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## Vanier's Lu Yao wins two *Forces Avenir* awards

***Congratulations to Vanier Science graduate Lu Yao, whose interest in theatre led her to start a theatre troupe at Vanier and direct a production of *The Merchant of Venice* last spring. That bold initiative has now garnered her two 2012 Forces Avenir awards.***

After first receiving a \$1000 prize in June Lu went on to compete in the *Forces Avenir* finals and, at a Gala held on September 5, 2012, she was awarded another prize of \$2000 for being the top entry in the category *Avenir: Arts, lettres et culture*. This particular category aims to recognize a student or group of students who undertook a project linked to theatre, the visual arts, film, art, literature, architecture, design or heritage.

### Starting a theatre troupe

"I thought no one would be interested in joining our theatre troupe," explains Lu, "but we had more than 100 people sign up! In the end 50 people stayed on and worked on the play. The aim was to introduce students to theatre, give them an outlet for their creativity and allow them to promote a cultural activity for students."

### The *Merchant of Venice*: a big project

"We wanted a play with a social commentary. So we chose Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* because anti-Semitism is still a problem in our society." It was a big undertaking that started with auditions in September and continued with rehearsals and preparations right through until the performances in March. "We put on a traditional production set in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, complete with historical costumes," says Lu. "We had 19 actors, a technical team of six and 30 other people who worked on publicity, music, costume design, set design and construction."

### A production to be proud of

Lu Yao is rightly proud of the production. "It's been 10 years since Vanier put on a play and this production is the result of the effort and dedication of a lot of people. It was an extraordinary experience with a full house at every performance."

### What's next for Lu Yao?

Lu is now studying at Université de Montréal in Biology, but her interest in theatre and acting is still alive and well. "The university has a theatre club," she confides with a twinkle in her eye, "and I'm thinking of joining."



L to R: Student Services' Dany Brown, Monique Magnan and Jim Atkinson; The Learning Centre's Ourania Zafiri and Joshua Berman with Lu Yao at the Forces Avenir Gala.