

## Criminal Justice & Sociology Club holds Open Conversation

BY REBECCA BEASLEY

A SMALL GROUP OF JUST under 20 people gathered in the Buenger Education Center (BEC) on November 5 to have an open conversation about today's issues. Two moderators, Brenda Vu and James Nystrom, as well as the leaders of the Criminal Justice and Sociology Club, presented student-submitted questions to the group.

The first questions were light: What has been the most challenging part of living through a pandemic with today's political climate? What has been your support system (friends, family, activities)? Attendees shared that the pandemic brought their families closer, or that they had anxiety about their family's safety out of the country and overseas. Criminal Justice and Sociology Club ice President Coral Van Muyden said that the pandemic renewed her love of art. However, the next questions were much more controversial. Students began to discuss topics such as police brutality, injustice in the court system, and more.

One student stood out from the majority. His opinions on these political topics differed from most in attendance, but the environment in the BEC was that of safe space, where everyone had an opportunity to share. Although his contributions were met with many rebuttals, everyone was respectful and civil. The conversation was healthy and beneficial--after all, what use is an open conversation if everyone there has the same opinions and agrees with each other? Brenda Vu, event moderator and Diversity Center director, shared that any feelings of discomfort during the conversation were good and healthy; these feelings are what make us question and examine our own opinions, and make us stronger and more confident.

Some attendees attribute the civility during the event to the "ground rules" set by the moderators. No one strayed from the topic or said tasteless things about one another. No one spoke over another speaker. This environment is contrary to social media, according to multiple attendees. Many agreed that social media, although it allows for conversation with more people, severely limits productive discussion.

One thing that set this event apart from previous events is the moderators. Normally, the club's faculty advisor, Dr. Beth Chambers, would have been one of the moderators. Vice President Davina Bellinger notes that this open conversation had a good turnout of attendees lured in by the free food and popular topics.

Following the end of the event, many of the attendees stuck around to chat with one another. They expressed respect for others' opinions and contributions to the conversation, and discussed the topics further in the same manner of respect they



Photo Credit: Davina Bellinger

possessed during the event. Attendees were able to leave that night satisfied with the event with no harsh or negative words on their hearts. Personally, I was glad to have attended the event. I have never been in such a respectful debate environment. Speakers, no matter how much they disagreed, were met with respect. It was a very positive experience, and I feel more confident in my own beliefs. While I know many attendees felt the tension when dissent was expressed, I recognize that it was good to have that conflict. Such conflict makes us ask ourselves "Why? Why do I believe that?" and dig deeper. I hope that events like these continue. The growth that this type of event offers is immensely beneficial to our student body.

## A New Age of Theater

BY ERIKA SOUKUP

BECAUSE THIS is a new era of Covid shows, creativity and ingenuity seem to be the name of the game. The original show chosen for the fall musical was *Urinetown*, but during Covid it is impossible to have a full show that is safe and able to be performed. Instead of not having a show, the theater department stuck their heads together and came up with the solution: *The Tintypes Project*.

Unlike the original *Tintypes* production, this is more of a combination of different pieces within *Tintypes* and is a combination of musical review, vignette, and production pieces full of

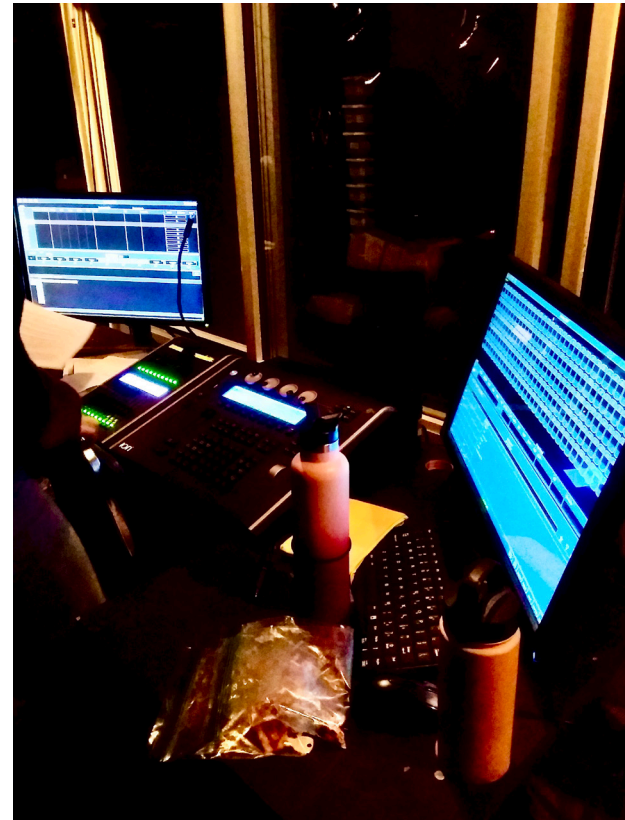


Photo Credit: Erika Soukup

medleys, solos, duets, and group pieces. It will not be a live-streamed production, but rather more of a film that will be set up on the theater department's YouTube page sometime in December. A link will be provided to anyone who requests it, but it will only be able to be viewed for a specific amount of time due to licensing.

While talking with Mark Rosenwinkel, the head director of *Tintypes*, he spoke about the importance of *The Tintypes Project*, especially looking at the scope for modern America and ensuring the art being created has resonance with the public. "There is particular resonance about America, how it became America, what that means and why it became that. There's a lot of racial history not only in this country but also in the music: appropriation of songs, minstrel shows, etc. It's surprising how many of these have roots in the minstrel tradition which is a racist tradition," Rosenwinkel said. Ensuring the theater department is creating a welcoming environment that can so often be lacking, they took another step as well: a large majority of the show was designed completely by students.

Justin Hooper, shop foreman and the one responsible for filming and production, states, "Having student designers was something we'd talked about in the past and it felt like the perfect marrying of these things. Now after doing that, we need to continue. A production each year with a team of students. We don't know the exact ideas, but there are a lot of options. All we've learned is: we've really liked this." Rosenwinkel agreed and said one of the advantages is giving students a chance to direct or design without the responsibility of an entire production.

There are many challenges, but according to Hooper, "The constant challenge and thing we are always keeping in mind is trying to remember we are still a theater department and keep things theatrical and not lean too heavily into the film. We need to keep looking at shows first and foremost as a theatre performance." Hooper's largest issue was to learn everything for film in one summer. "It's a completely new medium and I need to know it enough to teach it to students. In all honesty it has been a bit of a runaway train. But we are ensuring that students get to learn film, the tech portion of that, and how to make it accessible online to a mass audience."

In the end, the theater department is learning new ways to produce theatre. Not just this theater department, but all across the theatre board. This is a moment in history where the art itself is changing or becoming something new and exciting, which is why it is important to make theatre more accessible to the public.