“Iago Syndrome” Looks at Uxoricide

BY BRIANNA HEADSTEN
A & E Editor

Cal State East Bay’s new fall theater offering, “Iago Syndrome,” explores the lives of four couples from completely different backgrounds as they struggle to fit in and experience some kind of normalcy at the Fort Bragg, North Carolina military base.

Over the course of the play, however, we see the lasting effects of war on the psyche of not only the men who experienced it, but also their wives. The unwavering demands of their lives, bodies and minds is utterly fascinating, yet unimaginable for anyone outside of it.

Both written and directed by Assistant Professor Marc Jacobs, “The Iago Syndrome” is a labor of love. “I had never directed a play before. I was concerned about how it would be accepted,” said Jacobs.

Jacobs’ original idea for the play was quite different than the finished result. He began initially focusing on the relationship of Iago and Emilia in Shakespeare’s “Othello.” However, he ultimately decided that the parallels between the Fort Bragg murders as well as the domestic violence that occurs in a military base in “Othello” would work well together in one play.

“The Iago Syndrome” deals with very heavy subject matter in a respectful yet engaging way. With the recent violent shootings at Fort Hood, the thematic elements of this play are more relevant now than ever before.

The cast does an excellent job of showing a full range of emotions, especially the anger, confusion and frustration that so many military families experience in war. Jacobs was especially proud of the actors who mimicked the actors’ words and movements physically manifested what the characters were unable to emotionally express.

Carlos Martinez and Rebecca Bujko play Sergeant Bill and Jennifer Wright. This particular couple brings the most life to the play by showing every day events like arguments as well as the elation that comes from a marriage engagement and the birth of a child. These factors make one of the final scenes a graphic depiction of a murder and suicide, all the more disturbing.

Sal Vaaldo and Melanie Sutrathada portray Sergeant First Class Bert Nieves and Terry Nieves. Nieves is in a particularly touching scene show audience members what the final moments before being deployed off to war could be like. Sergeant Nieves struggles to impose himself in the familiar setting of his wife and home before being deployed.

The cast is led by Joseph Mason, and Desdemona, portrayed by Roay Harreal, acts as not only tour guide but also catalysts to some of the most climactic events throughout the play.

The play focuses primarily on the strength of the story as well as the actors’ abilities. It implements a minimal set that fully utilizes the space provided by the audience and stage. The music used also helps set the tone with drum rolls, gunshots and huge riff breaking up the scenes, yet keeping in theme with the subject matter.

Jacobs purposely chose not to put a message into the play, saying, “there has always been war, and men who kill, who see their friends die. The potential to come back scarred is huge. I didn’t want to pretend like I had a solution. As long as there is war, there isn’t a solution. I just wanted this play to be a matter of throwing light on the situation.”

Then there’s Stan, engaged to Alicia, who is a woman who is very far from perfect, yet valuable. Jacobs believes she could be that character’s “Cape Cod.”

Sixties hits play throughout the production. This troupe of actors worked extremely well together, smoothly moving between scenes in rapid succession. Although there are very few props, they are used skillfully and add to the emotional impact of the play.

For more information contact the theater department at 510-885-3118.

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Outlaw DJs Battle British Authorities in “Pirate Radio”

BY JAI SABAI
Staff Writer

W hen the British government tries to stop offshore radio stations from broadcasting, pop and rock music, eight dedicated disc jockeys stand up for music, and go back in “Pirate Radio.”

The highly entertaining film, directed by Richard Curtis (director of “Love Actually”), takes place with just this premise, as well as vibrant colors and moving background. The music used also helps set the tone with drum rolls, gunshots and huge riffs breaking up the scenes, yet keeping in theme with the subject matter.

“Othello” is known for its sometimes offbeat, but always hard-hitting productions. This winter’s premiere show, “Large Animal Games” definitely meets up to living up to its reputation.

The play, which runs 75 minutes, is a world premiere play written by Steve Yockey. Its seven players initially appear to be acting in order to elicit individual narratives but which combine themselves as the play progresses.

“Large Animal Games” is a fun, comedic play set in an English country house in the 1960s, when the government was trying to stop pirate radio stations at risk of being made illegal, but the real entertainment comes from the bond the characters develop and their adventures on board.

The chemistry between the cast is undeniable and makes the movie easy and enjoyable to watch. The film delivers a perfect mix of hilarious moments with bits of drama included, creating nonstop entertainment.

In this amusing film, everything from a young man’s first sexual experiences to an extreme game of “chicken” is made into a rewarding comedic experience. Philip Seymour Hoffman, who plays the only American DJ on board, gave a stellar performance as a truly devoted lover of rock and roll. Bill Nighy also had one of the more memorable performances as the ship’s loyal captain.

Series hits play throughout the movie and make you feel as though you’ve been transported back in time, and the upbeat mood of the film resonates the feeling that freedom and expression are worth fighting for.