‘Women of Juarez’ explores border disappearances

More than a thousand women have disappeared or been murdered in Ciudad Juarez in a decade and a half, leaving behind grieving families and accusations of police corruption, and creating an atmosphere of fear in the Mexican border town.

Sacramento State’s production of Ruben Amavizca-Murua’s The Women of Juarez runs 8 p.m. March 14-16 and 22-23; 2 p.m. March 17 and 24; and 6:30 p.m. March 20-21 at the University’s Playwrights’ Theatre.

Professor Emeritus Manuel Pickett returns to the campus to direct the production, which tells the story of one family’s struggle to find their missing daughter and get justice. In focusing on the one family, the play reveals the larger true story of the many acts of violence committed against women in the town just across the border from El Paso, Texas.

“Juarez is called the most dangerous city in the world,” says Pickett. “For the past 15 years there have been close to 1,400 women murdered, raped and missing in Juarez.”

Theories abound as to the perpetrators, whether it’s a serial killer, the work of drug cartels or those who deal in human trafficking. Whatever the motive, Pickett says the police have not followed up on the cases because of corruption.

Pickett has made some changes, dialing back on some of the play’s intensity in order to motivate the audience. “I don’t want the audience to feel alienated from the issue,” he says. “I want them to feel like they need to do something about it.”

He also has added three new characters – three women to represent Latin America, Africa and the United States to illustrate that violence against women is a worldwide issue.

Senior Javier Gonzalez and freshman Shelby Saumier portray the play’s narrators.

“When we first come on we’re trying to promote the city,” Gonzalez says. “But as time progresses in the play, we look to inform the audience and help the family look for their daughter.”
Saumier says the play can be emotionally exhausting to act in but it’s worth it. “Every actor needs to be completely into their character and present every moment,” she says, “because if we don’t believe it ourselves, and we’re not living it every moment on the stage, then the audience isn’t going to feel the entire impact.”

Tickets for the 6:30 p.m. performances are $8 general admission and $5 for children. All other performances are $12 general, $10 for students and seniors, and $8 for children. The play contains adult situations that might not be appropriate for young children.

For more information, visit www.csus.edu/dram or call (916) 278-6368. For media assistance, call Sacramento State’s Public Affairs office at (916) 278-6156.

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