

Virtual play takes on women's suffrage

Students from Holyoke Community College this week will perform a virtual staged reading of "Failure is Impossible," a play celebrating women's suffrage.

The free performance, directed by HCC theater professor Pat Sandoval and history professor Diane Beers, will be hosted on Zoom today, starting at 6:30 p.m. in conjunction with Holyoke's Wistariahurst Museum.

First performed in 1995 to celebrate the 75th anniversary of women's suffrage, the play by Rosemary Knower dramatizes the debate leading up to passage of the 19th Amendment, which granted women the right to vote.

Knower's script draws upon archival sources, including the Congressional Record, petitions to Congress, newspapers, personal letters, diaries, and memoirs. The cast of characters include Abigail Adams, Sarah Grimke, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucy Stone, Susan B. Anthony, Sojourner Truth, Clara Barton, and Frederick

Douglass among others.

The play was originally scheduled to be performed live on the stage of HCC Leslie Phillips Theater in March 2020 during Women's History Month, but that show was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I think it's even more significant now that we're doing this piece," Sandoval said. "The play is not a work of fiction. It is filled with historical facts, so it's educational and important and timely. Everybody should know the struggles of the suffragettes. We take it for granted, but, as we know by recent headlines, democracy and rights are not just handed to us."

The HCC cast includes Alex Santiago, of Holyoke; Cassi Broga, of Chicopee; Diamond Smith, of Easthampton; Hannah Labreche, of Holyoke; Nathan Rodriguez, of Holyoke and Roxy Murphy, of Easthampton.

To see the show, attendants must register in advance through a link on the Wistariahurst Museum website, wistariahurst.org/events.