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On Stage

TOP STORY



"History of the Word" Brings Student Work Onto The Stage

DIAL UP BROAD BAND

February 27, 2007

It is not easy being a teenager -- especially these days. But now a new work, called "History of the Word," explores the urban high school experience with all its trials, tribulations, and triumphs. NY1's Clover Lalehzar filed the following report.

"History of the Word" is a joint effort of the Tony Award-winning Vineyard Theatre in Manhattan and the Queens Theatre in the Park. The two theater companies' objective was not only to put on a play about young people, but also to help high school students in the classroom.

Poetry workshops are also being offered at Washington Irving High School and high schools in Queens.

"The Vineyard Theatre has a boot camp and the students can come and participate, or at least watch rehearsal to see what that process is like," said the show's director, Joe Morton. "So even beyond the play, we're giving kids an opportunity and choice of what they might want to do with their future or open up their minds to something artistic that they might not otherwise get a chance to delve into."

"History of the Word" not only looks into such issues as teen pregnancy, body image, and the war in Iraq, but also what freedom means.

Each night, the play includes a poem written by one of the high schoolers incorporating one or more of these themes.

Janet Escobar whose poem was selected and is featured in "History of the Word" is a student at

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Roma Torre

NY1 anchor [Roma Torre](#) is the newschannel's theater critic, and a regular contributor to "On Stage."



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Washington Irving High School.

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“A lot of kids tend not to speak, to hold everything inside like me,” said Escobar. “I just write and write away, and that's it. Whenever I have a chance to speak out I do it.”

The four actors who are portraying high school students are not that far away from the high school experience.

“I think what this play really does is shows the joy of youth,” said Utkarsh Ambudkar, who stars in the play. “What it is to be a teenager, what it feels to be in high school, to go through this on a daily basis -- to go through feeling like a prisoner in a learning institution.”

"History of the Word" runs through March 10th at Washington Irving High School in Manhattan and LaGuardia Performing Arts Center in Long Island City.

For more information go to www.vineyardtheatre.org or www.lagcc.cuny.edu/lpac.

-Clover Lalehzar

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