UC SANTA BARBARA

THE Current

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‘Venus’

The Department of Theater and Dance opens its 2015-16 season with a groundbreaking and provocative work by America’s premiere African-American female playwright.

A tale of exploitation and love drawn from real life, “Venus,” by Suzan-Lori Parks, centers on Sarah Baartman, a young South African woman lured from her home and put on the stage to star in one of the most famous freak shows of the 19th century.

Directed by UCSB’s Tom Whitaker, “Venus” opens Friday, Nov. 6, in the campus’s Performing Arts Theater and continues through Nov. 15.

Billed as the Hottentot-Venus, Baartman possessed a physique that both intrigued and astonished Europeans of that time. The play examines Venus’s rise to fame as well as her ultimate destruction as she battles society’s fascination, science’s cold curiosity a lover’s deadly obsession.

The cast features 12 undergraduate students from the department’s bachelor of fine arts program. “We are privileged to have the opportunity to work on Suzan-Lori Parks’ ‘Venus,’ and so exited to embark on this adventure,” said Whitaker.

“We have a very talented diverse cast,” he continued, “live musicians directed by Jon Nathan, director of UCSB’s Jazz Ensemble, wonderful designed being developed by our skilled departmental designers — and, of course, Suzan-Lori Parks’ powerful and theatrical text.”

Parks is an award-winning playwright, screenwriter and novelist. In 2002, she became the first African-American woman to receive the Pulitzer Prize, presented in recognition of her play “Topdog/Underdog.” Her other works include the epic “Father Comes Home From the Wars (Parts 1, 2 & 3)” and an adaptation of the book for the controversial 2102 revamp of the musical “The Gershwins’ Porgy and Bess.”

“Venus” continues through Saturday, Nov. 14. The production includes mature content and language that is not intended for children. More information, including a complete listing of performance dates and times, is available at http://www.theaterdance.ucsb.edu or by calling the box office at (805) 893-2064. Box office hours are Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

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.