

Spotlight on Rob Roznowski

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by JAMES SANFORD



Michigan State University associate professor of acting receives Distinguished Professor award

Rob Roznowski, Michigan State University associate professor of acting, was named Michigan Distinguished Professor of the Year by the Presidents Council, State Universities of Michigan. The award recognizes an educator at one of Michigan's 15 public universities who has been nominated by his or her peers for outstanding contributions through classroom work and advising.

A native of eastern Pennsylvania, Roznowski came to MSU in 2004 after working extensively as an actor on both coasts, including being part of the original New York cast of the musical "I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change."

Roznowski made the decision to look for a teaching position while he was the national education and outreach coordinator for Actors Equity, the professional actors union. "Because I was going around the country,

stopping at schools for a couple days at a time, I would teach master classes "I really just wanted a sit-down position," Roznowski told City Pulse publisher Berl Schwartz on The Impact's "Impact Exposure" radio show. "I realized I loved the time in the classroom more than necessarily the travel I was still doing, (both) from being a professional actor and this job, which was travel all the time."

Roznowski's local directing credits include the recent MSU productions of "Legally Blonde: The Musical" and "A Streetcar Named Desire," Stormfield Theatre's "Romantic Fools" and "Good Boys and True," which was presented as part of last August's Renegade Theatre Festival. He directed the comedy "The Understudy," which opened last month at Williamston Theatre and is working on a five-person production of Jules Verne's "Around the World in 80 Days" for MSU's Summer Circle Theatre.

"As a person, he's sweet and warm and friendly and thoughtful, but he's all of those things as a director, too," said Williamston's artistic director Tony Caselli, one of the three actors in "The Understudy." "He's not just good at the job of directing but also good at dealing with actors, asking the right questions, pushing us to explore and to do our best work. It was a relaxed and relaxing process, which was great, especially since it's been a little while since I've been onstage. I couldn't have asked for a better process."

Williamston executive director John Lepard, who also teaches theater at MSU, had praise for Roznowski as well. "Rob is a true professional in everything he does," he said. "He cares about his students, he is a top-notch director, but most importantly he is a fun guy to be around. He puts people at ease because he has a personality that makes you feel welcome and not judged. I'm so glad to be able to work with him here in Williamston and at MSU."

Wes Haskell, Roznowski's former student at MSU and one of the stars of "Legally Blonde" and "Good Boys," was also happy to talk about him. "Rob has been, by far, the most influential director and teacher with whom I have worked," Haskell said. "His commitment to the Department of Theatre and its students goes beyond all expectations and is truly inspirational. His artistic vision and teaching philosophy are groundbreaking. We are very lucky to have him here."

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