UC SANTA BARBARA
THE Current

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Jim Logan

35 Reasons to Laugh, Cry

Gregg Allen's "Too Much Light Makes the Baby Go Blind" defies easy categorization. It's 35 plays presented in 70 minutes — and the audience decides the order in which they're performed. Michael Bernard couldn't resist the challenge of directing it.

"There is a sense of immediacy, randomness and chaos in this show that I found really exciting," said Bernard, a lecturer in UC Santa Barbara's Department of Theater and Dance.

"Too Much Light" begins a limited run in the campus's Performing Arts Theater Saturday, Nov. 6, at 1 p.m. Purchase tickets here. Additional performances are the 6th at 7 p.m.; Tuesday and Wednesday, Nov. 9 and 10, at 7 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, Nov. 12 and 13, at 7 p.m.; and Saturday and Sunday, Nov. 13 and 14, at 1 p.m.

Bring proof of vaccination and ID or negative PCR test taken in the previous 72 hours, or show the green UCSB COVID-19 clearance survey badge. Masks are required. Arrive early for a COVID compliance check; there will be no late seating.

The show, which has been playing in Chicago since its debut in 1988, is an ensemble exploration of humor, pathos and the human conditions between. The order of each one- to four-minute play is based on audience participation.

Traditionally, patrons are given a list all 35 plays. From there, they get to decide the order in which the plays are performed as the show progresses. Audience members who choose to participate shout out the number of the play they want, and the first

one heard by the performers is the one they do next.

But there’s more audience participation than simply shouting out numbers — a few people might even find themselves onstage if they’re willing. (No one uncomfortable with participating will be asked to do so.)

“The challenge is not just to do the plays in the time required; we could easily do that if we rushed through everything,” Bernard said. “The challenge is to do them well, to keep all the moments real and true, and still be finished in the time required. The cast is doing an incredible job of that. They have really poured themselves into the show and I can’t imagine people will not enjoy it.”

The casts consists of eight students who are all in the Bachelor of Fine Arts acting program. They are Frances Domingos, Andalyn Honselaar, William Huffaker, Taylor Kirk, Cyrus Roberts, Michael Seitz, Ahlora Smith, Hailey Turner and Angel Villalobos.

“I am hopeful the audience will not only have a lot of fun but also feel an investment in the show and in the cast completing the challenge,” Bernard said. “I think the show is funny and touching. There are 35 separate plays being performed in the evening so you get a little bit of everything.”

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.