

Theatre Professor Earns Top Musical Director Honors

Cal State East Bay Assistant Professor of Theatre and Dance Marc Jacobs has won the Bay Area Drama Critics Circle Award for directing the musical, "Show Boat," in Spring 2007 at the San Mateo County Performing Arts Center.

Jacobs had previously directed "My Fair Lady" and "Fiddler on the Roof" for Broadway by the Bay, a 44-year-old Burlingame company with 7,000 subscribers. His "Urinetown," the musical, just ended its run at CSUEB.

"This was one of the most challenging shows I've ever directed," said Jacobs. "It's truly an epic, and requires both a white and an African-American chorus as it takes a realistic family of characters from 1887, shortly after the South's disastrous Reconstruction period, up to 1927, the height of the roaring '20s and just two years before the stock market crash would again change everything in America. The characters in the show are three-dimensional human beings who struggle to preserve a sense of family."

Jacobs observed that the show, originally produced on Broadway in 1928, not only changed the way we look at musicals, but our idea of what was possible in how an epic story could be told in musical terms.

He said the original production of "Show Boat" was a landmark in musical theatre, literally inventing the modern musical, as we know it. For the first time, the musical tackled serious subject matter (race relations, broken marriages, 40 years of our country's history), and did it with taste, intelligence, and one of the most beautiful scores ever written for the stage. The show broke the color barrier in its casting and, for the first time, songs moved the plot forward and were specific to the characters who sang them, according to Jacobs.

Tom Hird, Theatre and Dance chair, said, "I hope the community realizes that they don't have to go to the peninsula to see Marc's work."

In all, Jacobs' production of "Show Boat" was nominated for seven Bay Area Drama Critics Circle Awards: Best Musical, Best Direction, Best Choreography, Best Principle Male, Best Principle Female, Best Supporting Actor and Best Supporting Actress.



Marc Jacobs