Evita marks Johnson’s final curtain call

by Ken Hupp

Fans of the British theatre are familiar with that famous expression “leave the stage with the audience wanting more.” That expression will almost certainly apply to the University of Hawai’i at Hilo’s own master thespian, Jackie Pualani Johnson, when she takes part in her final UH Hilo production by directing the Performing Arts Center’s presentation of Evita, which begins a run of seven performances this month.

Johnson, whoretires at the end of the 2016-2017 academic year, was honored for her storied career in February with the University’s Distinguished Alumni Award. Actor-Director Jeri Gertz has worked with her on over 20 productions dating back to 1978 when Johnson launched the annual Shakespeare in the Park that takes place each summer in downtown Hilo’s Kalakaua Park. Gertz says you cannot overstate the impact Johnson has had on the entire community.

“Her life’s work has been about igniting and inspiring a love of theater in her teaching, acting, and directing,” Gertz said. “For Jackie, all the world has truly been a stage, and she has enriched the lives of all the players that have graced it.”

Johnson’s body of work has spanned the theatre arts for nearly four decades and includes acting, directing, stagecraft, costuming and make-up that has profoundly affected audiences from Hawai’i to New York City. Her signature creative work has been the adaptations and performances of strong female figures from Hawai’i’s past, including her portrayal of Hawai’i’s last queen in her one-woman show, Lili’uokalani.

For Johnson, who has directed more than 70 productions and shows throughout the state, Evita was an obvious choice for her final curtain call. She recalled spending countless hours playing the record of the concertized show when Evita first appeared in the mid-1970s so it was never a question of if, but when?

UH Hilo developing new enrollment management plan

by Chancellor Don Straney

While we continue to develop academic programs that address our island’s needs, we are currently developing new ways to be more effective at recruitment, retention, and graduation rates. We are taking our efforts to a whole new level, focusing our resources on specific students for recruitment and retention. This is part of a University of Hawai’i Systemwide initiative where each of the 10 campuses are developing their own five-year enrollment management plans specifically designed with appropriate goals for the individual campus.

In this column, I’d like to share some of UH Hilo’s plans.

The first step to creating this type of plan is to identify enrollment targets for the next five years, and in conjunction, to identify three to five areas of specific enrollment and retention activity to focus on, with the corresponding goals clearly outlined. This is done through analysis of historic trends and creating a foundation to work into planning and budgeting processes.

The goals are developed based on realistic and measurable outcomes and most likely will include shifts in, say, recruitment communications, marketing and public relations activities, financial aid strategies, academic course scheduling, support services
“It has been on my ‘to-do’ list ever since, rising to the top as other shows were staged or lost their place of importance,” Johnson said. “But little did I know at the time that the political atmosphere in America would echo many of the themes in the show, so the timing couldn’t be better, too.”

The Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice epic musical masterpiece is set against the backdrop of the 1940s and tells the story of Argentina’s controversial and ambitious First Lady Eva Peron. As an illegitimate 15-year-old, Peron escapes her dirt-poor existence for the bright lights of Buenos Aires. Driven by ambition and blessed with charisma, she becomes a starlet at 22, the president’s mistress at 24, the beloved First Lady of Argentina at 27, and dead from cancer at the age of 33.

Her story comes to life through a Latin-influenced score of songs and dialogue from the lead character and the corps of singers and dancers cast in a wide range of roles, including descamisados, or the shirtless poor of Argentina, officers, aristocrats, discarded lovers, laborers and the military.

Johnson describes the writing and inherent staging as crafty and clever, ensuring that there is never a dull moment. But at the same time, says one couldn’t manufacture better drama than what the real truth offers as the audience watches Peron sashay to first lady status, stepping on unsuspecting lovers along the way.

“Sometimes it seems like we’re looking at a mild domestic moment, then realize that a nation and its future are at stake,” Johnson said. “Other times, we see mockery by aristocrats and military officers who stand to lose a great deal if Eva succeeds.”

The cast features both family and close friends who turned out for January’s auditions. They include her daughter Malu Debus, who has appeared in several UH Hilo productions, including Hilo: Da Musical, Pinocchio, and Guys and Dolls, and landed the lead role of Peron. Veteran actor and theatre practitioner Doug Scheer is cast in the role of Peron’s husband and Argentine strongman Juan Peron. Performing Arts graduate and UH Hilo production veteran Scott Wusher will guide the audience through episodes of Peron’s life as Che, while Waiakea High School Senior Simone Tincher plays the role of the mistress. Norman Arancon heads up a host of UH Hilo faculty and staff past and present that includes Kenith Simmons and Ruth Robison as part of the Evita ensemble. Choreographer Celeste Staton, Musical Director Armando Mendoza, Choral Director Christopher Tomich and Designer Ariana Bassett round out the production.

Johnson is particularly excited about Arancon’s casting as Agustin Magaldi, whose character is the first stepping stone to Peron’s introduction to the big city of Buenos Aires as he warns her of the temptations and evils that lie ahead.

“All who saw Norman as the Engineer in Miss Saigon recognized that he is a bona fide star, who will shine in his role as the sensational Magaldi,” Johnson said. “His high tenor will literally transport the audience from the moment he steps on stage.”

The production also allows Johnson to do what she has enjoyed most during her distinguished 38-year career.

“There is nothing akin to ‘birthing’ a production from concept to the final daub of paint on the set,” Johnson said. “Immutable, life-long friendships are made as you remain connected to those who were part of your vision, who worked long and hard to
Curtain Call
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bring the story to life, and who shared the echo of the audience’s applause.”

Performing Arts Center Manager Lee Dombroski says Johnson will leave behind some huge shoes that no one will be able to fill the way she has.

“Jackie is the glue that holds the Performing Arts Department together, and the reason that spring musicals are always such a rousing success as she completely immerses herself in the process of bringing the production to life on stage,” Dombroski said. “It is going to take a concerted effort to adjust to life in the Performing Arts Center without Jackie.”

Johnson looks back on her time at UH Hilo with great humility. She describes herself as a spoiled brat, who got a million-dollar facility to bring her visions to life, with scores of extraordinarily talented people gracing the boards, an artistic team that breathed life into each production, and a giving, enthusiastic audience that never hesitated to show its love. And in keeping with that timeless expression of the British theatre, this beloved daughter of Hilo won’t exit the stage entirely when the curtains come down on the final performance of Evita.

“I’d like to focus on a few meaningful projects that continue the work I’ve done over the years, in living history, for instance,” Johnson said. “The Hilo Community Players, too, have a special place in my heart, so perhaps I can continue working with my fellow actors and directors in Kalakaua Park.”

Evita opens its two-weekend run of performances beginning Friday, April 7 at 7:30 p.m. Additional performances are scheduled for Saturday, April 8, and Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, April 12, 13, 14 and 15 at 7:30 p.m. with a matinee performance on Sunday, April 9 at 2 p.m.

Tickets are Reserved seating and priced at $20 General, $15 Discount and $7 UH Hilo/Hawai‘i CC students (with a valid student ID) and children, up to age 17 pre-sale, and $25, $20, $12 at the door. Tickets are available by calling the UH Hilo Box Office at 932-7490 or ordering online at artscenter. uhh.hawaii.edu.

Johnson’s career will also be celebrated during this year’s spring choral concert, set for May 7 at the Performing Arts Center. The University Chorus and Kapili Choir will be joined by special guests and soloists who will perform songs from many of the musicals she has directed during her tenure at UH Hilo.

(Ken Hupp is a public information officer.)

Plan
Continued from page 1

programs and various projects.

An area we are exploring in particular is recruitment and support for freshman students—increasing enrollment by reaching out to particular geographic and ethnic populations (think local), and increasing freshman to sophomore retention by focusing on certain student populations and specific academic programs.

An example of this is in striving to strengthen the sense of community on our campus by grouping freshman students, who are interested in specific academic programs, into cohorts that stay together through graduation.

We’ve been building on this concept over the past few years, creating a Freshman Village, a community at the Hale Kanilehua Living Learning Center that groups students as cohorts according to academic interest. We started with Native Hawaiian students, from both UH Hilo and Hawai‘i Community College, interested in Hawaiian studies and science, technology, engineering and math programs, commonly called the STEM programs.

The pilot program was a great success—it measurably expanded students’ competency in technology and retention at UH Hilo—and now the program has expanded to six Living Learning Communities: business, creative arts, environmental sustainability, Hawaiian culture and language, health and wellness, and natural science with a marine focus. This is a concept that we can build on as we develop our new enrollment management plan.

In other areas, we are currently discussing ways to increase distance learning, international students, and veteran enrollment. Also under discussion are scheduling more evening or weekend courses, expanding financial aid resources, and more highly targeted counseling and peer mentor programs.

I want to note that creating access and strengthening retention for students from Hawai‘i Island is our top priority. We have a responsibility to serve the whole island, and we are collaborating closely with Hawai‘i Community College to achieve recruitment-retention-graduation goals by creating pathways from Hawai‘i CC to UH Hilo in programs such as agriculture and Hawaiian studies.

All of these approaches to enrollment management need strong administrative support to be effective and there will undoubtedly be new approaches in admissions, financial aid, communications, and course scheduling. For example, including more scholarships in initial financial aid packages to encourage enrollment, and increasing high school visits by faculty and staff to talk with Hawai‘i Island students, are high on the priority list.

UH Hilo cannot grow on its own. We need to work together—faculty, staff, students—along with our local community to the benefit of all. This, combined with our strong partnership with Hawai‘i CC, will ensure that Hawai‘i Island’s high school students and others will have the options they need to access higher education on our island.

For more information, visit our Enrollment Management website.

Aloha,

Donald C. Shaney
Program Spotlight

Adopt-a-Beehive with Alan Wong update

Program Spotlight is a presentation of Ka Lono Hanakahi that highlights the work of various programs by following a program throughout the entire academic year and providing monthly updates. Here now is this month’s update on the Adopt-A-Beehive with Alan Wong Program:

The fifth grade class at Hawai‘i Preparatory Academy came to the UH Hilo farm in Panaewa on February 24 to learn more about honey bees and the vital role they play in the pollination of agricultural crops. The students toured the giant hive and bee garden, and participated in the opening of a live bee hive. They now look forward to establishing a hive at their school in the near future.

On March 17, the kindergarten and first grade classes at Ha‘aheo Elementary School took their own walking tour of the farm’s bee garden and giant hive. They also saw the farm’s plants and animals and viewed bees in an observation hive.

And the Adopt-A-Beehive program will return to the nation’s capital in June to represent the UH System at the “Hawai‘i on the Hill” event sponsored by U.S. Senator Mazie Hirono. The event showcases Hawai‘i products along with the innovation and creativity within the UH System.
**Hats off to...**


**Jon Goebel**, Associate Professor, Art, was recently accepted to exhibit his work in the 2017 *Honolulu Printmakers 89th Annual Exhibition* at the Honolulu Museum of Art School, Honolulu, HI, and the 36th Bradley International Print and Drawing Exhibition at the Bradley University Galleries, Peoria, IL.

**Todd Belt**, Professor, Political Science, was invited to present a paper on “Can We at Least All Laugh Together Now? What Online Political Humor Taught Us about Election 2016” to The American Elections Symposium 2017 at St. Anselm College in Manchester, NH in March 2017. Additionally, he was a panelist for a roundtable on “Environmental Police under the Trump Administration,” held at Wellesley College in Wellesley, MA, in February 2017.

**Deborah Taira**, Professor, Department of Pharmacy Practice, was co-author on two manuscripts: “Prevalence of Single and Multiple Leading Causes of Death Among Older Non-Hispanic Blacks, Non-Hispanic Whites, and Hispanics: Evidence from the National Health Interview Survey,” Preventing Chronic Disease (in press), and “The Cost-Benefit Balance of Statins in Hawai‘i: A Moving Target,” Hawaii J Med Public Health (in press). She also will be giving an oral presentation this month at the Global Health and Innovation conference at Yale University, entitled “Access to Care and Internet Use Related to Rural Residence and Race/Ethnicity in California."

**Julie Adrian**, Assistant Professor, Department of Pharmacy Practice, co-authored a paper on “Pet loss, complicated grief, and post-traumatic stress disorder in Hawai‘i,” published in the multidisciplinary journal Anthrozoos.

**Shugeng Cao**, Professor, Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences, was the lead author on “Sphaerialactonam, a c-lactam–isochromanone from the Hawaiian endophytic fungus Paraphaeosphaeria sp. FT462,” published in the journal Elsevier.

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University of Hawai‘i at Hilo Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Dr. Matthew Platz and the UH Hilo Maintenance Crew have been nominated by the University of Hawai‘i System for 2017 Governor’s Awards. The awards honor state executive branch employees, managers and work teams who exemplify the highest caliber of public service and dedication to serving the people of Hawai‘i.

Platz was selected as the UH System nominee for Manager of the Year. When notified of his selection, Platz gave credit to those around him.

“I was greatly surprised and very humbled to learn that I was the UH System’s nominee” Platz said. “Whatever success I have had as VCAA is entirely due to my outstanding staff and my incredibly supportive wife Joan.”

Platz was nominated for the System honor by Dr. Krishna Dhir, who he recruited to become Dean of the College of Business and Economics in 2013. Dhir credits Platz with assembling an outstanding team of Deans and Directors, focused on the mission of the institution and willing to make sacrifices among individual programs for the larger good of the University.

“Matthew Platz has increased transparency of budgets for Academic Affairs, and reduced recurring spending by over $200,000 a year, using the savings to fund faculty hiring and lecturers in high demand areas,” Dhir wrote. “He has been successful in reallocating faculty positions from programs and majors experiencing declining enrollments, to service areas experiencing bottleneck in flow of students. Such readjustments have required effective persuasion from Matthew Platz as he executed the responsibilities of his office.”

The nomination was supported by Dr. Roberto Pelayo, associate professor, mathematics, and Dr. Reni Ivanova, professor, mathematics, who said Platz has encouraged and inspired faculty members to pursue opportunities they would not have had the confidence to consider.

Pelayo, who is Platz’s co-investigator on the $20 million Ike Wai EPSCoR grant, was skeptical when Platz approached him to write the grant application to create a Data Science program. But Pelayo said the experience demonstrated Platz’s ability to take a bold vision and empower the right people to make it happen.

“Perhaps this is part of Matt’s managerial expertise,” Pelayo wrote. “He sees in people their potential before even they do, enabling them to make the most out of their opportunities.”

Platz was honored at the Board of Regents March 23 meeting at UH West O‘ahu where the UH Hilo Maintenance crew was recognized as the System nominee for Team of the Year.

Neal Nagao, who received the UH President’s Award for Excellence in Building and Ground Maintenance in 2016, heads up the team of eight that also includes Frederick Dela Cruz, Kirk Flores Sr., Calvin Fukuhara, Kevin Hand, Kelvin “Kenji” Kubo, Kenneth Kubojiri and Eric Rodrigues.

Their can-do attitude and capacity for working together to get the job done earned them shout outs from Auxiliary Services Director Kolin Kettleson and Vice Chancellor for Administrative Affairs Dr. Marcia Sakai.

Kettleson credited the crew with switching to a computerized work order system that allows them to directly assign and respond to requests, while Sakai noted that they are also moving UH Hilo toward greater energy efficiency through the in-house installation of LED lighting on a building-by-building basis.

“Their efficiency has allowed UH Hilo to complete many complex work orders in-house rather than bidding them out,” Sakai said. “They’ve been described as ‘small but mighty!’ as all of us at UH Hilo understand and share in the pride of being UH Hilo.”

Platz, the UH Hilo Maintenance crew, and the other department nominees will be recognized at the Governor’s Awards Ceremony at the State Capitol on May 18. The statewide winners in both categories will be announced at that time, along with the Employee of the Year, where UH Mānoa’s Luke Flynn is the System nominee.
Faculty and staff are invited to attend a presentation on the social and political implications of America’s increasingly multiracial landscape by Dr. Lauren Davenport, assistant professor of political science at Stanford University. *Beyond Black and White: The Identity Construction and Political Attitudes of Biracial Americans* will be held on Friday, April 7, from 5 – 7 p.m. in UH Hilo’s Student Services Center Room W-201.

America’s multiple-race population has surged by 106 percent since the 2000 U.S. Census, when Americans were first allowed to self-identify with more than one race. By 2050, an estimated 20 percent of Americans are expected to identify with multiple racial groups. Davenport’s presentation will address several questions, including:

- How do mixed-race Americans see themselves, socially, culturally and politically?
- What determines how someone of mixed-race parentage racially self-identifies?
- What are the repercussions for the broader American political structure?
- How do people of mixed-race approach various racial and social policies?
- What is the impact on resources and benefits intended for minority populations?

The event is sponsored by the Chancellor’s Professional Development Fund and organized by the Department of Political Science and the Office of International Student Services and Intercultural Education.

Nominations are currently being accepted for the UH Hilo Ka Lama Ku Student Leadership Recognition Awards for 2016-2017.

Both the University and community-at-large are eligible to nominate students with six or more credits and Fall 2016 graduate students with a minimum cumulative 2.5 GPA to be recognized for their formal and informal leadership roles. Students individually, in a group, team or organization who have demonstrated strong evidence of future leadership potential can be nominated for the following:

- Alaka’i Award: Leadership
- ‘Ike Papalua Award: Gift of vision
- Kuleana Award: Accountable and responsible
- Laulima Award: No task is too big when done by all
- Malama Award: Taking care of others

Additional criteria and nomination forms are available at the Ka Lama Ku website: [http://hilo.hawaii.edu/campuscenter/leadership/](http://hilo.hawaii.edu/campuscenter/leadership/).

Only printed nominations and essays will be accepted, and must be submitted no later than 3 p.m., Tuesday, April 4, to Campus Center Room 309. Winners will be announced at the Student Recognition Ceremony on Wednesday, May 3.
UH Hilo Briefs

April

7
Beyond Black and White: The Identity Construction and Political Attitudes of Biracial Americans, 5-7 p.m., SSC W-201

7, 8
Evita, 7:30 p.m., PAC, Admission

9
Evita, 2 p.m., PAC, Admission

12, 13, 14, 15
Evita, 7:30 p.m., PAC, Admission

14
Holiday: Good Friday

28, 29
Great Leaps Dance Concert, 7:30 p.m., PAC, Admission