Title
The Spectrum of Multiculturalism in Theatrical Design: New Plays in UCSD

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The Spectrum of Multiculturalism in Theatrical Design:
New Plays in UCSD

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Master of Fine Arts

in

Theatre and Dance (Design)

by

Yi-Chien Lee

Committee in charge:

Professor Robert Brill, Chair
Professor Judith Dolan
Professor Victoria Petrovich

2019
The Thesis of Yi-Chien Lee is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

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Chair

University of California San Diego

2019
DEDICATION

To my parents

To the Voyagers

To my mentor, Professor Robert Brill
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Signature Page ................................................................................................................ iii
Dedication ....................................................................................................................... iv
Table of Contents ........................................................................................................... v
List of Figures ............................................................................................................... vi
Acknowledgements ...................................................................................................... vii
Abstract of the Thesis ................................................................................................. viii
I. Intercultural Theatre vs. Multicultural Theatre ........................................................ 1
II. Target Audience: the Ethnical diversity in UCSD .................................................. 2
III. UCSD New Play 2019: Everybody Black ................................................................. 3
IV. Works Cited .............................................................................................................. 7
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 - UCSD Everybody Black Poster..................................................................................... 1
Figure 2 - UCSD undergrad enrollment - Ethnicity................................................................. 2
Figure 3 - Everybody Black_Scene 1 Photo............................................................................... 3
Figure 4 - Everybody Black_Scene 12 Photo.......................................................................... 4
Figure 5 - Everybody Black_Scene 13 Photo.......................................................................... 5
Figure 6 - Everybody Black_Scene 16 Photo.......................................................................... 6
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Thank you all. I can’t accomplish any of those productions without you.
ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

The Spectrum of Multiculturalism in Theatrical Design: New Plays in UCSD

by

Yi-Chien Lee

Master of Fine Arts in Theatre and Dance (Design)

University of California San Diego, 2019

Professor Robert Brill, Chair

The multiculturalism in American theatre thrives on the diversity and unified multicultural society. As an Asian designer from Taiwan, I am deeply influenced by the concept of multiculturalism, which evokes my interests in how the processes of colonization and nationalism experience have gradually developed into a sense of cultural identity, and how emerging artist can present the cultural collage through visual elements in theatrical storytelling. I will focus on the concept by developing my design experience in the new play productions-EVERYBODY BLACK in UCSD Theatre and Dance department.
I. Intercultural Theatre vs. Multicultural Theatre

When we talk about cultural diversity in Theatre, especially in American Theatre, I think the current vibe is more like Multicultural than Intercultural. As an artist who facing globalization every second in daily life, Interculturalism becomes a term we barely use. How do we acknowledge the obstacle in the current multicultural theatre nowadays?

Multiculturalism tries to break the cultural boundaries among geographical limitation and challenge cultural hegemony through representing different style, technique, Ideology, and language. However, when it comes to cultural interaction and influence, there is always a majority and minority, which means when the artist's intention is to make the work deterritorialize, we still need to carefully consider that the audiences' self-identity as well. While all the elements on the stage are displaced and are redefining the culture barrier, we can still easily see the director’s perspective of the relationship between multi-culture, whether we are crossing culture to deliver a new form, or falling into the dilemma of creating just an unpurified culture collage due to the lack of humanism and misunderstandings of the other culture.

Figure 1 - UCSD Everybody Black Poster
II. Target Audience: the Ethnical diversity in UCSD

According to UCSD institutional Research-Student Profile 2017-2018, approximately 59% of undergraduates are students of color, and among them, 2.5% are African American students. Therefore, during the early production process on the new play production EVERYBODY BLACK, the production team understand that we would be facing a major white audience coming to see a show about Black History.

In our first production meeting, director Steven Broadnax said that some of the African American plays sometimes become anti-white, although it might not be the production team’s initial intention. I think it is a ambitious goal to start a conversation between different race, then try to question ourselves how we can also see our own reflection when we watch other people’s history.

![Ethnicity Pie Chart]

**Figure 2 - UCSD undergrad enrollment - Ethnicity**
II. UCSD New Play 2019: Everybody Black

EVERYBODY BLACK is a new play Production in UCSD Theatre and Dance Department. It opened on March 8th, 2019, and closed on March 16th, 2019.

*Playwright – Dave Harris*

*Director – Steve H. Broadnax III*

*Scenic Designer – Yi-Chien Lee*

*Costume Designer – Dominique Fawn Hill*

*Lighting Designer – Mextly Almeda*

*Sound Designer – Stephen Jensen*

*Ensemble – Amara Granderson, Assata Hefner, India Gurley, Janet Fiki, Anthony Adu, Corneilus Franklin, Michael Rishawn, Xavier Clark*

Figure 3 - Everybody Black_Scene 1 Photo
EVERYBODY BLACK is a comedy that examines Race, Capitalism, Identify, History and Black Trauma through the imagination of a mad historian. When UCSD theatre and Dance department decide to produce this new play, it immediate create a platform for Multicultural Theatre. It also shows the vertical interculturalism—- how can the African American Culture across different time period be presented in front of the audience?

There are 16 scenes in this play. We started with research on African American Museum Monument. I want to create a huge wall that is like a monument at the square, inspired the initial stage direction—The canon, or the mind of one person who has the power to rewrite history. All the 30 characters will come from the doors on the wall and start to introduce their journey. And through out the time, the huge installation is always standing behind the stories, witnessing the
country sifting through the painful past to identify ourselves and make sense of today's racial, political, and economic climate this play is a well needed exploration.

“How do we chronicle the pain of yesterday in a way that makes sense today?”

—Dave Harris.

I think the playwright Dave Harris doesn’t aim to critique the white audience’s perspective, but more like discovering the African American’s contemporary situation through their own reflection. It is all about the conversations between the minority, then ends with their own family, which dramatically draws out a ambitious scope of African American History in a more personal way.
In terms of projection design, we looked through lots of research on African American artist, such as Varnette Honeywood, Ellis Wilson and Thomas Mickalene. I created the image blast video based on the color tone of their works, but also need to be aware that it doesn’t become just cutting and pasting some flat symbols.

In multiculturalism we have to be certain that many different cultures were represented, instead of using stereotype to entertain the audience. Eventually, we need keep trying to get a mixture of topics that had not been so outstanding in the previous multicultural writings. That is the eternal goal for the multicultural theatre.

Figure 6 - Everybody Black_Scene 16 Photo
IV. Works Cited

1. Figures 1.1 - UCSD Everybody Black Poster
   Designed by Sam Keamy-Minor

2. Figures 2.1 - UCSD undergrad enrollment - Ethnicity
   UCSD institutional Research-Student Profile 2017-2018