

Play Shares Real Stories From West Oahu's LGBT Community

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'Yes I Am: Leeward Edition' cast members (from left): Kristen Hughes, Jonathan Reyn, Marizel Butin and Kahana Ho. Photo from Terri Madden.

In an effort to highlight stories about identity and love from the LGBT community, theatre group PlayBuilders interviewed LGBT individuals in West Oahu.

The resulting play, *Yes I Am: Leeward Edition*, comes to the Leeward Lab Theatre Thursday through Saturday, and Feb. 8.

Yes I Am is what the group calls a community collaborative play.

“Our company is based on the idea that theatre can actually help make our communities better places to live,” PlayBuilders executive director Terri Madden said. “We want to build bridges of understanding between the many diverse peoples of Hawaii through the process of story collecting and turning those stories into theatre.”

The actors themselves conducted the interviews, chatting with friends, family members and strangers.

Under the guidance of Madden and artistic director Ronald Gilliam, the entire group devised the play during rehearsals.

“These stories are all very personal,” Madden explained. “They are mostly about love and self-acceptance. I think what comes to mind when I think about the play are the examples of courage so many of the people who are represented display in their lives. Even if you are not a member of the LGBT community, it is difficult not to identify with these very human stories.

“As one of our cast members from the play last year said, ‘No matter who you are, if you are gay or straight, we all have something in common — and that is our struggle for love.’”

The play includes, for example, a scene about the passing of the marriage equality bill.

The play is a follow-up to *Yes I Am: Stories from Honolulu’s LGBT Community*, which PlayBuilders put on last summer. The production received a positive response, so the group sought to share more sto-

fessional actors. Another recent production by PlayBuilders was *Houseless in Paradise*, in which the playwright interviewed 60 homeless people. The play also had homeless actors.

Tickets for *Yes I Am: Leeward Edition* are available for purchase for \$10 at 7 p.m. on the day of each show. Shows begin at

8. Seating is limited to the first 80 ticket holders. For more information, visit playbuilders.org.

Links

1. <http://www.midweek.com/author/christina-oconnor/>
2. <http://www.midweek.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/WO-012914-Play.jpg>