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For Immediate Release: SHERIDAN-UTM STUDENTS TAKE TOP PRIZES IN UofT DRAMA FESTIVAL -- AGAIN!

Students of the joint Sheridan-UTM Theatre and Drama Studies Program – under the banner of the UTM Drama Club – have again taken major prizes in the U of T Drama Festival. The Festival took place during the past week from February 13th to 16th in historic Hart House Theatre on the St. George campus of the University of Toronto. Over the four nights, eleven original one-act plays from multiple colleges representing a student body of over 60,000 on three campuses were entered in competition.

The festival Adjudicator this year was Derek Boyes, longtime Artistic Associate of Soulpepper Theatre and Toronto Masque Theatre, and veteran of the Stratford and Shaw Festivals. Second year TDS student Madeleine Brown was the UTM representative on the Drama Coalition Executive.

An Award of Merit for Performance went to Cameron Grant and Hannah Vanden Boomen for their work in Sara Peters' intriguing ghost story THE GULLY, directed by Courtney Keir. GULLY also won the Audience Choice Award for the Saturday Night performance. Another went to the six young women comprising the cast of Kaitlyn Alexander's play about a leukemia survivor, BRUISED PORCELAIN: Hannah Ehman, Colette Fitzgerald, Rachelle Goebel, Brittany Miranda, Chelsea Riesz, and Marryl Smith. All but Peters and third-year student Alexander are in the first and second year of the Theatre and Drama Studies Program.

The Robert Gill Award for Best Direction is presented to the director "who achieved the highest artistic and technical quality of transition from script to stage, and who expressed the clearest vision". This year it went to second-year student Eilish Waller for her stylish and insightful work on BRUISED PORCELAIN.

The biggest winner of the Festival, however, was third-year TDS student Nicholas Potter's play about a young Northern Ontario woman obsessed by communicating with the spirit of her dead mother, MARIANNE, ARE YOU ASLEEP? Second year student Jaime Henderson Lujan earned a special Award of Merit for his direction. The entire cast – comprised of fourth-year students Ben Hayward, Megan Janssen, Karyn Mcgibbon, and Carolyn Nettleton, with newcomer Lauren Vesterdal – took the Hart House Theatre Award for Best Performance. Stage management team Amanda Piron (fifth year) and Angelica Appelman (second year), operator Spencer Bennett (first year), and the sound and costume designs of the author and director, rounded out the stellar work that was awarded the President's Award for Best Production – "presented to the company that best combines the requirements for the other awards with professionalism in the Festival as a whole."

Congratulations once again to all of the winners and participants! They keep the Sheridan-UTM Theatre and Drama Studies flag flying high in the world beyond our doorsteps.