Opulent *The Heiress* comes to Sac State


Sacramento State’s Department of Theatre and Dance will present a timeless, Tony Award-winning story of emotional struggle and personal empowerment that’s as relevant now as the era in which it is set.

Catherine Sloper, the title character in *The Heiress*, a 1947 drama by Ruth and Augustus Goetz, is the daughter of successful, rich Dr. Austin Sloper in 1850s New York. Shy and plain, Catherine is romanced by a handsome and charming but poor suitor, Morris Townsend. The relationship is vehemently opposed by Catherine’s stern father, who threatens to disinherit his daughter. How Catherine weathers a storm of emotions – and evolves from the experience – forms the center of the story.

Directed by Professor Michelle Felten, *The Heiress* will be staged at 8 p.m. Oct. 22-25, Oct. 31 and Nov. 1; 2 p.m. Oct. 26 and Nov. 2; and 6:30 p.m. Oct. 29 and 30, on the main stage of the University Theatre.

Catherine is played by Elizabeth Ferreira, a theater and English major. “She’s introverted and shy in social situations,” Ferreira says of her role, “but underneath it all, she is very nice and a very genuine human being.”

Theater Arts major Brent Bianchini portrays Morris. Bianchini describes his character as a fun-loving guy who likes to make good impressions on people. “The only catch to me is, I’m not really the guy you want to take home to dad,” he says. “I don’t want to work to be successful.”

For the part of the father, Austin Sloper, Felten brought in Sean Morneau, a veteran of Sacramento theater who has worked with Ed Claudio, former artist in residence at the B Street Theatre.

“Dr. Sloper is confronted by changes in attitudes and a change in the world,” Morneau says. “He lives in loss, and a lot of the play turns on how he resides in that loss.”

Because it’s a period piece with opulent sets, the actors are challenged by the stage business they have to perform with items such as hats, canes, cigars, ladies’ fans and pocket watches.

For Morneau, those items are key to getting into character. “When you research that time period – the social mores, the class system, the change going on in New York City – and then slip into the costumes, it’s easy to slip into that kind of mindset.”

And there’s the language.
“Because this is a style known as Classic Realism, the actors must work on speaking English correctly and eloquently without slurs, slang or modern regional flavor,” Felten says.

The actors relish the challenge.

“For every line, there are many different things you’re trying to portray,” Bianchini says. “Every line in this play is valuable.”

“There is so much said with so little,” adds Ferreira. “It’s amazing to get to play with that.”

Felten observes that even though it’s a period piece, it resonates with modern audiences in its portrayal of a woman struggling to be accepted by her father and by men in general. “That desire to be accepted and loved, especially by parental figures, I see that every day,” Felten says.

“If you want to be taken on an emotional roller-coaster ride, then come see this show,” Ferreira says. “You never can quite tell exactly what direction we’re going.”

And Felten likes to quote the New York Post review of the 1995 revival: “‘Romance, money, lies, manipulation … this play has it all!’ It’s a very exciting piece of theater.”

Tickets for the 6:30 p.m. performances are $8 general, $5 for children ages 2-12. For all other performances, tickets are $12 general, $10 for students and seniors, $8 for children. Tickets are available at the University Ticket office, (916) 278-4323 or www.csus.edu/hornettickets.

For more information on the play or the Theatre and Dance Department, visit www.csus.edu/dram or call (916) 278-6368. For media assistance, contact the University’s Public Affairs office at (916) 278-6156. – Craig Koscho