



The "Tongues" cast and crew of about 30 people traveled to Washington D.C. in April for final performances of the successful show. (Photo: Ben Ailes)

'Tongues' production wows Kennedy Center crowds

• May 6, 2009 By Diane Daniel

"Tongues," a one-of-a-kind blend of theater, dance and music, received standing ovations at both of its performances at the prestigious Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival in Washington, D.C. in April.

The production was only the second entry from California State University, East Bay to advance from the Region VIII Kennedy Center festival in Southern California to the national stage.

"I'm really inspired by the way our whole performance community — performers, designers and crew — came together," said Theatre and Dance Assistant Professor and Director and Choreographer Eric Kupers. "This was a professional theater. We were expected to behave in a more professional way than ever before, and we rose to the occasion."

Written by Sam Shephard and Joseph Chaikin, the CSUEB interpretation of "Tongues," a collage of views, memories and interpretations about dying, was created and performed by a multi-racial, intergenerational, physically integrated cast of dancers, actors and musicians, with and without disabilities.

The final "Tongues" performances had been under development for nearly a year by Kupers and 20 CSUEB students, faculty, staff members and five alumni and members of Kupers' private Dandelion Dancetheater. Following a preview on the Hayward campus last spring, the show was presented in the University Theatre during the fall. Competing against 56 productions, "Tongues" was among eight selected to participate in the KCACTF regional festival in February and among four invited to perform in Washington D.C.

Although the scheduled performances of "Tongues" have ended, Kupers won't let the effort languish. He says he is considering future possibilities to keep the project alive.

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