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## **SUU ALUM RHETT GUTER RECEIVES CHICAGO THEATRE JOSEPH JEFFERSON AWARD NOMINATION AS CHOREOGRAPHER OF “WEST SIDE STORY” AT DRURY LANE THEATRE**

**Southern Utah University, Cedar City, Utah:** Putting his own spin on the choreography of a beloved musical theatre classic has earned SUU Theatre Arts and Dance alum **Rhett Guter** his first major award nomination. Rhett has distinguished himself for his work on ***West Side Story*** at the **Drury Lane Theatre**, a regional theatre in suburban Chicago, and has received a **Joseph Jefferson Award** nomination for **Best Choreography**. Rhett’s nomination was one of 13 nominations the theatre received, three of which were for *West Side Story*. The Jeff Awards, as they are known in the region, celebrate excellence in Chicago theatre.

Rhett not only choreographed the production but also appeared as Riff, the leader of the Jets. Running January 15 to March 29, 2015, the production was a huge success and was extended. In addition, the show also featured another SUU alum, Lillian Castillo, as one of the Shark girls.

When reached for a comment, Rhett Guter was overwhelmed, “Thanks Jeff! I’m shocked that the first show I’ve choreographed here in Chicago has been nominated and humbled to see my name alongside choreographers that are veterans of the Chicago Theatre community.” Rhett went on to mention that he is continuing his career as a choreographer, “Next up I’m choreographing *A Christmas Story* at the Paramount Theatre!”

**Rhett Guter** is returning to the Drury Lane Theatre in their upcoming production of *Peter and the Starcatcher* in the roles of Slank, Hawking Clam, and understudy for Black Stache as well as choreographer for the show. He previously played the role of The Boy in Utah Shakespeare Festival’s production of the popular prequel to *Peter Pan*. Rhett also appeared at Drury Lane as Older Billy in *Billy Elliot!* Other Chicago credits include *Brigadoon* (Harry Beaton) at the Goodman Theatre; *Gypsy* (Tulsa) and *Follies* at Chicago Shakespeare Theater; *A Chorus Line* (Al), *The Music Man* (Tommy Djilas), and

*Cats* (Munkustrap) at The Paramount Theatre. Rhett has toured with the International company of *West Side Story* as Action. Regional credits include *The Music Man*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *Cyrano de Bergerac* and *Dr. Faustus* (Utah Shakespeare Festival); *West Side Story*, *Macbeth*, *Curtains* and *Les Miserables* (PCPA/Pacific Conservatory Theatre). As a choreographer, he has staged musical numbers for the Utah Shakespeare Festival productions of *The Music Man* and *Anything Goes*. Rhett received his BFA in theatre and his BS in dance from Southern Utah University. Follow Rhett's career at [rhettguter.com](http://rhettguter.com).

One of Rhett's mentors in SUU's Department of Theatre Arts and Dance, Peter Sham, Associate Professor and Head of Acting and Directing, commented, "Rhett's success is no surprise to me at all. He is one of the few people, let alone students, that has had and continues to have a profound and lasting impact on my life. In my heart I believe he is one of the very special talents that grace the world every so often, like a Gene Kelly, whom he admires greatly."

**The Joseph Jefferson Awards** (The Jeff Awards) are given annually by a volunteer non-profit committee to acknowledge excellence in theatre in the Chicago area. Founded in 1968, the awards are given in tribute to actor Joseph Jefferson. Two types of awards are given: Jeff Awards are for work done under an Actors' Equity Association contract, while Non-Equity Jeff Awards are for non-union work. Award recipients are determined by a secret ballot.

## **ABOUT THE COLLEGE**

The **Southern Utah University College of Performing and Visual Arts** is comprised of nationally accredited departments of Art and Design, Music, Theatre Arts and Dance, as well as a graduate program in Arts Administration and the new Center for Shakespeare Studies. The College offers 16 different degree areas, including liberal arts Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees; professional Bachelor of Music and Bachelor of Fine Arts in art and theatre degrees; and a Master of Fine Arts in Arts Administration degree. More than 60 full- and part-time faculty and staff are engaged in teaching and mentoring over 550 majors in the College. Over 1100 students enroll each year in over 195 arts classes on the SUU campus. The College presents 100 performances, lectures, presentations, and exhibitions each year. The College's affiliate organizations include the Braithwaite Fine Arts Gallery, Utah Shakespeare Festival and the SUU Ballroom Dance Company. For more information about the College of Performing and Visual Arts, contact the Office of the Dean at (435) 865-8561, or by e-mail at [cpvamktg@suu.edu](mailto:cpvamktg@suu.edu).