

Comedy is focus of summer theater program

July 22, 1974

Comedy is the focus of a three--part summer theater program to be presented by the Department of Drama of the University of California, San Diego. Included will be a traveling comedy show, a program of comic sketches and the ancient comic play "Lysistrata."

The UCSD Commedia, a troupe of eight theater students, will give free performances Wednesday, July 24, through Saturday, Aug. 3, in ten San Diego locations including beaches, parks and shopping centers.

Slapstick, puns, gags, songs and dances will be part of the group's 40-minute shows which are based on the traditional street comic theater of Renaissance Italy.

The players will act out their zany comedy of mix-ups and tricks in costumes combining period and contemporary dress.

Bitz'n Pieces, a grab bag of comedy including seven short sketches about American life today, and "Lysistrata" by Aristophanes, the most famous of all ancient comedies, will be presented back to back Wednesday, July 31, through Saturday, Aug. 3. All performances will be at 8 p.m. in the UCSD Theatre on the Matthews campus. Admission is \$1.

The summer theater program is part of the department's Comedy Workshop offered in UCSD's Summer Session. Some 40 theater students from across the country make up the company enrolled in the six-week intensive training course.

The Commedia, under the direction of Dr. Michael Addison, draws upon stock comic situations and characters and performs in a robust fashion on an outdoor platform stage. Stock characters are Arelecchino, the rascal servant known as Harlequin; Pantalone, the crusty and difficult old father; Dottore, the fraudulent doctor, and a pair of young lovers.

Based on improvisation, the Commedia is boisterous and physical with performances including an interplay with the audiences.

According to Addison, UCSD associate professor of drama, the purpose of the group is to provide a rigorous training experience for young artists and to share this comic theater with the San Diego community.

The Commedia will appear according to the following schedule: Wednesday, July 24, 12:15 p.m., UCSD Revelle Plaza; Thursday, July 25, 12:15 p.m., La Jolla Cove; Friday, July 26, 12:30, 1:30 and 2:30 p.m., Fashion Valley Center central plaza; Saturday, July 27, 1 and 3 p.m., Crown Point picnic area; Sunday, July 28, 1 and 3 p.m., near Balboa Park reflecting pond; Tuesday, July 30, 1 and 3 p.m., La Jolla Shores beach; Wednesday, July 31, 12:30, 2 and 3 p.m., Mission Valley Center interior courtyard; Thursday, Aug. 1, 12:15 p.m., Charles Dail Concourse plaza, downtown San Diego; Friday, Aug. 2, 11 a.m. and 1 and 3 p.m., Old Town park at San Diego Avenue and Mason Street, and Saturday, Aug. 3, 11 a.m. and 1 and 3 p.m., Gum Tree Grove, San Diego Zoo.

Bitz'n Pieces is a potpourri of scenes, sketches, vaudevilles, black-outs, one-liners and gags presented under the direction of Dr. Thomas B. Markus, artistic director of Theatre Three in Philadelphia and a member of the Temple University faculty.

"The sketches," Markus said, "are mostly about New York and for a lot of the actors, the New York experience is an unfamiliar one. The plays are really funny and that's provided us with a common ground for our workshop."

Bitz'n Pieces will be presented as a curtain-raiser to the workshop production of "Lysistrata" which is directed by Dr. Robert Beneditti, dean of theater at the California Institute of the Arts.

"Lysistrata" concerns a revolution of the women of Athens and Sparta who form an alliance after 40 years of continuous war between their countries. Occupying the Parthenon, they abstain from sex and entice men from both sides to their barricaded fortress until in the frenzy of unrequited love, a treaty is concluded.

Presented in a broad slapstick manner, the production features 11 musical numbers. Although the performance is in the spirit of good-hearted fun, parental guidance is suggested for the adult comedy.

Designer for all of the productions and a member of the summer drama faculty is Gregory Kollenborn whose experience as a designer includes two years with one of Germany's state theaters.

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