

THE *Current*

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[Keith Hamm](#)

UCSB student-produced plays collect theater awards

A trio of UC Santa Barbara undergraduate students were among this year's Indy Award winners, joining professionals countywide honored for acting and stagecraft.

In the theatrical adaptation of George Orwell's classic novella, "Animal Farm," graduating seniors Yasmine Castaneda and August Armstrong earned an Indy Award for costume and lighting design, respectively, while Diana Mateescu, who is also graduating this month, won for costume design in the Naked Shakes production of Shakespeare's "The Tempest." Mateescu co-designed with UCSB lecturer Peshia Rudnick, who also took home an Indy.

"To be the costume designer for a mainstage production was really exciting for me, and it would be my last time working on a UCSB theater production before graduation," said Castaneda, who is double majoring in theater and communication. "'Animal Farm' felt like a culmination of everything I've learned and worked towards during my years at UCSB."

Armstrong added, "It meant a lot that the department trusted me enough to be the primary lighting designer for such a large production, and the Indy Awards (ceremony) was an awesome experience."

Looking back on her time on "The Tempest," Mateescu said one of the main creative challenges was overcoming resource and weather constraints inherent to university

productions that happen outside during the summer. “I am so unbelievably grateful to be recognized for my work, and I want to reiterate my thanks for everyone who has mentored and supported me.”

Indy Awards also went to UCSB continuing lecturer Michael Bernard, who directed “POTUS,” and Sean O’Shea, retiring undergraduate advisor for the Department of Theater and Dance, who received the Curtain Call lifetime achievement award.

Meridith Ventura, who graduated from UCSB with a BFA in dance and is currently working on her PhD, also won an Indy for her choreography work for Out of the Box Theatre Company’s production of “Jagged Little Pill.”

“UCSB had a particularly strong year in theater,” said Leslie Dinaberg, the Independent’s arts and culture editor, who also served on the judging panel. “The productions of ‘The Tempest,’ ‘Animal Farm’ and ‘POTUS’ were standouts with excellent production values as well as performances.”

[The Indy Awards](#) were founded by the Santa Barbara Independent in 1991.

Tags

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The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.