

# Letters adapted on stage in 'Dear Harvey'

*Current campus play recounts support sent to political icon*

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In light of the recent budget cuts, the San Diego State theatre department was told it would have to cut its repertoire down from six plays to five — it's a good thing it didn't.

Peter Cirino, the director of the almost-doomed play "Dear Harvey," and producer Jay Sheehan fought to make sure no show was taken away. The play, however, is so wonderful it's amazing that there were ever thoughts about cutting it. One reason for this is because Cirino also fought to perform something with more meaning than the average show. "I was brought (to SDSU) when I was first hired as a diversity guy, so to me that meant to represent every part of being truly multicultural," he said in a recent interview. "It was important to me to direct a play about a culture that's being forgotten or being pushed aside or disenfranchised and I thought it was really a good key for this department."

"Dear Harvey" also brings the Aztec community closer together:

The script was written by alumna Patricia Loughrey and the music was composed by current student Thomas Hodges, whose piano melodies bring the emotions of the characters and audience together perfectly.

The show itself is absolutely marvelous despite the fact the only aspect funded by the school is the lights. All costumes, props, etcetera were bought by the cast and crew themselves, proving that everyone involved truly put their heart and soul into making this play great.

"Dear Harvey" was recently performed at the Diversionary Theatre, yet Cirino notes that his version is slightly different. "The Diversionary one was a workshop and they basically read the piece as if (it was a collection of) letters," he said. "They did it very stylized. They actually didn't memorize them. Our play took a different journey: We decided to bring all of (the letters) to life, so sometimes we are in the middle of the riots during that time frame, other times we are in a nondescript heaven where Harvey Milk is talking to one of his lovers and telling him how the world has changed and how he sees his future. And other times we are in the middle of a modern-day activist telling the world 'I'm trying to help you change the world like Harvey did.'"



Courtesy of Zwink Photography

Cast members of "Dear Harvey" discuss the impact political activist Harvey Milk made through re-enactments and monologues.

"Dear Harvey" has no backdrops except for a few relevant pictures projected on the back wall; the props are scarce and there is no wardrobe change. Nonetheless, it emanates radiance from start to finish. Anthony Simone's performance empowers everyone's inner

diva while Kristin McReddie adds some lighthearted fun with her portrayal of Jackie Grover. Derek Smith's monologue is emotionally moving and powerful and Emily Davenport's talent is heartwarming. The love each cast member has for this production shines

through with every movement and every word of dialogue.

According to Cirino, "It'll make you laugh, it'll make you cry, it'll make you learn something you never knew before." "Dear Harvey" is a touching performance that should not be missed.