 in room 222 of the Student Life Building. The discussion expanded the popular conception of black history month beyond solely African-American history to also include Afro-Latino history and the history of the entire African diaspora. James Mercado, a Lehman biochemistry major who attended the event said, “It is reassuring to know that we are no longer willing to let ourselves be divided by cultural and geographic boundaries.”

Lehman sophomore and political science major Victoria Smith created the event in honor of Black History Month. Smith said she was “inspired by a combination of my family and culture,”--because, she explained, black people come in every shape and color. Ni-Emah Bugg, a Lehman alum, poet and a singer/songwriter, performed her poem, “To Be Black & Human at the Same Damn Time,” which touched on topics such as the oppression of African Americans, feelings of being set up for failure, and drugs in African American neighborhoods.

Lehman professors LeRonn Brooks and Lise Esdaile, both in the Africana studies department, also spoke about some issues that the black community is facing, particularly the issue of colorism. Several videos explained the colorist hashtags #Teamdarkskin and #Teamlightskin, which are being used widely in black communities to draw attention to colorism.

#Teamlightskin, used by those who are light skinned, refers to those who fear



Students and professors gathered in the Student Life Building for Victoria Smith's Black History Month event. Photo by Genesis Ramos.

their blackness because of the negative misconceptions that are associated with being a person of color. This includes those still black decedents who don't want to be called Afro-Latino, Afro-German, African American, or Afro-Peruvian. They are a part of a community that has been mistreated for a long time. They choose to now reject this community to evade this mistreatment in the belief that the lighter one's skin complexion, the better chance of success one has.

#Teamdarkskin represents the negative associations with blackness. This negative association can be found in the Dominican Republic which comes from slave times. Haiti and the Dominican Republic are separated into two distinct countries.

There is now a cultural whitewashing of black Dominican people, many of whom try to disassociate themselves with anything related to blackness. However, event speakers pointed out that denying their origin is not the way to fix the problem.

Hilliary Frank, a Lehman junior and chemistry major, said, “I thought the event was nice and I got to see different artistic performances from black individuals. I specifically loved the poet who came because she talked about black people as well as mental health as a black person, which is something you don't hear about especially in non-black culture. I hope to see more events like this one in the future.”

# Black Panther Has Reached the Top of the Charts

By Zayna Palmer



Poster for Black Panther. Photo courtesy of Flickr.

The first film in superhero history to ever have an all-black cast, *Black Panther*, is one of the most powerfully invigorating movies of all time. By giving the Marvel template a twist using African culture, director Ryan Coogler has created a masterpiece. It is especially great to see diverse casting in a Marvel Studios production because it appeals to black audiences and it gives a different aspect to the action genre. The film has also been

extremely successful at the box office. In just over a month since its release on Feb. 16, it had grossed over 1.2 billion dollars as of Mar. 24.

Starring Michael B. Jordan, Lupita Nyong'o, Chadwick Boseman and Angela Bassett, *Black Panther* focuses on the relationship between a father and son, and citizens fighting to protect a nation. The film's hero, named T'Challa, does

whatever it takes to protect his homeland Wakanda, while he faces danger from the villain Erik Killmonger, who wants to take his throne as king.

The *Black Panther* soundtrack is also impressive, featuring luminaries including Kendrick Lamar, The Weeknd and SZA. Musician Ludwig Göransson, who created the amazing instrumentals in the movie, traveled to Africa and used



a field recorder to capture music for the film. He wrote down the meanings of songs and bought instruments to create traditional African music. He even traveled to Senegal to visit singer and guitarist Baaba Maal, who was also featured in the film.

In addition, the scenery of the movie was beautiful, such as the forest in Wakanda. It reminds me of Senegal due to the instrumentals of the music and the beautiful waters. The characters wore a traditional woven African print, called Kente, and the gold rings that were worn around the necks of the Dora Milaje were inspired by the tribe of South Africa.

Overall, Black Panther is a terrific film because it has a black superhero as the main character.



Lupita Nyong'o and Chadwick Boseman appear in promotional posters for Black Panther.

Photo courtesy of Flickr.

WED. APRIL 25  
6:30 P.M.

STUDENT LIFE  
BUILDING 101  
LEHMAN COLLEGE

TALK & DISCUSSION  
WHAT'S HAPPENING  
IN SYRIA?

# Lehman Playwrights Festival Centers Student Realities

By Hector Bello

The special effects produced in this semester's New Student Playwrights Festival took spectators on a magical journey into diverse realities. Running from Mar. 1-3 at the Lovinger Theatre, this spring's festival, which happens every semester, showcased the work of six student playwrights: Yasmilka Clase's "Speed Dating," Erachie Brown's "Your Cheating Heart," Leonel Henriquez's "Sheema's Wolf," Leslie Huynh's "Passing" Eloy Rosario "Unrequited," and Robert Torigoe's "Deliver Me." (Full disclosure: Henriquez is the managing editor of this paper.)

Despite the small size of the stage, the production team managed to use it effectively to make the audience part of the script. Director and Lehman professor Stephanie Stowe said, "Our choice to make people sit around the actors and actresses was an artistic choice. When we allow people to sit next to the performers, it surprises them and gives the plays a more intimate, personal feeling between the performers and the audience."

Stowe also noted that the production was completed under a tight deadline. "We only had two weeks to prepare everything," she explained. "We had to proofread the plays, choose the clothing and everything. It was hard work but we got it done."

Student writers and actors who participated felt empowered by the opportunity to take the stage. Lehman student Brian Paredes, who plays Roberto in "Sheema's Wolf," by Leonel Henriquez, said it fed his love of acting. "We had new faces as well as old faces. Behind the scenes, it was good...this is what I need in my life."



Actors Brian Paredes and Kevin Vencosme play Roberto and Hector in "Sheema's Wolf." Photo by Hector Bello.



Scene from "Deliver Me" by Torigoe. Photo by Hector Bello.

Theatre major and senior Robert Torigoe, author of "Deliver Me," said he is evolving as a writer and felt amazing writing this specific play. He said, "It is the beginning. I am just beginning to write plays. I keep writing more and seeing if I can write more plays in the future!"

Audience members also enjoyed the production. Lehman student Kelvin Santos, 28, said the first play, "Sheema's Wolf," was his favorite. He said, "It was just so funny. I could relate with all the characters. The way they spoke, dressed and behaved was like what I live in the Bronx every day."



# Former Basketball Star Enlightens Students on Mental Illness

By Andrea Nieves

Lehman hosted the 10th Annual ReelAbilities Film Festival on March 12. The festival, which strives to bring Lehman students together to give a better understanding of disabilities, showcased the award-winning documentary “Mind/Game: The Unquiet Journey of Chamique Holdsclaw,” directed by Rick Goldsmith. The film follows the journey of Chamique Holdsclaw, a basketball superstar who struggles with clinical depression and bipolar II disorder.

While Holdsclaw herself wasn’t in attendance, the film gave Lehman students and staff insight into her journey in life. In the film, Holdsclaw says as a high school, college and WNBA basketball player, she has flourished in her many amazing achievements but suffers depression from the loss of her grandmother. Holdsclaw said she has emerged as an advocate for mental health to help others who face the same hardships.

The film gives an important insight into the lives of public figures and shows that they are not perfect. As sports figures, Holdsclaw says, players are expected to show no weakness whether they’re on or off the court. It prevents them from seeking help for their mental health issues because they fear judgment or criticism from their peers. “If you saw a psychiatrist, people would think you’re crazy,” Holdsclaw says on the discussion of mental health in sports. She chose to suffer in silence and says it hindered her personal growth.

According to a June 2013 article in The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, Holdsclaw



Chamique Holdsclaw basketball player and mental health activist. Photo by Rick Goldsmith.

was arrested for smashing the windows and firing a gun into her ex-girlfriend’s car. She was sentenced to three years’ probation, ordered to pay a \$3,000 fine, and complete 120 hours of community service in 2012. She realized she could hurt those around her and received therapy for a year and a half.

Holdsclaw proves despite being successful in life, she could still fall victim to depression. In the film, she says “Many people would ask me, ‘How can you be depressed when you have so many blessings?’” Depression is an illness that can affect anyone whether you’re rich or poor, young or old. She became the face of mental health awareness and used her status to teach young students to get help

for their suffering, and to identify signs of depression in others.

In the film, Holdsclaw stresses the importance of keeping close friends and family around her when she needed it the most. Merrill Parra, Director of Student Disability Services at Lehman says, “Life is a journey that presents a lot of different challenges. Holdsclaw came to a realization that even though she was an athlete that was completely dependent on herself, she needed the assistance of others to have healthy physical and mental health.” This film aims to help others who feel as if they are alone and to show that people can suffer from depression, overcome it and still be successful.

# Ghost of Hamlet Rocks Lehman

by Leonel Henriquez

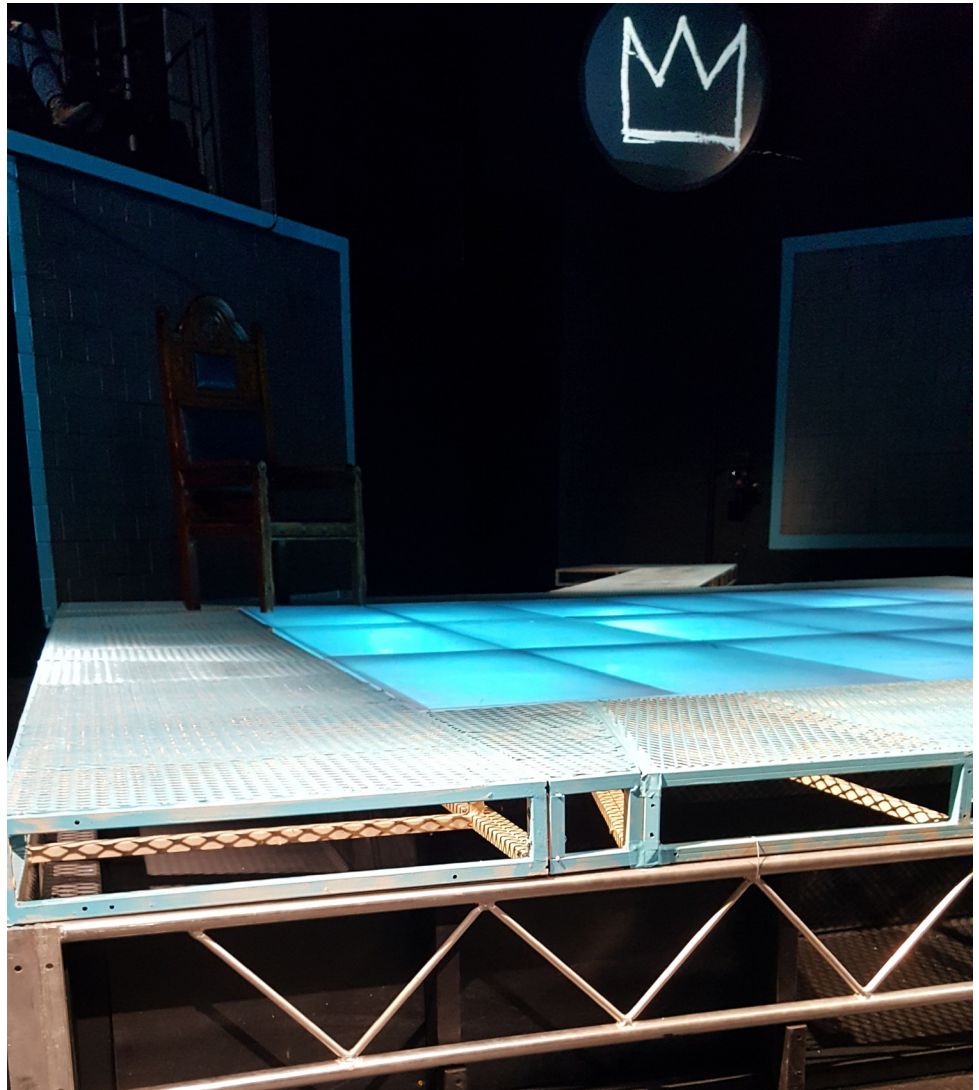
When audience members walked into Lehman's Studio Theatre on March 17 to see a raised platform stage on steel girders, they could immediately sense that this would not be an ordinary presentation of Hamlet.

"The stage was made to look like a boxing ring, leveled up, with the ring side seats," said senior Ibrahim Traore, who was recast as Laertes just two days before the first show.

Overall, the production was a fresh, innovative success, with director Rick DesRochers brilliantly adapting Shakespeare's Elizabethan work. DesRochers presents it in a post-colonial creole setting reminiscent of Haiti after the French revolution, with characters wearing knickers and corsets. He modernizes the staging, however, with the use of projection screens which show flashbacks of the king's death and pictures of his ghost which startle the audience.

The performance is pushed along by a score of classic rock music and ritualistic voodoo dance routines choreographed by Amy Larimer. DesRochers also broke with traditional casting, as male characters were played by women, with Nadja Gonzalez as Rosencrantz and Giselley Munoz as Horatio.

One of the best things about the staging of this production was the proximity and interaction of the performers with the audience. Performers would appear in the balcony, climb down to the orchestra and walk up into the gallery. At times the actors placed their hands on people's shoulders and even took hold of someone's hand and talked directly to them, bringing the experience to life as opposed to just viewing a performance.



Raised stage at the Studio Theatre. Photo by Eileen Sepulveda.

At one point, Robert Torigoe as King Claudius places a hand on an audience member's shoulder and talks to them as if they were a member of the king's court as the scene plays out.

Bereket Mengitsu was outstanding in the role of Hamlet. Beyond the prince's controlled ramblings and bewildered looks, the physical interaction between him and the other characters was masterful. Mengitsu rolls around on the ground with Polonius (Hermanuel Darnis), and climbs on and humps the

throne that his mother, Queen Gertrude (Jacqueline Rosa), is sitting on as he confronts her for marrying his uncle so shortly after his father's death.

"I'm not a big fan of Shakespeare" said audience member Anna Rodriguez, "but this was fun."

"I'm so proud of everyone associated with this play. They all worked so hard," said DesRochers. Tearing up he added, "I couldn't be prouder."