

## **Lou Criscuolo Memorial Scholarship Winner(s) Announced**

Wilmington, NC - This year Opera House Theatre Company (OHTC) has chosen two recipients. Both Jakob Gruntfest and Dylan Szuch are winners of the Lou Criscuolo Memorial Scholarship. Jakob, is a Senior at Topsail High School and will be attending The School of Drama at North Carolina School of the Arts in the fall. Dylan, has dual enrollment at Eugene Ashley High School & Cape Fear Community College and will be attending Berklee College of Music in the fall. Dylan is the first person to ever be accepted into the music program as a tap dancer (percussionist).

Both Jakob and Dylan were in OHTC's summer show "Newsies" which won Best Musical at the recent StarNews Theatre Awards. Jakob played the supporting lead role of Davey Jacobs and Dylan was one of the featured tap dancers named Shoe. Tina Leak, OHTC Executive Producer, says "While we are certainly impressed with their talents, we are also impressed with their work ethic on and off the stage, as team players and as advocates for the arts in our community."

"OHTC without a doubt helped me get into Berklee by teaching me to be fearless." said Dylan Szuch. "Spending time with OHTC has really helped me to grow into the beginnings of a more well rounded performer. This community of amazing people have encouraged me to push my self to learn how to approach all elements of performance with an open heart and enthusiasm. I'm so grateful to have been welcomed by the OHTC community and I'm super excited to continue developing my artistry with them. This Scholarship will really help me to succeed at Berklee college of music. Boston can be an expensive city and having peace of mind from a financial standpoint will really allow me to focus on my studies and make the most of my education. Thank you so much for this opportunity. I'm honored to be a part of the OHTC community and a recipient of the Lou Criscuolo Memorial Scholarship."

The scholarship honors the contributions that Lou Criscuolo has made to the Wilmington arts community. Lou was a talented actor and patron of the arts who co-founded Opera House Theatre Company in 1985 and forever changed the perception of performing arts in the Wilmington area. He was an active member of the Screen Actors Guild, a former feature film and Broadway leading performer who left a legacy to the Wilmington community through professional quality community theater. "I am thrilled to know the Lou Criscuolo Memorial Scholarship Fund will help to send these two exceptional young men on their way! Thank-You to the scholarship committee & many donors for making this happen!" Jeanne Criscuolo, OHTC Director of Hospitality.

Now under the leadership of Executive Artistic Director, Justin Smith, Opera House Theatre Company is proud to continue Lou's legacy to "Make Dreams Come True" with an annual academic scholarship in his name, awarded to a college bound student who has gained experience with Opera House Theatre Company in any way. ie.: Performer, Director, Choreographer, Designer, Costumer, Lights, Sound, Stage Manager, Volunteer, etc. Pursuing a Theatre Arts education is not a requirement.

"Justin Smith has taught me so much about not only acting and directing, but about kindness and appreciation of the arts and the people involved" says Jakob Gruntfest, "My very first time on the Thalian Hall stage was in Priscilla, Queen of the Desert; a Ray Kennedy production with OHTC, during which I shared the stage with Opera House greats like Jason Aycock, Jeff Phillips, Blaine Mowrer and Heather Setzler. From that moment on I've felt like a part of the Opera House family. My time working with OHTC has taught me so much about performing and the importance of collaboration and, in addition, I have made life long friends. I am so honored to have earned this scholarship and I will be putting it towards tuition as I pursue my acting career as a UNCSA School of Drama student. I am so thankful to Justin, Tina, Carson, Ray and everyone at Opera House who has supported me throughout my years of working with them."