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Theater & Dance Presents 'Five Quiets'

The Department of Theater & Dance at UC Santa Barbara continues its current season with “Five Quiets,” a spring dance concert featuring two works by guest choreographers set on the department’s student company.

Under the direction of Mira Kingsley and Christina McCarthy, assistant professor and lecturer, respectively, in the Department of Theater & Dance, the concert is set for 8 p.m. on Friday, April 11 in UCSB’s Hatlen Theater. Additional performances will take place at 8 p.m. on Saturday, April 12, and at 2 p.m. on Sunday, April 13.

The first new work performed by the student company is Alexandra Beller’s “This Is the Way It Ended.” Moving away from the standard model, Beller tapped into the specific talents of the company dancers to create a custom piece just for them.

“Usually, when guest choreographers come, we only have time for them to quickly teach an existing dance,” said McCarthy. “There are benefits to this kind of fast paced learning because the students have to work to fit themselves into a role that was created for another dancer. It makes them stretch.”

Having a piece composed specifically for the students is beneficial in another way, McCarthy continued. “It feeds the dancers’ creative fire and validates their way of expressing. The dancers are very personally invested in the material they are performing. This investment brings a raw immediacy to what is happening on stage.

The students in her work are fully present, not only as dancers, but as humans."

The second piece to be performed by the student company is "Songs for Chile," a modern dance masterwork from former José Limón dancer Lucas Hoving and reconstructed by Alice Condodina and Tonia Shimin, UCSB professors emeritus of theater and dance. Condodina and Shimin share an intimate connection with the piece, having performed together as members of the original cast in 1981.

According to McCarthy, performing a historical piece such as "Songs for Chile," presents a unique set of challenges for the student dancers. "'Songs for Chile' is a classical modern dance that is technically challenging in a way their bodies are not familiar with," she explained. "The modern dance movement vocabularies of the past were vernacular to the dancers of the time. They felt comfortable in the transitions and modes of locomotion. The students now live in another vernacular and have to wake themselves up to the slightly different dialect of movement ideas that are foundational in this older work."

The program also includes new dances choreographed by senior bachelor of fine arts (BFA) students Wilson Vu, Kate Lyons, Kasey Burgunder, Heather Mignon Cross, and Dakota Bailey. BFA students are chosen in their sophomore year and pursue a rigorous training program in dance technique and choreography. Their work on the spring concert is their final choreographic project before they graduate.

In presenting their new work alongside that of more experienced choreographers such as Beller and Hoving — not to mention Condadina and Shimin — the students face what McCarthy described as a "beautiful challenge." They are getting "a first rate education through their deep immersion in this concert both as dancers and choreographers," she said. "They are stepping up to the excellent standard set by their elders. The concert is full of pathos, emotion, life and vibrancy."

Tickets for "Five Quiets" are available online at https://www.theaterdance.ucsb.edu and by phone at 805.893.7221. More information about the concert can be found at https://www.theaterdance.ucsb.edu.

About UC Santa Barbara

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of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.