

COMMITTEE ON FACULTY RESEARCH LECTURE
Annual Report, 2009-10

To the Academic Senate, Santa Cruz Division:

The Senate Committee on the Faculty Research Lecturer (CFRL) enthusiastically nominates Professor Paul Whitworth of the Theater Arts Department to deliver the 2010-11 lecture.

Paul Whitworth is an artist and scholar of uncommon distinction and range in the world of theater. During his 17 years as a Professor (and 26 years of affiliation) with the University, he has produced a corpus of work—including translating, acting, directing, and serving as a highly visible Artistic Director—that has earned him national and international recognition.

Whitworth graduated with an MA in Hispanic Studies from the University of St. Andrews in 1973, with First Class Honors in Spanish, also studying Portuguese language and literature and the Amerindian languages Quechua and Guarani. He went on to study 17th-century Spanish Drama as a Carnegie Scholar at Oxford University, with an emphasis in the playwright Tirso de Molina. He performed with the Royal Shakespeare Company from 1976-82. After teaching a number of literature courses in verse and drama at Oxford, Oberlin College, and other institutions, Whitworth came to Santa Cruz.

Whitworth's combination of scholarly acumen and professional acting skills has led him to craft accurate and highly actable translations of important but unjustly unknown works of dramatic literature. In particular, Whitworth has worked to bring Spanish Golden Age drama into the mainstream of English theatrical discourse. His 1992 translation of Tirso de Molina's 17th century masterpiece *The Rape of Tamar* premiered in 1992 in London, winning notice in the *London Independent* as one of the year's "Five Best Plays." It premiered in the US in 1994 with Shakespeare Santa Cruz, garnering 6 Drama-Logue Awards for Outstanding Achievement in Theater, including one for Whitworth's direction. In 1999, it was published by Oberon Press (London), with an introduction by Whitworth, presenting the play to the English-speaking world for the first time. Whitworth has also translated de Molina's *Don Juan (El Burlador de Sevilla)* and is currently at work on translating his *El Vergonzoso en Palacio*.

Whitworth has performed in some of the most respected theaters in England and the United States, including the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford-upon-Avon—one of the most influential and celebrated theater ensembles in the world—the American Conservatory Theater, Seattle Repertory Theater, the Magic Theater, Syracuse Stage, and Asolo Repertory Theater. His performances have drawn national praise. He has been named among the "Ten Best Actors of the Bay Area"; been nominated for the Robby Award for "Best Actor"; won the Santa Cruz County Artist of the Year award for his performance in *The Hollow Crown*; won two Drama-

Logue Awards; and won the Dean Goodman Choice Award for his performance in *Blue/Orange* at Berkeley's Aurora Theater.

Whitworth's honors and notices testify to the way his crafting of a role combines an exceptional training in the actor's instrument (voice, diction, physical presence), a profound intellectual engagement with his characters and texts, and an astute choice of roles. He has played some of the great roles in Western theater, including Shakespeare's Hamlet, Iago, Richard III, Prince Hal, and Macbeth; Molière's Tartuffe; and modern classics such as Galileo in Brecht's *Galileo*, Professor Henry Higgins in Shaw's *Pygmalion*, George in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, and Vladimir in *Waiting for Godot*. His eye for new work and experimental plays is also unerring. From Hamm in Beckett's *Endgame* to his masterful work in a new play by Conor McPherson, *Shining City*, Whitworth's choice of roles reflects his flair for a complex and well-crafted part that speaks to contemporary audiences.

Whitworth's directing work is equally well chosen and has garnered him numerous awards. He has directed two plays by Edna O'Brien at San Francisco's cutting-edge Magic Theater: in 2005, *Family Butchers*, a U.S. premiere, and, in 2003, his award-winning direction of *Triptych*, a world premiere. At Shakespeare Santa Cruz, Whitworth's direction of new and classical works has been characterized by a sharp eye for humor, pitch-perfect pacing, exceptional acting, and firm cultural and intellectual grounding.

Whitworth's Artistic Directorship of Shakespeare Santa Cruz, spanning 1995-2007, was widely regarded as a monumental success in artistic and scholarly ambitions and nurturing a strong relationship between campus arts and the Bay Area community. Having first appeared as an actor with SSC in 1984, Whitworth has a 24-year career with the company. Named "one of the ten most influential Shakespeare Festivals in the country" by *USA Today*, Shakespeare Santa Cruz gained a reputation under Whitworth's direction as a festival unafraid of tackling lesser-known works by Shakespeare and other classic playwrights. Shakespeare Santa Cruz's artistic vision and high production standards have attracted a diverse and talented company of professional actors, directors, and designers from across the country. The company reflects well the kind of creative scholarly engagement that Whitworth brings to his projects: unusually in the US, the festival mounted repertory seasons of thematically linked plays. Testaments to the value of the thought behind the seasons and the excellence of the work under Whitworth's tenure as Artistic Director come repeatedly in the form of substantial grants from institutions such as the National Endowment for the Arts, the Packard Foundation, and the Hewlett Foundation.

Honors awarded to Whitworth for his Artistic Directorship and production include the 1997 Santa Cruz County "Artist of the Year" Award, with Congressional Recognition from Sam Farr; Drama-Logue Awards for Outstanding Achievement in Theatre for several of his seasons; and a San Francisco Chronicle "Top Ten of 2004" for something he excels in: "Best Rediscovery," for the contemporary world to a forgotten Jacobean classic, *The Tamer Tamed*.

Whitworth teaches, performs, and directs drama informed by a rare blend of scholarly erudition and embodied knowledge. He is attentive to the larger contexts of Western drama with its historical, literary, and artistic heritage. This makes his discussions of how he creates his roles exceptionally rewarding. After having played Hamlet twice, Whitworth crafted a piece that toured the nation discussing the burden and joys of playing that role, embedded in a thorough knowledge of its literary and production history. Now, having retired from his position as Artistic Director of Shakespeare Santa Cruz, it seems that his talents as a gifted performer known for his rigorous selectivity, artistic openness, and sureness of taste are in more demand than ever. A recent creation of the role of Galileo in Brecht's *Galileo* at the Asolo Theater attests to this. Internationally esteemed theater critic Terry Teachout asserts in the *Wall Street Journal*, that Whitworth's research, immersion in the role, and critical engagement with the complex play and the world it reflected make him the well-deserved star of an outstanding and timely show.

Therefore, in recognition of Professor Whitworth's extraordinary artistic and scholarly accomplishments, the Committee recommends that he be invited to deliver the 2010-11 Faculty Research lecture to the UCSC and Santa Cruz communities.

Respectfully submitted,

COMMITTEE ON FACULTY RESEARCH LECTURE

Wlad Godzich
Kimberly Jannarone
John Musacchio
Mary Silver
Barbara Rogoff, Chair

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