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LOCAL HISTORY, VIVID THEATER COMBINE IN ‘FEFU AND HER FRIENDS’

Montclair Women’s Club and Montclair State collaborate on unique performance event

MONTCLAIR, NJ – Students from the B.A. Theatre Studies Program at Montclair State University will partner with the Montclair Women’s Club for an exciting theatrical event in presenting “Fefu And Her Friends,” an experimental drama by pioneering Cuban-American playwright Maria Irene Fornes.

The production will be performed April 28 and 30 using the Montclair Women’s Club as its backdrop, with the play’s action unfolding at various locations throughout the Union Street clubhouse.

First produced in 1977, “Fefu And Her Friends” follows a close-knit band of 1930s women – well-bred and well-heeled but hardly well-behaved – as they spend an eventful day at Fefu’s country house. The women work through a grab bag of emotions and topics like self-doubt, jealousy, husbands, lovers, and gardening, while the play’s unusual structure shifts the action, and the audience, among different locations in Fefu’s home.

The current production is the culmination of a semester’s work by students in MSU’s Site-Specific Performance course, in which “students create performances outside of traditional theater spaces through the integration of interdisciplinary research and theatrical practice,” said Jessica Brater, assistant professor of theatre and dance. “This course aligns with our emphasis on the relationship between what happens on stage and what happens in the world around us.”

To prepare their production, students worked with the Montclair Women’s Club to research the club’s history and learn more about the women who belonged to it, especially during the 1930s, the era in which Fornes’ play takes place. In addition to two days of research at the Montclair Women’s Club, the students also explored sources at the nearby Montclair History Center.

“One of the most exciting aspects of this class is the opportunity to collaborate with a community partner - in this case the Montclair Women's Club,” said Brater. “I love getting the students off-campus and into the townships around us. I also love it when students make embodied connections between archival research and theatrical production.”

“In sharing our club’s history with the students, this project became an exciting opportunity for us as well,” said Montclair Women’s Club archivist Liz Lynch. “Their enthusiasm and fresh perspectives were fascinating, and we’re excited to see the result of all their hard work.”

“Fefu And Her Friends” will be performed at 3 p.m. Sunday, April 28 and 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, April 30 at the Montclair Women’s Club, 82 Union Street, Montclair. Suggested donation: \$10.

About the Montclair Women’s Club:

The Montclair Women’s Club (MWC) began in 1915, when a group of 23 women formed an organization “to develop individual efficiency, stimulate interest in current affairs, and encourage co-operation in all lines of progress.” The MWC, which opened its headquarters at 82 Union Street in 1929, is a member of the [New Jersey Federation of Women’s Clubs](#) (NJSFWC), part of the [General Federation of Women's Clubs](#) (GFWC).

The club offers programs free to members every other Friday afternoon, as well as monthly evening and weekend programs. Our mission is to engage actively in the community with a focus on educational, artistic, environmental, and charitable endeavors, while preserving our historic institution and clubhouse on Union Street. For a full list of programs, to become a member, or for information on renting club facilities, visit www.montclairwomensclub.org.

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