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Milwaukee Repertory Theater Finalist Yexuanj Rivera Melendez Finishes in the Top 6 of the National August Wilson Monologue Competition

Milwaukee, Wis – May 5, 2021 –[Milwaukee Rep](http://www.MilwaukeeRep.com) finalist **Yexuanj Rivera Melendez**, from Milwaukee High School of the Arts, finished in the top six in the **National August Wilson Monologue Competition** (AWMC) winning a \$500 scholarship. Melendez performed a monologue from *Jitney* virtually alongside 33 other competitors from cities across the country. 2021 is the first year Milwaukee Rep is an official AWMC partner, which makes Melendez and fellow finalist Fardowso Shidad the very first students to represent Milwaukee in the National finals.

In a year like no other in the competition's history, **Milwaukee Rep's** Education team lead by Jenny Toutant, navigated a digital landscape to bring the program to high school students across the city. The AWMC kicked off this season with in-school and after school offerings including free virtual workshops every Wednesday afternoon in January and February where Milwaukee Rep teaching artists helped students prep for the initial audition on February 27, 2021. Milwaukee Rep teaching artists which included Selena McKnight, Malaina Moore, Hope Parow, Kendricke Pittman, Malkia Stampley, Denzel Taylor and the AWMC Coordinator, Ashley Jordan served schools such as Bay View High School, Milwaukee High School of the Arts, Cristo Rey Jesuit High School, and multiple Boys and Girls Clubs locations across the city. Yexuanj Rivera Melendez was coached by Milwaukee Rep favorite and former Emerging Professional Resident (EPR) DiMonte Henning.

The **National August Wilson Monologue Competition** is a free arts education program celebrating the words of playwright August Wilson, inspiring high school students to express themselves through theater. Founded in 2007 by Kenny Leon and Todd Kreidler at Kenny Leon's True Colors Theatre Company in Atlanta, the program is produced in collaboration with the national presenting partners True Colors Theater Company and Jujamcyn Theaters.

Milwaukee Rep honors the legacy of August Wilson as a new host of the AWMC as well as its continued productions of Wilson's work. Milwaukee Rep has presented 7 of the 10 plays in Wilson's Century Cycle, most recently *Two Trains Running* in 2019.

Milwaukee Rep's August Wilson Monologue Competition participation is sponsored in part by **MKE REC Partnership for the Arts and Humanities** and **Milwaukee Rep's Spotlight Members**.

For more information, please visit www.MilwaukeeRep.com.

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About Milwaukee Repertory Theater

Milwaukee Rep is the largest performing arts organization in Wisconsin with three unique performance venues in the Patty & Jay Baker Theater Complex— the Quadracci Powerhouse, Stiemke Studio and Stackner Cabaret. For over six decades, Milwaukee Rep has been a centerpiece of Milwaukee's vibrant arts and cultural scene with productions ranging from Broadway musicals to Shakespeare to American Classics and New Works that are entertaining, inclusive and impactful. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Mark Clements and Executive Director Chad Bauman, Milwaukee Repertory Theater ignites positive change in the cultural, social, and economic vitality of its community by creating world-class theater experiences that entertain, provoke, and inspire meaningful dialogue among an audience representative of Milwaukee's rich diversity.