

Alfred Jarry's late-19th century masterpiece "Kking Ubu" will open in the Mandeville Art Gallery

February 7, 1977

Alfred Jarry's late-19th century masterpiece "Kking Ubu" - a bawdy, scatological romp across the landscape of the social and artistic awakening of the period - will open at 8 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 16, in the Mandeville Art Gallery at the University of California, San Diego.

The play, presented by special arrangements and in cooperation with the Mandeville Art Gallery and the UC San Diego Department of Visual Arts, will be presented twice each night, at 8 p.m. and 10 p.m., through Sunday, Feb. 20. Tickets may be purchased at the UCSD Theatre ticket office on the Matthews campus or by calling 452-4574. Ticket office hours are noon-4 p.m. Monday-Friday or at 7:15 p.m. evenings of the performance.

"Ubu," according to director Michael Addison, associate professor in the UC San Diego Department of Drama, displays an "irreverence and childlike outrageousness that characterizes much of Jarry's work - not just simple, superficial thumbing of noses but an example of the much deeper and darker streams running in Jarry as well."

The play, written by Jarry when he was still a mid-teen schoolboy in the provinces of France, purportedly portrays a teacher whom Addison calls "a petit bourgeois monster." When the play was first presented professionally in 1896 in Paris -- after much publicity about its being an avant-garde work -- the audience was so indignant, there was a riot.

"It was," smiles Addison, "A bronx cheer in the direction of tradition."

The tale, difficult to describe, is a panoramic view of the history of western Europe for the one or two centuries of war and unrest preceding the writing of the play. Though Addison admits to the story's being a political commentary, he maintains it is "as much about Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon as it is about Napoleon or Henry V -- about the myths we've built up around these savages who lead wars."

The extra "K" on the name of the principal character, "Kking Ubu," offers Addison, is one more attempt to shake up prospective audiences and has no real significance. The play takes place in Poland equally for no reason, states Addison.

"Poland was 'nowhere' at the time the play was written. It was that center of middle Europe that kept getting overrun and shifted and where people got pounded on and trampled into the mud. I think that sense is inherent in the play," says the director.

The Ubu Company includes: Frank Collison, Santa Di Lavor, Peter Hackett, Robyn Hunt, Will Klipfel, Susan Lewis, Doug Lyness, Fidencio Marquez, Lisa Phelps, Ellen Rennolds, Sharon Silverglate, Chris Schulte and Judy Stewart.

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