

Drama Dept. Graduate Repertory Season opens with plays

May 19, 1978

Two plays - a dramatic journey to the land of dreams where "time and place do not exist. . . . imagination spins . . . there are no secrets no laws" and a brilliant French piece "sparkling, glittering, hard like a diamond" are the choices for the 1978 University of California, San Diego Drama Department Graduate Repertory Season which opens at 8 p.m. Thursday, May 25, in the UCSD Theatre.

Jean Anouilh's "Invitation to the Chateau," in a new translation from the French by its director Jennifer Parent, is a play about money, power, manipulation and exploitation; a comedy of intrigue and a charade with music. Clever, rich, beautiful people plot seemingly innocuously to right a series of liaisons gone awry as a ball whirls about and near them to the strains of a Stravinsky tango or a Debussy waltz.

"Chateau," translated not long after its premiere by British playwright Christopher Fry as "Ring Around the Moon," is not, says Parent, "the Cinderella romance Fry created." The original, explains Parent, was more cynical but, in 1947, "before the Theater of the Absurd, English-speaking audiences couldn't accept serious and trivial elements juxtaposed," so Fry made his version more gentle and fairy-tale-like, closer to Anouilh's younger work, his "pieces roses."

Parent says her new translation, one she felt an obligation to provide, is "closer to the author's original intention," his increasing pessimism about love. The play delineates a series of romantic misapprehensions. Identical twins, one sensitive and the other a brute; their aunt, a manipulator with an artist's touch for rearranging people's lives; a penniless ballet dancer who compromises herself, believing she is in love, and a cast of characters rich and bored play their way through a night of elegance and artificiality with panache and occasional cruelty.

The cast includes Robyn Hunt as Madame, Bill Davis as the twins Horace and Frederic, Marcia Robinson as Isabelle and Valerie Shanks as Diana.

"Chateau" can also be seen at 8 p.m. Saturday, May 27, and Wednesday, May 31.

"A Dream Play" by August Strindberg, which will be performed at 8 p.m. Sunday, May 28, Thursday, June 1 and Saturday, June 3, was described by its author in 1901 as an attempt to "imitate the inconsequent yet transparently logical shape of a dream" in which the dreamer "neither acquits nor condemns, but merely relates."

And, "as a dream is often more painful than happy," Strindberg wrote in his own preface to the play, "so an undertone of melancholy and a pity for all mortal beings accompanies this flickering tale."

The play, according to its student director Peter Hackett, is considered a focal one in the genesis of modern drama and has influenced such playwrights as Beckett and Ionesco. In addition says Hackett, Freudian analysts have paid tribute to its accuracy in reproducing the dream structure by utilizing the play and its prologue as a model for the study of dream images and the dream process.

"Dream Play" tells of Indra, chief Vedic deity, the Hindu god of rain and thunder, who sends his daughter to earth to discover whether the complaints of mortal beings are justified and deserve to be addressed and their

causes mitigated. There are 13 vignettes which describe the human condition, following which Indra's daughter returns to heaven to report to him on what she has learned.

In order to convey its dreamlike quality, explains director Hackett, the play has been staged much like a film. There are theatrical equivalents of crossfades, simultaneous action and transitions approximating cinematic techniques.

"These transitions must take place with the least amount of jarring effect on the audience," says Hackett. "Because the play must 'move,' the scenery must move, too, and we've made the set changes a part of the action. Also, we have the idea that the audience should be like a camera in a film and we'll focus their attention on various aspects of the action."

Because "Dream Play" was acknowledged even by its author as an artistic paraphrase of a painful and difficult period in his life and his marriage, Hackett has prepared his actors by discussing with them Strindberg's autobiographical works. The research period has been followed by an exploration of text of the play in which the actors are encouraged to develop their own characters and interrelationships with other characters.

An important part of the play is its original music, composed for the UC San Diego production by visiting Dartmouth composer Bruce Coughlin, in San Diego on a fellowship from the New Hampshire college specifically in order to work with the Department of Drama here. Coughlin will utilize many of Strindberg's own lyrics. Some of the music will be created electronically and some will consist of live sounds on tape.

The cast includes Santa DiLavore as the Daughter, Dick Maynard as the Prompter and the Poet and Frank Collison as the Advocate. All three appear also in "Invitation to the Chateau."

The technical crew for both productions includes Ann Fajilan, stage manager; Edvard Ronning, dramaturg; and Mike Chybowski, lighting designer. Jim LeBrecht will be scenic designer for "Chateau" and Jane Gehring for "Dream Play." Lorna Harris will design costumes for "Dream Play" and Jane Whitehead for "Chateau."

Tickets for either play are \$2 for students and \$3 for general admission and may be purchased at the UCSD Theatre Ticket Office, Building 203, Administrative Complex, from noon to 4 p.m., weekdays, and evenings, of performance starting at 7:15 p.m.

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