

Drama season opens with "Krapp's Last Tape" and "On the Harmfulness of Tobacco"

September 28, 1978

Samuel Beckett's portrait of the artist as an old man and Anton Chekhov's vignette of a 19th-century browbeaten husband will open the 1978-79 UCSD Theatre season at 8 p.m. Friday, Oct. 6, in the Mandeville Recital Hall.

Arthur Wagner, director of the actor training program at the University of California, San Diego, will perform in a faculty artist recital of "Krapp's last Tape" by Beckett and Chekhov's "On the Harmfulness of Tobacco."

Wagner describes the Beckett piece as a "delineation of the wasted life or the apparently wasted life, which Beckett would suggest most lives are, or at least appear that way at the end."

The play depicts a man living alone who for years has been making tapes of his activities and discoveries. The main action of the play is his listening to a tape he made about 30 years before the time of the play during which he talks about a tape recorded about 12 years before that. There is a sense of Krapp at three stages in a life which "reels itself away on magnetic tape."

Wagner calls the play "basically serious," though Beckett himself refers to Krapp as looking somewhat like a clown. The humor is poignant and there is a mood of timelessness.

The "Tobacco" piece is an early Chekhovian short farce which the playwright rewrote several times. It is not totally farcical, says Wagner. but has a "real humanity." A browbeaten husband is giving a lecture about the harmfulness of tobacco on the orders of his wife before an unspecified audience. He says he's going to talk about the topic of the lecture but, somehow, he never does, though he admits he's a smoker.

"He talks about personal things -- family life, his wife, his children, his own frustrations and despairs. But, even though he contravenes his wife's orders," Wagner comments, "he's not really heroic. This play is nowhere near as profound as the Beckett nor as Chekhov's later magnificent full-length works but we do find characters much like this in his more mature plays."

"Krapp's Last Tape" and "On the Harmfulness of Tobacco" will also be presented at 8 p.m. Oct. 7-8 and 11-15.

The theater season will continue with Oscar Wilde's "The Importance of Being Earnest," directed by Eric Christmas. The Wilde comedy of manners opens at 8 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 16 and continues Nov. 17-19, 21-22, 24-26, and Nov. 29-Dec. 2.

Embroidered with Wildean wit and epigrammatic brilliance, the play takes the silliness of Victorian British high society for a delightful spree. The frivolousness is blatant but it sparkles all the same.

Tennessee Williams' "A Streetcar Named Desire" will be the late-winter production, opening under the direction of Arthur Wagner at 8 p.m. Thursday, March 1, and continuing March 2-4, 7-11 and 14-17.

Williams' uncovering of the bruising collision of old passions and new sensibilities in the New Orleans "French Quarter" household of Stanley Kowalski has gifted the American theater with a searing portrayal of prototypical native personalities. Self-deception is rampant and surcease in short supply.

The Wilde and Williams productions will be performed in the UCSD Theatre on the Warren campus at UC San Diego.

The spring presentation will be a theatrical spectacle based on the tragedies of Aeschylus entitled "Orestes, Orestes." Directed by Michael Addison and performed outdoors on the Plaza of the UC San Diego Central University Library, the new theater event will open at 8 p.m. Thursday, May 24, and will continue May 25-27, and May 29-June 2.

Addison says, the play deals with "the final blood-letting in a family feud" and describes it alternately as "the hero show, or whatever happened to Orestes or death in the city or some adventures in the life of a Greek hero named Orestes or the Orestes play or towards an Oresteia or a new theater event based on an old tragedy."

Tickets for all theater season productions may be purchased at the UCSD Theatre Ticket Office, 203 Warren campus, telephone 452-4574 or 452-3791.

Essential to the success of the UCSD Theatre and the Department of Drama Program is the group called Friends of the UCSD Theatre, an association of patrons whose membership fee provides funds that enable drama students to work as interns at professional theaters throughout the country,.

During the past summer, for instance, interns were members of companies at the Intiman Theater in Seattle, at the Teatro de la Esperanza, Santa Barbara (about to embark upon a European tour) and the San Diego Repertory Theatre.

In addition, the Friends participate in a number of events throughout the theater season intended to encourage support for the Theatre and the drama department. Friends' tax-deductible memberships include two season subscriptions. Student membership is \$20; general membership, \$40; patron membership, \$100, and "Life Friends," \$500 or more. For information about Friends' memberships, telephone 452-3791.

Single tickets for all theater season productions are \$4 for general admission and \$3 for students.

For information contact: Public Information Office, 452-3120

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