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EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
Charleston, Illinois

news

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FILE
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

FORMER EIU STUDENT RECEIVES TONY AWARD

CHARLESTON, IL.--Former Eastern Illinois University student Joan Allen has won the 1988 Tony award for best actress in her portrayal of the bereaved dancer in Lanford Wilson's play "Burn This."

Allen, a native of Rochelle, Il., attended Eastern from 1974-1976, majoring in Theatre Arts.

Dr. Gerald Sullivan, Theatre Arts professor at Eastern who taught Allen, said, "She was an excellent student and an excellent crew worker. She was very easy to get along with and an accomplished actress even at the age of 18."

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Allen and John Malkovich, also a former Eastern student, played the lead characters in the love story "Burn This" at its opening in Chicago last fall. Malkovich is now in France filming a movie.

Sullivan, who saw the play in Chicago, said, "I thought Allen was excellent. She is such a good actress that you wouldn't know she was not a dancer," he said.

Sullivan said about Malkovich, "His opening speech was one of the funniest things in modern theatre."

"They both are very wonderful people to work with and very serious about their work ... It's so hard to make it in theatre. They have done well," he added.

Dr. E.G. Gabbard, former chairman of the Theatre Arts Department at Eastern, and his wife, Lucy, who taught English at Eastern, watched the Tony awards Sunday from their home in Chicago.

During her acceptance speech, the Gabbards said Allen gave "much" credit to Malkovich and to the Steppenwolf Company of Chicago, one of the producer's of "Burn This."

"Gabby and I are so impressed with them because their performance in the play is so spectacular. They both are so unaffected by their success ... They are two Eastern students we can be proud of," said Lucy.

"I thought they were magnificent," said her husband, who also saw the play in Chicago and had Allen and Malkovich as students at Eastern. "I don't take credit for their magnificence. They did it all on their own. They have turned into fine actors."

"I can't imagine why Malkovich was not nominated for an award," he added.

While at Eastern, Sullivan said Allen played Nurse Ratched in "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest," adapted by Dale Wasserman from the novel by Ken Kesey.

She also served as assistant to the designer on "The Imaginary Invalid" and on "The Birthday Party" by Harold Pinter.

During her sophomore year, Allen served as stage manager for "Summer and Smoke" by Tennessee Williams.

In March 1975, she appeared in "Dracula Stabat," an interpreter's theatre production. In February 1976, she appeared in another interpreter's theatre production called "What I Want in a Man Besides a Moustache: An Evening of Women's Poetry."

Malkovich, a native of Benton, Il., who attended Eastern from 1972-1975, two years ago played Biff in the revival of Arthur Miller's "Death of a Salesman" starring Dustin Hoffman, according to Sullivan.

He was also active in theatre at Eastern, playing the role of Jigger in the summer 1975 Rodgers and Hammerstein's production "Carousel."

Gabbard said last year Malkovich was nominated for an Oscar award for his role as the blind man in "Places in the Heart."