

# The Grove at the Gate Being Staged November 19-21 at SWOSU

11.11.2009

Cast and crew of the SWOSU theatrical production of *The Grove at the Gate: A Rashomon Tale* that is being staged November 19-21 on the Weatherford campus are (front from left): Eva Zitterkob, Weatherford, musician; Tanner Fisher, Calumet, north wind; Mindy Herb, Benbrook TX, stage attendant; Sara Molnar, Fay, stage attendant/asst. stage manager; Tyler Powell, Woodward, Takehiro and sound designer. Middle row from left-Bailey Maxwell, Choctaw, Medium; Eryn Brooks, Woodward, east wind and makeup designer; Bethany Dawn Schmidt, Enid, Masago; Rachel Langley, Elizabethtown KY, west wind; and Cody Carnahan, Sayre, Commoner, and props designer. Back row from left-Steve Houdek, Elk City, police agent; J.J. Witt, Guymon, priest and lighting designer; Dakota Jones, Yukon, Tajomaru; Riley McCallay, Hammon, Woodcutter; Dayna Robinson, Altus, stage manager, scenic designer and dramaturg; Matt Ebner, Grandfield, south wind; and Ashley Howard, Fort Worth TX, light board operator. Not pictured are Kayla Argo, Plains KS, musician and graphic designer; and Casey McKay, Lone Wolf, stage attendant, asst. stage manager and lighting assistant.

Southwestern Oklahoma State University Theatre is presenting the premiere of *The Grove at the Gate: A Rashomon Tale* on November 19-21 on the Weatherford campus.

This will only be the second production that the script has had with the first performance being a lab theatre production that the playwright directed shortly after writing the script.

Playwright Dr. Gino Chelakis will be in attendance for the SWOSU premiere.

Based on short fables by Ryunosuke Akutagawa, *The Grove at the Gate* reveals two crimes: the murder (or possible suicide) of a samurai and the rape of his wife. Set at the foot of the Rashomon, the great entrance gate to Kyota, Japan, versions of the crimes are told by those directly associated and the stories of their testimony are recounted by three men, who meet accidentally, at the Rashomon. Though all are plausible, each version is different.

*The Grove at the Gate: A Rashomon Tale* runs November 19 and 20 at 7:30 p.m. and November 21 at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. in the SWOSU Hilltop Theatre. Admission is \$5 for adults, \$3 for non-SWOSU students and free for individuals with an SWOSU I.D. Tickets may be reserved by calling the box office at 580.774.6046. Reservations and/or advance purchases are encouraged due to limited seating.

SWOSU Director Steve Strickler said the production team is implementing three major forms of Japanese theatre to present the stories: Noh Theatre, Kabuki Theatre and Bunraku Theatre. All of the production elements are inspired by the three theatre styles.

"This is such an exciting process for the students involved in the production," Strickler said. "I think that it will be intriguing for our audiences. It is not very often that we get to work with Eastern theatre styles, so it offers a new cultural experience for all those involved."

Strickler said that Stephen Haynes, SWOSU's professor of design and technical theatre, was involved in the first production of *The Grove at the Gate*. He contacted the playwright to introduce the possibility of further development of the script. Dr. Chelakis was very willing to revisit the project.

SWOSU's production is entered as a participating entry in the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival, and the script is entered in the Michel Kanin Playwriting Awards program and is being considered for the David Mark Cohen Playwriting Award through the Kennedy Center.