Photo: [http://bit.ly/1fu8SYt](http://bit.ly/1fu8SYt)
Caption: Tiffanie Mack and Cole Winslow star in *Intimate Apparel*.
Credit: Sacramento State/Craig Koscho

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**Corsets tie into *Intimate Apparel* symbolism**


Lynn Nottage's play won the 2004 New York Drama Critics Circle Award and is being staged by Professor Melinda Wilson Ramey, chair of the Department of Theatre and Dance ([www.csus.edu/dram](http://www.csus.edu/dram)). Performances are at 8 p.m. March 13-15 and 21-22; 2 p.m. March 16 and 23; and 6:30 p.m. March 19-20.

Nottage has described *Intimate Apparel* as “a meditation on loneliness,” but Wilson Ramey says it is not a tear-jerker. “It has light moments,” she says.

The play has six characters, among whom are friends, clients and potential love interests. All six are, in essence, searching for the same things.

“They all want to be touched,” Wilson Ramey says. “They all want to be held. They want to have someone, to have something.”

In her efforts, Esther begins corresponding with a Panama Canal worker from Barbados named George. But he eventually betrays her after they meet face to face.

Meanwhile, Esther has become smitten with Mr. Marks, an Eastern European Jewish immigrant who runs the garment shop where Esther buys her material. The two obviously have feelings for each other, but are kept separate by their cultures and customs.

And all the while, Esther dreams of opening her own beauty parlor for African American women.

One of the most demanding aspects for the actors is performing while wearing real early-1900s corsets during the entire production; they mirror the bindings placed on the lives of the characters. “They’re learning to breathe in the corsets, walk in them, sit
in them,” Wilson Ramey says. “The idea of being restricted makes its way into the different characters.”

Esther is portrayed by junior Tiffanie Mack, who testifies to the restrictions imposed upon the actors by the corsets. “It was torturous,” she says of her first experience getting into one, noting how the ties in the back are tightened to shrink the waist.

“You get used to it; then they see you’re too comfortable, and they make it tighter,” Mack adds. “They now cinch my waist in three inches since the start.”

Kennedy Smith plays George, Esther’s love interest. “He comes off as a sweet gentleman, just trying to find love, but on the inside, there’s a different layer,” Smith says. “He’s kind of greedy. He wants a life for himself, so he’s going to do whatever he can to prosper.”

“It’s a very sensual play,” teases Wilson Ramey without wanting to give away too much. “There are some tantalizing moments.”

And Smith notes that a modern audience will find a lot to identify with. “Just like Esther, you think you’re in love, and there happens to be someone else who’s not quite as in love with you as you think they are. It’s very relatable.”

Tickets for 6:30 p.m. performances are $8 general, $5 for children. For all other performances, admission is $12 general, $10 for seniors and students, and $8 for children. Tickets are available at the University Ticket Office, (916) 278-4323 or www.csus.edu/hornettickets.

The Department of Theatre and Dance is part of the arts experience at Sac State. For more information about its programs, visit the website or call (916) 278-6069. For media assistance, call Sacramento State’s Public Affairs office at (916) 278-6156.

– Craig Koscho

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