

## **\$200,000 Gift Supports MFA Playwrights at UC San Diego**

*The renamed Theodore and Adele Shank Theatre recognizes the Shanks' contributions to the Department of Theatre and Dance*

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Kristin Luciani

Adele and Theodore Shank-both critically acclaimed dramatists as well as distinguished faculty emeriti in the Department of Theatre and Dance at the University of California, San Diego-have pledged \$200,000 to establish the *Adele and Theodore Shank Professional Playwriting Residency Award Fund* to support students graduating with a Master of Fine Arts in Playwriting at UC San Diego.

UCSD Theatre and Dance performs the play "1001" in the Adele and Theodore Shank Theatre. *Photo: Manuel Rothenberg*

In appreciation of their generous philanthropy, the former Forum Studio at UC San Diego has been renamed the Theodore and Adele Shank Theatre. The Department of Theatre and Dance experienced a remarkable period of growth during the time that Adele Shank served as chair of the department, including the construction of the Mandell Weiss Forum Theatre and a new 100-seat, black box theatre known as the Forum Studio. Now this performance space will take her name to honor the continued service that Adele and her husband have provided to the department.

The Shank gift is a current use fund estimated to support 20 graduate students over the next 14 years. The prestigious \$10,000 fellowships support graduating MFA student recipients in playwriting residencies at recognized and renowned theatres across the country. Tailored to the interests and needs of each graduate, these residencies offer new graduates the financial foundation to jump-start their careers.

Alex Lewin, MFA, '08, was one of the first recipients of this fellowship. "It is really scary when you get out there, especially the first couple of years," said Lewin. "The fellowship gives you a home theatre and a support base. It makes life not so frightening." The award supported Lewin during his residency at the New York Theatre Workshop, a leading U.S. theatre that features many original productions each year.

"We are very proud and very pleased at the work that is being done by our graduates," said Adele Shank. "And we hope that with the residency fellowship we can make the transition into the first couple of years of their careers a bit easier."

The Shank Fund will help to ensure that the university's graduate playwriting program continues to attract top applicants from across the nation. UC San Diego's Department of Theatre and Dance-recognized as one of the top three theatre programs in the nation-produces over 15 productions annually and is known for its imaginative, eclectic and interdisciplinary programs.

A scene from "1001" in the Adele and Theodore Shank Theatre. *Photo: Manuel Rothenberg*

One of the many innovative programs that helps to set UC San Diego apart from other programs is the Baldwin New Play Festival, an annual showcase for original work made possible by a generous gift from Ken and Ginger Baldwin. While a graduate student, Alex Lewin was involved with the festival each year. His play, *The Further Adventures of Suzanne and Monica*, was featured in the 2008 festival. "As a student, there is nothing as valuable as seeing your work produced," said Lewin. "It's something unique to UC San Diego." This year's festival, featuring full length plays written by students in the MFA playwrighting program at UCSD, is scheduled April 14-24.

"The Baldwin New Play Festival is a tremendous asset. It is very important in the recruitment of top students from across the country," added Adele Shank. "I think that our fellowship will also be important for recruiting the best."

Donors Adele and Theodore Shank have both been influential leaders of the renowned Department of Theatre and Dance at UC San Diego; today, as professors emeriti in the department, they continue to actively mentor and teach students. Adele Shank, former department chair and head of playwriting, has written numerous plays that have been produced throughout the U.S. and in England. She is the recipient of several awards, including a National Endowment for the Arts Playwriting Fellowship and a Dramatists Guild/CBS award. Former head of the graduate directing program, Theodore Shank is an award-winning author and director who has published eight books on contemporary theatre and has directed over 50 plays and musicals. His original play *Wild Indian!* received two Dramatists Guild/CBS awards.

Creators, teachers, mentors and philanthropists, the Shanks are ensuring the continued vitality of the UC San Diego Department of Theatre and Dance through their dedicated service and philanthropy. For more information about UC San Diego's Department of Theatre and Dance, visit the website at <http://theatre.ucsd.edu>.

The Shank gift contributes to UC San Diego's \$50 million student support campaign "Invent the Future ." To learn more visit [www.inventthefuture.ucsd.edu](http://www.inventthefuture.ucsd.edu) .

Media Contact: Kristin Luciani, [kluciani@ucsd.edu](mailto:kluciani@ucsd.edu), 858-822-3353



