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## **Actors Make the Best of Tight Spaces**

### **Interim Theatre Becomes the Stage for New Techniques in Drama Department Productions**

Theater students are cultivating their talents of adaptation in the accurately named Interim Theatre during the renovation of the Garvin Theatre complex on West Campus.

This spring, “there will be 90 opportunities for students to participate in theater projects,” said Rick Mokler, an associate professor at the Theatre Arts department. “It’s because we’re concentrating on smaller projects.”

During the fall, when the department was still working out of the Garvin and Jurkowitz theatres, they could offer 40 opportunities for students, Mokler said. This includes actors, stage managers and other supporting positions.

The provisory stage is called the Interim Theatre. “It’s more like an arena theater,” said Sandarbh Tripathi, one of the students helping to run the play *Moonchildren*, directed by Katie Laris.

“It’s going to be really fun for the audience to watch because the actors will be right in front of them,” Tripathi said.

The temporary facilities affect the department’s budget profoundly. “Money we’ve generated at the box office at the Garvin Theatre was a significant part of our budget,” Mokler said.

Laris believes “Moonchildren” is a good play for this kind of theater. “The play is supposed to be in a pretty shabby house,” she said. “The students (in the play) were supposed to redo the kitchen. They haven’t done that.”

Laris also pointed out how theatergoers normally are unaware of set changes and backstage procedure.

“We think the technical stuff just happens,” Laris said. “When the audience comes in, they’re going to be aware of our running of the show.”

The Interim Theatre makes the performers raise their standards, Laris said. Because the audience is so close to the actors, they really have to stay focused. She said it was particularly important to get the props and other details right.

Laris believes the audience will be enriched, as well.

“We’re part of this world but also part of this theater,” she said.

Theatre Arts department chair Tom Garey described the Interim Theatre “as a chance to explore some stuff we haven’t done before.”

The department is planning to stay in the provisory building until the construction of the Garvin Theatre is completed in Summer 2010.

“We’ll be doing smaller pieces,” Garey said. “We’re focusing on different kinds of theater experience.” Garey said he thinks this is a good time to take a look at the new direction of their program.

The SBCC Theatre Group is the longest-running theater in Santa Barbara. It normally produces four shows each year.

“At the time the Garvin Theatre was built, it was a state-of-the-art facility,” Garey said, adding that this was 32 years ago.

The renovation will cost \$17.5 million, Garey said. The state has approved \$12.4 million, and the rest will be financed through Measure V, a special property tax voted on by the citizens. The tax will raise the costs for homeowners by \$36-40 every year for a period 30 years, he said.

Measure V allows the department not only to improve the accessibility for disabled students and audience members but also to bring the latest technology to the department. After the renovation, “we will resume doing the kind of shows we have been doing,” Garey said. “We will also do more kind of avant-garde.”

He thinks 10 to 12 percent of 300 to 400 students enrolled in the department will work in the field after their education.

“The rest will be theatergoers,” Garey said. “The best course a student could take to make them ready for the real world is a theater course. They learn all survival skills.”