

Polish Mime Ballet to perform "The Managerie of the Empress Filissa"

January 16, 1976

The seductive and sardonic Polish Mime Ballet Theatre will perform "The Managerie of the Empress Filissa," Sunday, Feb. 1, at 8 p.m. in the Mandeville Auditorium at the University of California, San Diego.

"The first thing that stands out," one critic has exulted, "is that all of the dancers, male and female, have extraordinary physiques. Gone forever is the willowy, unisex ballet look as it is firmly replaced by barrel-chested, bulging-biceped men and full-breasted, prominent-featured women."

The troupe, founded 20 years ago by former dancer Henryk Tomaszewski, performs works which vibrate with eroticism and sensuousness. Everything -- costumes, music, lighting -- is geared to stress the body, its physical beauty and the versatility of the dancers. Nudity and sex in all forms are an essential part of productions which stress simultaneously the despair and the hilarity of human existence.

"We live in a visual world," Tomaszewski has said, of TV, theater, cinema. Conversation is rare. So pantomime is modern theater. We have devaluated words. A lot of people today don't trust words. But they haven't stopped feeling."

"Filissa," called "the masterwork of the company's repertory," is based on an 80-year-old scenario by the German expressionist playwright Frank Wedeking. It makes extravagant use of the cynical humor, the overt sexuality, the explosive violence, the theatrical energy and the muscular athleticism which characterize the mime troupe.

The work tells of a young girl recently awakened to sexual desire. The mime is a series of sexual encounters in which a variety of men try to seduce the Empress. A sadist throws her court into an orgy, a strongman becomes impotent; the Empress becomes "a sexual Waterloo for Napoleon," who attacks her with a cannon. Another suitor arouses her appetite for food so she eats him. A magician tries to win her with a Frankensteinian monster who comes to life as a Nazi. At the end, the young Empress dons a top hat, picks up a whip and calls to heel the whole troop of suitors.

Tickets for the Polish Mime Ballet Theatre are \$3.00 for UC San Diego students and \$4.50 for general admission. For further information, call the UC San Diego Box Office: 452-4559.

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