

Original play "Harmattan" performed at UCSD

February 2, 1989

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ORIGINAL PLAY "THE HARMATTAN" TO BE STAGED AT UCSD

Michael Erickson's play "The Harmattan" dealing with the consequences of American humanitarianism in a third-world country, will be staged at the University of California, San Diego from Feb. 22-26, including a Saturday matinee, in the Warren Theatre.

Named after the searing desert wind that sweeps through Chad, Africa, from November to April, the play is based on the UCSD playwright's experiences in Africa as a U.S. Peace Corps worker.

The play takes place during the closing days of a civil war in Chad. Some of the characters find themselves in the country carrying out their assignments or jobs. Others have found the country on their own, seeking some kind of escape.

The cast of characters is made up of ambitious diplomats and "their stifled wives," a Lebanese refugee, a curmudgeonly oil driller, and an American forestry expert, Tim Royce, who is taking part in a humanitarian effort to plant trees.

Some of the characters are expatriates who are seeking a more primitive lifestyle away from Western society, Erickson says. In spite of the commitment of the expatriates to fully accept the culture of their adopted country, their understandings don't always mesh.

For example, Ousmann, a Chad native, asks the tree planter about his religious practices.

"I have none," Royce replies. "My mother was a Lutheran. They believe in white cake, coffee and suffering in silence. My sister is a Moonie."

Ousmann concurs: "Ah, yes. Many of our young women worship the moon. Very powerful."

Stage manager for "The Harmattan" is Cherie Miltenberger, and the director is Walter Schoen.

Erickson is in his final year of the UCSD Theatre Department Master of Fine Arts playwriting program. Last year UCSD produced his play "Water Music," which was later produced by a Los Angeles theatre company.

Schoen is associate producer for the San Diego Repertory Theatre Company and has been associated with numerous regional theatre groups nationwide. He received his MFA in directing from UCSD's theatre program in 1980.

Tickets for "The Harmattan" are available from the UCSD Theatre Ticket Office, TicketMaster outlets, the UCSD Box Office and from ArtsTix, for \$8 general admission, \$6 for seniors on week nights, and \$5 for students. Call 534-4574 for information.

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