

Department of Theatre to stage "The Labyrinth"

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UCSD DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE TO STAGE FERNANDO ARRABAL'S "THE LABYRINTH," NOV. 18-22

Duplicity and the "double bind" are just two of the themes explored in Fernando Arrabal's play, "The Labyrinth," to be staged Nov. 18-22 in the Warren Theatre at the University of California, San Diego.

UCSD Department of Theatre graduate students, and others in supporting roles, will perform this surrealistic work by the Spanish playwright.

Arrabal, now an ex-patriate living in France, is considered to be one of the foremost playwrights of the "theatre of the absurd" genre. He lived under the Franco regime and, although "The Labyrinth" does not speak directly of politics, the tyranny of Franco's rule is present in the dialogue.

Arrabal, who fled Spain in the 1950s, compares to leading post-World War II writers such as Samuel Beckett and Eugene Ionesco. His work explores a range of themes that first found expression in the writings of existentialist philosopher/artists such as Jean-Paul Sarte and Albert Camus.

What characterizes Arrabal and the other playwrights of the absurd is their ability to forge a densely poetic drama about the irrational pain and suffering they find in the human condition.

"The Labyrinth" opens with Etienne, a man chained to a latrine in the middle of a maze of blankets and nightmarish debris, struggling to free himself from the manacle that binds him to his fellow prisoner, Bruno. Thirsty and very near death, Bruno's pleas for help are ignored by Etienne as he breaks free of his chains and runs into the labyrinth. But his sense of freedom is short lived and he finds that no matter which direction he takes he always ends up back at the latrine.

Micaela, a mysterious young woman, explains to Etienne that the maze of blankets and debris covers every inch of an enormous parkland controlled by Justin, her father. Escape is impossible, she says, and those who have tried are assumed to have perished from starvation or dehydration. Etienne sees that his only hope of escape lies in seducing Micaela into showing him the way out. But his efforts only lead to more trouble and he finds himself on trial for his life before a notoriously cruel "hanging" judge.

James Carmody, assistant professor of theatre and advisor for this production, sees Arrabal's work as having strong affinities with surrealism. He describes the play as "the dark side of the Alice in Wonderland coin in which characters become trapped in a game of life and death, victims of their own irrational fears and anxieties."

In contrast to the nightmarish, surreal set, the costumes, designed by Victoria Petrovich, are playful and theatrical, further revealing the dark and light sides of human existence. Brenda Berry has designed the sets and lighting. Original music has been composed by Chris Hertzog, who has also designed the sound. Matthew Wagner is the dramaturg for the production; Linda M. Funsten is the stage manager.

Directed by M. Jonas Lerman, the cast will be comprised of UCSD Department of Theatre graduate students Theresa McCarthy, playing Micaela, Mark Cherniak, portraying Justin, and Andy Weems as Etienne. Completing the cast are undergraduate student James Hilton, as Bruno, and community members Kurt Reichert as The Judge, and Jordan Engle and Kelly Wimberly-Robinson portraying the children.

"The Labyrinth" will be performed at 8 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday, Nov. 18-21; on Sunday, Nov. 22. curtain time is at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$7 for general public and \$5 for students. Senior citizens and UCSD faculty and staff are eligible for a \$1 discount off the general public ticket price for Wednesday and Thursday performances only. Tickets may be purchased from the UCSD Theatre Ticket Office located at the Mandell Weiss Center for the Performing Arts (534-4574), the University Events Box Office (534-4559), from TicketMaster outlets and from ARTS TIX, located at the Spreckles Theatre.

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