UC SANTA BARBARA

THE Current

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LAUNCH PAD Summer Series

The UC Santa Barbara theater and dance department's program SUMMER LAUNCH PAD: New Plays in Progress continues with public readings of new works by playwrights KJ Sanchez and James Still.

Sanchez's "Too Much Water" and Still's "April 4, 1968" will be presented on August 13 and 20, respectively. Both readings will begin at 7:30 p.m. in Theater-Dance West, Room 1507. They are free and open to the public.

"Too Much Water," directed by Jenny Mercein, follows the ghost of Ophelia as she revisits Elsinore guided by other famous suicides such as Meriwether Lewis and Virginia Woolf. Combining found text, transcriptions of interviews with young women and highly theatrical moments of dance, "Too Much Water" examines the lives of "good girls," the social taboos of mental illness and the repercussions and reverberations of suicide.

In "April 4, 1968," directed by LAUNCH PAD Artistic Director Risa Brainin, playwright Still focuses on a particular day in the life of 16-year-old Indianapolis resident Geneva Fields. Battles over Civil Rights are being fought on the homefront while the Vietnam War rages on the other side of the world; Robert Kennedy is running for president, and is scheduled to make a campaign speech in Indianapolis that night; the city's first 24/7 R&B radio station had recently hit the airwaves; and change is coming to Indianapolis — too slowly for some and too quickly for others.

“We are so proud to be working with this talented group of diverse playwrights this summer,” said Risa Brainin, professor and chair of theater and dance and LAUNCH PAD’s artistic director. “From last week’s workshop of Annie Torsiglieri’s ‘“A” Train’ grappling with the complexities of autism, to KJ Sanchez’s new piece looking at teen suicide through the eyes of Shakespeare’s Ophelia, to James Still’s story of a family deeply affected by the assassination of Martin Luther King, the scope of the reading series is both wide and deep.”

An expansion of LAUNCH PAD, a program during the academic year that offers professional playwrights the opportunity to fully produce a new original work with faculty members, guest artists and students, SUMMER LAUNCH PAD invites three professional playwrights to join the UCSB community as artists in residence in a summer course.

The collaboration between Brainin and a team of undergraduate students and the playwrights culminates in public readings and open rehearsals. Through the process, students gain valuable experience working on plays in the earliest stages of development.

The class is designed for student actors, designers, directors, dramaturgs, playwrights and stage managers. While the actors read the roles, playwrights and directors work closely with their professional counterparts, shadowing their processes. Designers bring ideas to the writers in the form of sketches, research and models, and the stage managers work with the team as a whole to facilitate scheduling, managing rehearsals and integrating newly written pages into the scripts.

While expanding the reach of the LAUNCH PAD program, the summer series provides a different kind of incubator for students, plays and playwrights and LAUNCH PAD’s preview productions.

More information about the LAUNCH PAD reading series is available at http://www.theaterdance.ucsb.edu/launchpad/reading-series.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community

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.