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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Coronado School of the Arts Students Sweep San Diego Shakespeare Competition, Advance to Nationals!

Coronado, CA, March 12, 2009 -- Coronado School of the Arts (CoSA) students Olivia O'Connor and Michael Silberblatt won the 2009 English Speaking Union's Shakespeare Competition for the entire San Diego region. Olivia and Michael competed at the branch level for all San Diego County high schools on March 8 at La Jolla Playhouse with Olivia taking first place, and Michael earning first runner-up.

As winner of the San Diego competition, Olivia receives a trip to New York City to participate in the final stage of competition April 25-28. The English Speaking Union National Headquarters provides the national finalists with three full days of activities, including a Broadway performance and tours of New York City. The National Competition winner is awarded a full tuition scholarship to the British American Drama Academy's *Midsummer Conservatory Program* in Oxford, England.

Olivia competed in the contest for the first time this year. "I chose a monologue by Queen Margaret from *Henry VI* because she is one of the few very strong women in Shakespeare, so it was fun to play her," explains Olivia. She became interested in Shakespeare when she saw *The Comedy of Errors* in the seventh grade, so she embraced the opportunity to play Luce in CoSA's production of the play earlier this year.

Michael won first runner-up at the San Diego contest this year. He is a seasoned veteran of the Shakespeare Competition; last year he won the Coronado High School contest and was a finalist at the San Diego competition. He began reading Shakespeare in junior high and continued over the past two years in CoSA. Michael delivered an outstanding performance as Antipholus in the 2009 production of *The Comedy of Errors* at Coronado School of the Arts and played Romeo in *Romeo y Julieta* at the Old Globe Theatre in summer of 2008. In fact, he learned of the role of Romeo while at the San Diego Shakespeare competition last year.

Both students are enrolled in the musical theatre department at CoSA, a public arts conservatory for high school students from all San Diego. Olivia and Michael studied Shakespeare in depth last year with CoSA instructor and local actress, Kim Strassburger, who they both credit with helping to peak their interest in Shakespeare.

CoSA is a rigorous program that extends students' school day by two hours every day. In addition, when students participate in plays, they rehearse nearly every evening for months before the shows open. Students attend the program exactly for such demanding training. These are the actors, singers, dancers, directors, and technical theatre experts of the future.

For more information on CoSA, call 619.522.4050 or visit www.cosafoundation.org. For more information about the English Speaking Union's Shakespeare Competition, visit www.esuus.org/programs_shakespeare_competition.htm.

About Coronado School of the Arts (CoSA)

CoSA is a public arts conservatory for high school students that embraces and encourages artistic creativity and academic excellence. This pre-professional arts program reaches out to talented students from all San Diego County, offering a nurturing environment focused on individual growth, opportunity, and diversity.

CoSA is made possible by the Coronado School of the Arts Foundation, whose mission is to perpetuate a regional public school of the arts at Coronado High School that offers the opportunity for the best possible arts education to all qualified students in San Diego County. The foundation is committed to inspiring broad community support and engaging other foundations, educational and arts institutions, and community organizations in partnerships to fulfill this mission.

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