

"Clara's Ole Man" and "Day of Absence" presented by UCSD Drama Dept, from Black Theatre repertoire, Floyd Gaffney to direct

January 16, 1973

Two one-act plays from the Black Theatre repertoire, "Clara's Ole Man," by Ed Bullins, and "Day of Absence," by Douglas Turner Ward, will be presented by the Drama Department of the University of California, San Diego for six performances beginning Friday, January 26.

Both plays will be directed by Dr. Floyd Gaffney, Associate Professor of Drama, and will be presented at UCSD Theatre, Building 203, Matthews Campus. Performances will be at 8:00 p.m. January 26, 27, and 28 and February 1, 2, and 3. Admission is \$2.50 for the general public and \$1.25 for students. Tickets are available through the UCSD Box Office in the lobby of Urey Hall or may be reserved in advance by calling the UCSD Drama Department at 453-2000, extension 2491. Tickets must be picked up one half hour before the performance.

"Clara's Ole Man" is a brutal, realistic rendering of black ghetto life dramatizing a dimension of reality to which many of us have never been exposed. The harsh reality is reflected through Bullins' characters: a spastic, illegitimate child; a ruthlessly cynical and grotesquely oversized lesbian; Clara, under the control of the older woman (her "ole man"); and Clara's well-spoken, relatively educated suitor and veteran of four years in the Marines.

The suitor comes to call on Clara with no idea of what he is about to become involved in. Three hoodlums enter; their viciousness is viewed with equanimity, even some satisfaction by the lesbian. A woman neighbor, a wino, also intrudes briefly on the scene.

Bullins is resident playwright of the New Lafayette Theatre, an experimental professional theatre for blacks, in Harlem. He was born in Philadelphia in 1936 and spent much of his adult life in California where he attended several universities.

His plays, staged throughout the United States and many foreign countries, have been highly praised by critics. "Goin'a Buffalo" (1968) was first given a staged reading at the American Place Theatre. "In the Wine Time" (1968) was first produced at the New Lafayette Theatre. "Son, Come Home," "The Electronic Nigger," and "Clara's Ole Man" were presented as a triple bill at the American Place Theatre in 1968. "Gentleman Caller" and "How Do You Do" were produced in London and New York in 1969 and "The Pig Pen" was performed at the American Place Theatre in 1970.

"Day of Absence" is based on a single joke: the sudden disappearance of every last "nigra" from a sleepy, self-satisfied southern hamlet. The joke is directed to the absurdity of a whole range of racial delusions. The play makes use of a dramatic form both popular and traditional within the American theatre - a minstrel show - but with the use of white face by black actors.

Ward is an actor and resident playwright of the Negro Ensemble Theatre in New York City. He was born on a sugar cane and rice plantation near Burnside, Louisiana, grew up in New Orleans, and attended Wilberforce College and the University of Michigan. In 1948 he settled in New York and made his off-Broadway debut as an actor in the Circle in the Square production of "The IZeman Cometh." Next, he was featured in the New York

City Center production of "Lost in the Stars" and understudied Sidney Poitier in "A Raisin in the Sun," eventually playing the leading role during the national tour of the play.

His first two plays, "Happy Ending" and "Day of Absence," were first produced at St. Mark's Playhouse in 1965 and ran for 504 performances. The plays won a Vernon Rice Drama Deak Award and an Obie Award.

The casts for the UCSD production of the two plays were chosen from open auditions bringing together a large number of actors from the campus and the local community. They include representatives from San Diego State University, Mesa (More)

College, San Diego City College, United States International University, and the Southeast Community Theatre as well as UCSD. Four musicians and four singers, forming what Gaffney calls a "mini minstrel" are from the San Diego Community Choir.

Gaffney has several plays to his credit - both as director and as actor. Most recently in San Diego, he has directed Fugard's "The Bloodknot" at UCSD Theatre and the very successful "The Me Nobody Knows" last summer for the Southeast Performing Arts Consortium.

Gaffney feels it is important to expose the community to the works of black playwrights since "the duality of American culture has created a distinct black expression which is substantially different from the predominant white cultural mode. The black playwright strives to assert black ethics and aesthetic values by re-interpreting theatre in the light of black experience."

Gaffney recently returned from a two-week visit to Brazil where he participated in a series of workshops and lecture-demonstrations on modern dance and Afro-jazz dance. The tour included the cities of Sao Paulo, Campinas, Curitiba, and Santos, with additional visits to Rio de Janeiro and the new capital city of Brasilia.

(January 16, 1973)