

Favorite Things Henry Kwok and a bottle of Pappy Van Winkle bourbon



Henry Kwok is the owner of the Meridian Township restaurant Asian Buffet and the adjacent bar, Henry's Place. When he's not cooking up delicious food and sharing it across Greater Lansing social media, he might be enjoying a taste of his favorite thing, a coveted bottle of Pappy Van Winkle's 20-year Bourbon, valued well above \$1,000.

My favorite thing right now is my bottle of Pappy Van Winkle 20-year Bourbon. It's one of the most prized bottles of bourbon you can find. If somebody can track that bottle down, it's one of those coveted bottles. Most bourbons are usually aged six to nine years, that's the sweet spot. This one is aged for 20 years, so it's got a very complex flavor to it. It's very unique, as far as being an outlier to normal bourbons.

I first started delving into exploring bourbons since I opened my bar back in 2015. I wasn't really too exploratory before then. There's a lot of things out there right now, that I notice that I didn't know before. There's a lot of good stuff out there, and this is one of those bottles that are very rare now. Ten years ago, it was fairly available, but it's becoming more and more rare. One of the joys of bourbon hunting is finding one of these especially coveted bottles.

When people see this bottle, they get very excited. They want to take

a picture of it. It's a great talking piece. We like to start out with this bourbon first, because it's rich in flavor and smell. So you want to start with that and then go off and try other things. It's one of those things where it's like, you can drive a Kia or you can test-drive a Lamborghini.

Whenever I'm in the restaurant and somebody asks me about the bottle, it's always a nice conversation.

People are mesmerized by it, and we always delve into talking about other bourbons. It's a great ice breaker. With other bourbons, there's great stories but nothing kickstarts a conversation like this one.

Bottles of Pappy Van Winkle are very few and far between these days. I drink very little of it. If I am going to drink it, it's got to be a special occasion. I have to appreciate how fine it is. I probably won't find another bottle of this that I can obtain for another five to 10 years, so I am going to cherish it.

I last brought it out when we re-opened the dining area of my bar. I thought it was a celebratory moment because we had been doing takeout and the numbers weren't there. The first week we re-opened, we were really busy. So I felt it was a real justified moment.

If you have a suggestion for Favorite Things, please email Skyler@Lansingcitypulse.com

MSU's 'Audio Anthology': Drama heard, not seen



By DAVID WINKELSTERN

COVID-19 stifled the Michigan State University Theatre Department's ability to offer live shows, but the pandemic has not muted student creativity. The "Audio Anthology" collection, available at theatre.msu.edu/dei_audio/, demonstrates how the department is continuing to create imaginative projects during restricted times.

"Audio Anthology" has a deliberate focus on diversity, equity and inclusion. The five, sound-only segments are mini audio plays inspired by dozens of poems from diverse artists. Each play is a genuine teaching moment.

Students worked virtually to discuss the variety of poems that were the starting point for plays that focus on separate issues. Deric McNish is the faculty coordinator who oversaw the process.

"Audio Anthology" sounds like radio shows of the past — complete with sound effects, background noises and occasional music. Each show examines the prejudices and barriers to inclusion. None of the recorded conversations sound like mere readings. Being able to access the original scripts onsite is an added bonus.

"So Close, Yet" was written by Cole Dzubak and Sam Carter. Carter, Kayla Katona and Nate Davis are the voices. The nine-minute and 21-second play spotlights some failures of American public school's sex education, displaying how the sex information needs of women and LGBTQ members are often ignored.

Mary Claire Zauel's, about-six-minute "For Detroit" shows the ignorance of a white Traverse City boy who's on a first date with a Black Detroit native.

Dzubak plays the boy and Keturah Heath is his date. Her pride for her home — and for who she is — is lost on her clueless companion.

The five-minute "Missing Link" opens our eyes to dilemmas multi-race people face. The play's author Nealmonté Alexander struggles with being intimate and being "Black enough" or "Latino enough." His conversation with Laura Sansoterra reveals the layers of difficulties the character encounters.

Sansoterra, Davis and Jason Dernay collaborated on the six-minute and 20-second "She's the Wo(Man)." Sansoterra, Davis and Zauel perform in the sound skit about a broadcast interview where the host asks very different questions to a woman and a man — both successful business people. "She's the Wo(Man)" reminds us how unfairly women are treated and regarded compared to men in similar roles.

The fifth "Audio Anthology" play, "Now Say Hello," combines different scenarios in eight minutes and 47 seconds about a gay man's search for self-love. Four settings reveal his anguish with strangers, his mom, teachers and himself. The play exposes how difficult coming out can be.

Ben Barber is the author and Barber, Dernay, Zauel, Katona, Heath, Carter and Ian Klahre complete the cast. Like all the segments in the "Audio Anthology," "Now Say Hello" features realistic conversations that aren't always easy to listen to but always make us think.

As McNish puts it, "If one person listens to one of these plays and becomes a little bit more empathetic, if they become a little bit more kind — maybe if they just listen a little bit better, this will be time well spent."