UC SANTA BARBARA

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Death in the Wings

At first blush, “She Kills Monsters” sounds bizarre. A young woman loses her entire family to a car crash — and it’s a comedy. But the play by Qui Nguyen manages to turn tragedy, Dungeon & Dragons and sexuality into a funny, geek-friendly romp.

And now you’ll get a chance to see it. UC Santa Barbara’s Department of Theater and Dance will perform “She Kills Monsters” via Zoom over three days beginning Thursday, May 13, at 7 p.m. Additional performances will be Friday and Saturday, May 14 and 15, at 7 p.m. and a Saturday matinee at 1 p.m.

The play, directed by Pirronne Yousefzadah, has been a favorite on campuses since it debuted in 2011, said Irwin Appel, professor and chair of Theater and Dance.

“Students love being part of it, and we felt it provides great opportunities for student actors, designers and crew,” he said. “If you are a fan of Dungeons & Dragons, this is the play for you. It is a wild comedy that is described as offering ‘a heart-pounding homage to the geek and warrior within us all.’ ”

Yousefzadah, an accomplished director and writer who is associate artistic director and director of engagement at Geva Theatre Center in Rochester, NY, suggested “She Kills Monsters” to Theater and Dance, Appel said. The selection committee read the play and quickly approved it.

“First of all, when a director is excited about doing a play, we as a department try to make it happen whenever possible,” he said. “We were also looking for something that would work in the remote environment. As you can imagine, the pandemic has

hit live theater and dance hard, but we have been trying all year to present interesting and compelling programming tailored for remote viewing."

Nguyen, a prolific playwright who might be best known for "Vietgone," had the foresight to adapt "She Kills Monsters" in a remote-friendly script when the pandemic hit, Appel noted.

Tough times call for creative solutions, and Theater and Dance has responded, Appel noted.

"We want to provide our students with as many performance opportunities as possible, even if we can't be in person," he said. "We also want to deliver exciting content to our community. Our motto all year has been, 'Out of adversity comes opportunity,' and 'She Kills Monsters' is hopefully a great example of this. We hope everyone will really enjoy it!"

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.