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'HAITI'

By Wilfred M. Phillips Jr.

The revival of the 1938 play "Haiti" written by famed writer, William DuBois, which depicts the Haitian Revolution of 1804, was reintroduced by the magnificent directing skills of Ellen Geer on Saturday evening at a sold out opening performance at the beautiful Will Geer's Theatricum Botanicum.

The fabulous outdoor stage setting, along with the costumes worn by the performers and the chirping sounds of crickets, gave this play a feel that you were in Haiti during that era.

"Haiti" is a melodrama about the pressures brought against the controlling free slaves on the Island of Haiti and the invading French Army who fought to colonize it. The play consists of the love of a lost daughter Odette played by (Tiffany Coty), a beautiful mulatto, and the love of two French soldiers for her. Her unknown slave mother Jacqueline, played by (Ernestine Phillips) sparks uncertainty among the French. They feel that the slave woman is a spy aiding the defiant General; Christophe, played by (Max Lawrence.) This play has plenty of action, drama, as well as comedy. "Haiti" has battles and fantastic swashbuckling scenes that will have you sitting on the edge of your seat. The ending has a great rejoicing of victory over the French by the former slaves.

Haitian leader, Touissant L'Ouverture, played by Rodrick Jean-Charles, stated: *"We are free today because we are the stronger; we will be slaves again when the government becomes stronger."* However, to this day, Haiti is still the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere.

"Haiti" has a large ensemble cast of excellent performers who portray their roles fluently. Sound effects of distant African drums in the surrounding hills of the theatre and explosions of cannon and gun fire while the actors and actress are performing on stage provide realism of an ongoing war.

I give this wonderfully well-rounded play two thumbs up for fine acting, directing, and most of all sheer realism.

"Haiti" is currently performing on Saturdays and Sundays through September 29, at the Will Geer's Theatricum Botanicum located at 1419 Topanga Canyon Blvd, Topanga, California 90200 (midway between PCH and the Ventura 101 freeway.)

Visit them on facebook: www.facebook.com/theatricum for show times, directions and ticket prices.