UC Berkeley Presents Peter Barnes' THE RULING CLASS, 3/8-17

by BMW News Desk (author:BMW News Desk)  Feb 20, 2013

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Peter Barnes' The Ruling Class, the third production in UC Berkeley's Department of Theater, Dance, and Performance Studies Main Stage 2012/2013 season, opens March 8 in Zellerbach Playhouse. The work deals with Jack Gurney, a member of the upper class who inherits his father's position of Earl. Jack's aristocratic family expect him to use his new position to advance the household's wealth and power, but Jack believes he's the "God of Love" and wants to give the money away. Through increasingly brutal means, his family
attempt to cure him of his liberalism with hilarious and terrifying results. Through a darkly satirical approach, the work explores the themes of class difference and the complexity of the human. Director and TDPS lecturer Christopher Herold has relished the chance to direct the show that is, in his words, “the kind of work creative artists hope to do.”

“The play is a late 20th century little known masterpiece” Herold says. “While written in 1968, the play is amazingly topical, and the situations are recognizable as current. The characters actually talk about the 1% percent and the 99%. And Barnes wrote the roles and scenes in a very complex way, the audience never gets too comfortable either theatrically or with the characters. As such you can understand them, they violate that sensibility.”

The play itself portrays Jack’s actions, and those of his increasingly desperate family as both comical and horrifying - and Herold approaches both with an even hand. “Jack begins the play as a gentle soul - he calls himself the ‘God of Love.’ His family attempts to change that outlook, which is funny, but the results end up shocking both the family and the audience. Coming from a background of having their wills automatically being made manifest, the family truly are unprepared for what befalls them.”

Herold is also excited to bring this 1968 play to modern audiences. When referring to the design process Herold states, “We used a 1968 reference point for the play, but I didn’t want it to be anachronistic. It has a classic beauty to it, it is timeless.”

When asked about his experience working with the students on this production Herold states, “Having the opportunity to work with these students, who I also teach in class, has been fantastic. They bring their own experience to each character, which helps to bring the play into the Berkeley reality without violating the text. Barnes never says how old the characters are, for instance, so age doesn’t become a problem - we are able to move into another realm of interaction. And the Berkeley students really bring an innate talent to the piece.”

Ultimately, the work will leave the audience meditating on the huge complicated nature of the human experience and the ingredients of monumental human endeavours. “I think the play is about love, hope, class, nightmares, and monsters,” Herold says. “It’s a monumental play, and a world class ride.”

**TICKETS AND INFORMATION**

**THE RULING CLASS**
By Peter Barnes
Directed by Christopher Herold
The Ruling Class opens on Friday, March 8 at Zellerbach Playhouse and runs through Sunday, March 17.

Presented Fridays & Saturdays at 8pm, Sundays at 2pm
Friday, March 8 - 8pm
Saturday, March 9 - 8pm
Sunday, March 10 - 2pm (a post-show discussion will follow the matinee)
Friday, March 15 - 8pm
Saturday, March 16 - 8pm
Sunday, March 17 - 2pm

Tickets $15.00 General Admission, $10.00 Students, Seniors, UC Faculty/Staff
Group rates for groups of 10 or more: $10 - general admission, $7 - students/seniors.

Simply order ten or more tickets online during a single transaction for a single performance and the discount will be given at check out.

Tickets can be purchased online at tdps.berkeley.edu or in person at the Zellerbach Playhouse box office on Fridays from 1pm to 4pm. The box office also opens one hour prior to each performance for will call and ticket sales for that day’s performance.

For directions to the Zellerbach Playhouse and more information about the Department, please visit our website: http://tdps.berkeley.edu (http://tdps.berkeley.edu)