Written by Steve Frank
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The Watauga High School Pioneer Playmakers received nine awards and were selected to advance to the State High School Play Festival on the strength of their original production of the one- act play “schuld” last weekend at the high school. The Pioneer Playmakers production is one of just 18 chosen for performance at the state level out of more than 118 productions statewide and it is the only one chosen from the northwest region of the state.

The awards won by the Playmakers included Excellence in Costume Design; Excellence in Student Design and Production for Lighting & Sound Design and Execution (Bekah Shoemake, Carrie Mae Sweeney, Isabelle Branstrom, and Nick Bozeman); Excellence in Student Design and Production for Set Painting and Design (Emily Cheshier, Michael Navarro, Kelly Sweeney, Jake Ford, and volunteers); Excellence in Ensemble Acting; individual Excellence in Acting awards for Michael Navarro, Annie Johnson, and Emily Cheshier; Excellence in Directing; and a Superior rating for the production as a whole.

The Playmakers won their honors as Watauga High School hosted 11 visiting schools and 14 one-act plays for the western region of the North Carolina Theatre Conference (NCTC) High School Play Festival. Hosting the Festival required extra work for the Playmakers and a lot of assistance from local volunteers, and the Playmakers and the high school drama department expressed their deep gratitude to all the volunteers and local businesses who helped host the event. “We couldn’t have done it without all the help we got from our community,” said Playmakers Director Sarah Miller, “and we’re so proud that we can represent Watauga County at State!”

Miller shared her excitement about both hosting the event and the Playmakers performance. “I was just thrilled that we ran a great festival and felt good about our performance,” she said. “I like focusing on the process of making a play and I always tell the Playmakers to think of their performance work as making a cake. If they’re happy with their cake, then I’m happy. I’m thrilled that they got a lot of icing on their cake at this regional, but even happier that they felt great about the work they shared.”

Playmaker Will Bushman added that “We had a great time meeting all the schools who came to our regionals. Everyone was so nice and we’re looking forward to meeting more people at State.”

The Playmakers will offer an encore performance of their award winning self-written production of “schuld” on Monday, November 12 at 8 p.m. in Watauga High School’s Ross Auditorium. Admission for this special performance is $5. They will perform the play at the State High School Play Festival at Greensboro College on Thursday, November 15 at 2:30 p.m.

(Photo courtesy of Mrs. Marci Parker) The Pioneer Playmakers include front row: Michael Navarro, Annie Johnson, Lily Smith, Ms. Sarah Miller, Carrie Mae Sweeney; Back row: Candace Parker, Emily Cheshier, Lauren Lehr, William Bushman, Bekah Shoemake, Gabby Godwin, Oisin Reed-Kelly, Nick Younger, Vance Langdon; Not pictured: Brian Greer & Justin Lynch