

UNIVERSITY *of* PUGET SOUND

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Canadian Playwright Michael Springate to Perform at Puget Sound

TACOMA, Wash. – In January, University of Puget Sound welcomes Canadian playwright Michael Springate to perform *kut*, his powerful new work about a Vietnam veteran journeying to Korea to visit the family of a man with whom he served, in an attempt to reconcile the splintered pieces of his identity. This multimedia, interdisciplinary piece incorporates spoken word, dance, music, and video to challenge assumptions, ask important questions, and tell a powerful story.

Events during Springate's visit to campus include a presentation (9:30 a.m., Jones Hall 203) and lecture (4 p.m., Norton Clapp Theatre) on Thursday, Jan. 18, and three performances onstage at Norton Clapp Theatre. Performances will be held Friday, Jan. 19, at 7:30 p.m., and Saturday, Jan. 20, at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. All events are open to the public. Tickets for the performances are \$5. Seating is very limited; advance purchase is encouraged.

In *kut*, Springate becomes four distinct characters for the audience: an American veteran who has recently converted to Buddhism, and the Christian family (daughter, son, and wife) of his former Korean ally. Each character expresses definite opinions on issues of faith, patriotism, loyalty, memory, and identity, and the audience watches as these opposing views and diverse beliefs meet and intertwine in an intricate dance.

"Religion is one way we generalize the other questions we want to ask," said Springate, "questions of being and purpose."

Influenced by two forms of Korean storytelling, in *kut*, Springate draws on *p'ansori* or Korean opera, and *kut*, a shaman ritual of healing. In the tradition of *p'ansori*, the piece involves a single performer who takes on many personas, and a musician who plays various instruments to indicate change in mood, transition between characters, or to interject comment or emphasis. Performing with Springate is cellist

and Korean percussionist Nathan Hesselink. Hesselink is assistant professor of ethnomusicology at the University of British Columbia, and is an accomplished performer of traditional Korean percussion in authentic *p'ansori* patterns. In the healing ritual *kut*, a shaman calls forth the spirits of the dead to rebalance the life forces of the living. Fittingly, the performance of *kut* begins with a remembrance of the deceased Korean man and culminates in a kind of healing for each character.

A respected playwright and actor, Springate is known throughout Canada for his development and advocacy of new theater. He began in Montreal, as founder and artistic director of The Painted Bird Ensemble, an experimental company with whom he conceived and directed formal explorations of musical forms on stage. Springate has also served as artistic director for the Prairie Theatre Exchange (Winnipeg), the Factory Theatre (Toronto), and the Playwrights Workshop, an organization that provides development assistance for more than 50 plays from across Canada each year. He has taught all levels of acting at Concordia University, and is currently a limited-term faculty member at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, British Columbia. Springate has written several plays, including *Dog and Crow*, *Kareena*, and *Freeport, Texas*.

kut opens a semester-long celebration of world theater at University of Puget Sound. “World Theatre Old and New: Politics, Tradition, and Community” will bring writers, performers, and experts to campus for lectures and performances. Participants include Angelina Nockai and the Native Pride Dancers, playwright and performer Seema Sueko '94, and a week-long residency by Theatre Nogaku.

All events surrounding Michael Springate’s visit to University of Puget Sound and “World Theatre Old and New: Politics, Tradition, and Community” are open to the public. Performances of *kut* will be held in Norton Clapp Theatre on Friday, Jan. 19, at 7:30 p.m., and Saturday, Jan. 20, at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$5. Seating is very limited; advance purchase is encouraged. For tickets or information, call 253.879.3419.

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