

## "Good Woman of Setzuan" to be performed

**February 23, 1976**

"The Good Woman of Setzuan," a parable by Bertolt Brecht about a young woman forced to subordinate her more human impulses in order to survive in a corrupt society, will be presented at 8 p.m., March 5-7 and 9-14 in the UCSD Theatre at the University of California, San Diego.

The "good woman" is Shen Te, a kind-hearted prostitute who is smiled upon for her selflessness by three visiting "gods" with dubious motives. When Shen Te's luck changes and she acquires a tobacco shop, various groups and individuals-- her landlady, an opportunistic lover and his mother, her neighbors-- begin to abuse her good nature and generosity, eating her food, demanding her help, and cheating her.

The device chosen by Shen Te in order to survive in the world in which she finds herself is to create a fictitious male cousin, Shui Ta, whom she imitates. Shui Ta is practical, shrewd and, if not entirely selfish, more self-interested than Shen Te.

Throughout the play, Shen Te/Shui Ta tries to resolve the dilemma of how to remain good and yet survive in a competitive society. The gods who have placed her in a situation fraught with conflict offer no solution and, in fact, act as her judges, appearing from time to time to see if she has remained "good" while prospering economically. At one point, they are literal judges, trying Shui Ta for the alleged "murder" of Shen Te.

"To be good to others and myself at the same time," Shen Te laments, "I could not do it."

And yet, the gods conclude, "The world should not be changed."

"Good Woman" is representative of Brecht's experiments with what he called "epic theatre," a theatrical style the play's director, Associate Professor of Drama Michael Addison, calls "radically different from what we normally associate with the contemporary western theatre. Brecht uses a number of theatrical devices to interrupt the empathic flow of the drama to pull us away from our emotional connection with the characters and to force us to recognize their situation, think about their dilemma and perhaps arrive at some potential solution."

Actors step in and out of character to comment on the action, to sing a song, to move scenery, to confront the audience more directly. Brecht, says Addison, wanted an actor always to be slightly detached from his character while at the same time fully presenting the character.

"But he always wanted the audience to be aware that the actor was there as a separate entity, making his own comment on the work, maintaining some kind of objective distance from the work," says Addison.

All performers in the UC San Diego production are students in the university's drama department.

Shen Te/Shui Ta will be played by Beth Hogan and Wong, the water-seller, will be played by Robert MacDougall, who has also written an entirely new musical score for the play. Others in the cast include Pat De Santis as Yang Sun, the flyer with whom Shen Te falls in love, and David Jensen, as Shu Fu, the barber.

The production has been designed by Robert Morgan, resident designer with San Francisco's American Conservatory Theatre, who is at UC San Diego as a Regents' Lecturer in design. Deborah Dryden has designed the costumes and the lighting has been designed by Cindy Chenowith.

Tickets are \$1.50 for all students and \$3 for general public. Tickets may be purchased at the UC San Diego drama dept., Matthew campus, 452-3791.

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