

Kennedy Theatre



UNIVERSITY of HAWAI‘I at MĀNOA

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Media Release FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 8, 2017

Where the Watchers Watch the Watchers Watch... *Smile, You're Under Surveillance!* continues 2016/17 Season

The University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa’s Department of Theatre + Dance is proud to continue its 2016/17 Primetime series with the devised theatre project, *Smile, You're Under Surveillance!*, initiated, facilitated, and coordinated by Professor of Theatre Dr. Markus Wessendorf. Performances will take place March 15, 16, 17, 18, 24, 25, 2017 at 7:30 p.m. and March 26 at 2:00 p.m. in a found space within Kennedy Theatre.

The devised production, created “from scratch” by the ensemble (Matthew Kelty, Dylan Lee, Ike Webster, John Wells, and Markus Wessendorf), places attendees in the role of a live audience at the studios of ICU (International Communications Unlimited) during the recording sessions of various program segments. The production focuses on several episodes of a flagship sitcom of ICU that is about the two brothers Hector and Syd and their daily adventures and romantic pursuits in a culture of mutual and normalized surveillance. Hector is a hacker by trade while Syd works for the NSA. Between these sitcom episodes, the audience will catch glimpses of other ICU shows that also explore the issue of surveillance, but in different styles and formats.

The process for *Smile, You're Under Surveillance!* actually began years ago. After Edward Snowden’s 2013 revelations of the global surveillance apparatus utilized by the National Security Agency (NSA), Wessendorf, already interested in the subject of surveillance as a performance concept, was emboldened by the sweeping injustices that Snowden’s disclosures had brought to light. In April 2014, Wessendorf sent an email message with the

subject heading “Wanted! Collaborators on ‘EDWARD SNOWDEN PROJECT’” to twenty local community members and began to “brainstorm” and develop dramaturgical ideas for a potential theatrical production with interested participants that fall. In July 2015, he organized a symposium on “Dramaturgies of Surveillance: Edward Snowden, the Security State, and the Theatre” at the University of Frankfurt, Germany.

The devising process for the actual production of *Smile, You’re Under Surveillance!*, however, did not start before this January. The radically changed political landscape has certainly contributed to a widening of the project’s original focus. Julian Assange, for example, an icon of the anti-surveillance movement just six months ago, now seems to have helped a white nationalist autocrat win the last election. Both last year’s presidential campaign and the early days of the new White House administration indicate that the future abuse of surveillance and social media for reasons of political expediency may be even more dystopian than deemed possible only a short while ago. Because of these developments, *Smile* will not just deal with Snowden’s revelations but with a normalized culture of surveillance at large. “Until 2016, the line was clear cut,” Wessendorf says, “Snowden uncovered things that were illegal, and there existed a very clear narrative in which facts mattered. But now we’ve seen a darker version of reality, and this devised theatre production will reflect this altered reality.”

The production will coincide with pre-show talks and panel appearances by Civil Rights lawyers and Performance Studies scholars with an expertise in surveillance. Ben Wizner, Edward Snowden’s ACLU lawyer, will give a pre-show talk on March 17 at 6:30pm and appear on a panel (with UHM’s Suzanna Reiss and Michael Shapiro) on March 18 at 6:00pm. A second panel on March 26 at noon will feature Elise Morrison (Texas A&M University), James Harding (University of Maryland), and David Goldberg (UHM). Morrison, author of *Discipline and Desire: Surveillance Technologies in Performance*, will also give a pre-show talk on March 24 at 6:30pm. Harding, author of a forthcoming book *Performance, Transparency and the Cultures of Surveillance* will give a pre-show talk on March 25 at 6:30pm. (All panels and pre-show talks will happen at Kennedy Theatre.) Wizner, Morrison, or Harding will also have short appearances in *Smile, You’re Under Surveillance!*, depending on the show date.

Tickets to *Smile, You’re Under Surveillance!* can be bought online at www.etickethawaii.com, by phone at (808) 944-2697, at official outlets, and at the Kennedy Theatre Box Office during the week of the show.

EVENT:

Smile, You're Under Surveillance!

PRESENTED BY:

UHM Department of Theatre + Dance

WHEN:

March 15, 16, 17, 18, 24, 25, 2017 at 7:30pm
March 26 at 2:00pm

WHERE:

Kennedy Theatre
1770 East-West Rd.
Honolulu, HI, 96822

TICKET PRICES:

\$18 Regular
\$16 Seniors, Military, UH Faculty/Staff
\$13 Students
\$8 UH Mānoa Students with valid UHM ID

PURCHASE INFO:

Tickets are available online at etickethawaii.com, by phone at (808) 944-2697, at participating outlets, and at the Kennedy Theatre box office. The box office is open from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Monday through Friday during show weeks, with extended hours on performance dates.



L to R: John Wells, Ike Webster, Matthew Kelty,
and Dylan Lee in Kennedy Theatre's
Smile, You're Under Surveillance!
Photo: Jessica Jacob

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