UHMC

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“very still & hard to see” Presents Eerie Scenes of Corrupted Love
Obake Will Take Up Residence at Earl Ernst Lab in March

The University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa’s Department of Theatre and Dance is proud to present Steve Yockey’s play “very still & hard to see” in the Earle Ernst Lab Theatre. Performances will take place Mar. 12, 13, 14, and 15, at 8 p.m., and Mar. 16 at 2 p.m.; a free post-show chat will be held with the cast and director on Fri., Mar. 14. The production marks the show’s Hawaiian premiere, and will serve as director Alex Munro’s MFA thesis presentation.

Munro’s work as a director extends beyond Kennedy Theatre. In addition to pursuing his MFA at the Department of Theatre and Dance, and assistant directing at theatres around town, Munro also coordinates the HealthCAST program at UHM’s School of Nursing. Through that program, he directs actors to portray patients with a wide variety of physical and mental health issues; nursing students interact with these actors in improvised encounters, in order to improve their patient interaction and their ability to deal with unexpected circumstances.

“very still & hard to see” will actually be the second time Munro has directed Steve Yockey’s work at Kennedy Theatre; last Spring, he directed a collection of Yockey’s one-acts.

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under the banner “A Lovely Violent Ghost Haiku with Gun (and other plays).” Munro says that he is drawn to the “magical realism” in Yockey’s writing: “These very strange, very quirky things are happening on-stage; but many of the characters respond to them as if they were completely normal.” Walking the line between realism and fantasy is a challenge that the director enjoys.

Yockey goes from strange and quirky to eerie and creepy in “very still & hard to see,” which features stories of everyday people whose lives are upended by stays in a cursed hotel. As the play begins, architect Buck Mason (played by Matthew Kelty, who also worked with Munro on “Ghost Haiku”) is drawn into a deal with an obake (played by Melissa Schmitz, one of the Angry Women in UHM’s Fall production of “Big Love”), a malevolent spirit who dwells beneath the hotel he’s building. Munro was excited that the spirit who sets the play in motion is an obake; although the entity is originally found in Japanese folklore, it is also well-known in local Hawaiian traditions — several of the cast members, in fact, have gotten spooked during rehearsals while sharing local ghost and obake stories.

Once the hotel is finished, it becomes a “playground” for spirits, minor Japanese deities, and some truly terrible people. An ensemble cast portrays the victims of the obake’s influence; cast members – all veterans of the UHM stages in plays such as “Big Love,” “The Wild Party,” “Handler,” and “Danny and the Deep Blue Sea” – play multiple roles in a series of loosely related chapters. Although the director and cast imagine the hotel to be in Hawai‘i, the playwright deliberately leaves the time and place of each scene vague. This allows the actors to create their own stories for the characters, and draw their own connections among the roles they play. It also allows Munro to highlight what he considers the running motif of the show: corrupted love. “In each of these scenes,” he says, “there is a relationship that could have been
beautiful, or maybe once was beautiful. When something beautiful goes bad, it almost feels like death, or like you’re cursed. I think that’s what Steve Yockey is talking about in the play, and it’s something I want to bring out in our version.”

Tickets for “very still & hard to see” are available online at etickethawaii.com, by phone at 808.944.2697, at participating outlets, and at the Kennedy Theatre box office; the box office is open from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Monday through Friday, with extended hours on performance dates. Prices are $18 for general admission; $16 for seniors / military / UH faculty and staff; $13 for students and UHAA members; and $5 for UHM students with a validated Spring 2014 UHM photo ID. Ticket prices include all service fees. For further information, please visit hawaii.edu/kennedy, or call the theatre at 808.956.7655. For disability access, please call the theatre.

EVENT: “very still & hard to see”
PRESENTED BY: UHM Department of Theatre and Dance
WHEN: Mar. 12, 13, 14*, and 15 at 8 p.m.
        Mar. 16 at 2 p.m.
* Free post-show chat with the director and cast
WHERE: UHM’s Earle Ernst Lab Theatre
        1770 East-West Road, Honolulu
TICKET PRICES: $18 general admission
                $16 seniors / military / UH Faculty and staff
                $13 students / UHAA members
                $5 UHM students with validated Fall 2013 UHM photo ID
Ticket prices include all service fees.
PURCHASE INFO: Tickets are available online at etickethawaii.com, by phone at 808.944.2697, at participating outlets, and at the Kennedy Theatre box office; the box office is open from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Monday through Friday, with extended hours on performance dates.
NOTE: Due to some sexual and violent themes, as well as strong language, the play is recommended for mature audiences over the age of 15.

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