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Cal Poly Professor's Play to be Staged in West Hollywood June 22

SAN LUIS OBISPO — A staged reading of a new play by Theatre & Dance Department Professor Al Schnupp and colleague Ellyn Gersh Lerner from Cal State Northridge will be given Sunday, June 22, at the West Hollywood City Council Chambers.

The play, titled "Ivy," is based on the life of Ivy Bottini, an 87-year-old activist living in West Hollywood. Bottini worked for 16 years as art director for Newsday on Long Island, N.Y., and was a co-founder of the New York City chapter of the National Organization for Women (NOW), serving for a time as its president.

After Bottini's marriage ended and she revealed she was a lesbian, author and feminist Betty Friedan orchestrated Bottini's expulsion from NOW. Bottini became an activist and crusader for women's and lesbian rights. She conducted consciousness-raising workshops around the country, wrote and performed a one-woman show, and hosted "It's a Gay Life" on KHJ radio in Los Angeles.

In Southern California, Bottini led the "No on 6" and "No on 64" campaigns. Proposition 6 sought to ban gays from teaching in public schools. Proposition 64 was designed to identify people who were HIV-positive and force them from their jobs, possibly even quarantining them.

Bottini played a leadership role during the AIDS crisis, organizing public meetings and meeting weekly with Dr. Michael Gottlieb -- the first person to identify AIDS. She identified ways to inform the community and disseminate information. She also played a role in helping to establish AIDS Network LA.

At the June 22 reading, six actors will portray more than 50 characters in a poetic collage that explores Bottini's intimate personal stories and public acts. The reading will begin at 7 p.m. at the West Hollywood City Council Chambers, located at 625 North San Vicente Blvd.

When Schnupp, a faculty member at Cal Poly since 1989, was introduced to Bottini, he found her to be "extremely engaging, inspiring and insightful."

"I've always been interested in political theater and in theater that features gay and lesbian characters," he said.

Schnupp is the author of about a dozen plays. His original plays have been produced and given stage readings at such venues as The Invisible Theatre in Tucson, Ariz., American Theatre of Actors in New York City; Living Theatre in New York City; Walkerspace in New York City; UCLA; Hollins College in Virginia; the Kennedy Center American College Theater's Regional Festival in Utah; and on KCBX public radio in San Luis Obispo.

The reading is presented as part of the city of West Hollywood's One City One Pride LGBTQ Arts Festival, which runs through June 30. This year the festival is celebrating marriage equality with the theme "I Do." For a full roster of festival events,

visit www.weho.org/pride.

About the Cal Poly Theatre & Dance Department

The Theatre & Dance Department provides students with programs of study that integrate practical production work with theater and dance principles, theory and historical development. The department also acts as a cultural focus for the campus and San Luis Obispo community. Each year the department presents three main-stage theater productions, the Orchestis Dance Company production, and a student-directed dance concert, all showcasing the importance of the department in realization of the university's mission as a comprehensive polytechnic identity.

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