

BARB WIRE
THEATRE INC.

SPONSORED BY: *The College of Continuing Education and Community Service in Cooperation with the University Theatre and the University of Hawaii Interim Session.*

PRESENTS A

DRAMA FROM SAN QUENTIN



THE

CAGE

by **RICK CLUCHEY**

**WRITTEN, PRODUCED & PERFORMED
BY SAN QUENTIN PAROLEES**

KENNEDY THEATRE

JANUARY 8 - 9 -- 8:00 p.m.

\$3.00 adults

\$1.50 students

TICKETS AVAILABLE AT

KENNEDY THEATRE BOX OFFICE - PHONE 944-8746

SEARS at ALA MOANA - ISLAND FEDERAL SAVINGS & LOANS

From DECEMBER 28th

For more information call 944-8238

THE CAGE

By RICK CLUCHEY



The BARBWIRE COMPANY begins by entering the classrooms on any campus scheduling a performance of CAGE. In the classroom, each member of the company talks about his experience in prison, his past life and the events which led him to prison. A basis for reaching students evolves from this approach as any student can ask a burning question or two and get an answer from an expert.

DIALOGUE

In the play performed in the auditorium later that same evening, students can evaluate the stories heard in the classrooms with the reality of a hard-hitting drama — enacted by the ex-offenders themselves — showing what happens to a man when he first enters his State-supported Cage!

CONFRONTATION

The play concludes with the actors returning to be seated on stage for a confrontation with the audience. During this period we now hear questions and answers from both sides of the footlights. It is NOW that all have the opportunity to enter into a problem-solving debate about the future of our prisons. New careers emerge as students change their minds about what they want to do with their lives.



S.F. EXAMINER

"... persuasive acting by former San Quentin prisoners ... wretched, resentful, violent men bound together in an un-named cage ..."
— Stanley Eichelbaum

S.F. CHRONICLE

"... unusual, enlightening and constantly fascinating ..."
— Knickerbocker

OTTO PREMINGER — "... a truly stunning production with great acting ..."

ED AMES — "... great theatre, everyone should see this production ..."

PALO ALTO TIMES — "... strange, savage drama by cast of ex-convicts ..."

SAN MATEO TIMES — "... powerful, gripping story of prison life ..."

PLAYS AND PLAYERS — "... Homosexuality is handled with a sort of lightness that makes it more distressing than any amount of hard-edged protest ..."

The story on "THE CAGE" as told in

Newsweek

January 12, 1970

Barbwire Theater

One day back in 1961 in the yard at San Quentin, Micil Murphy—who was doing a six-and-a-half-year stretch for armed robbery—got into a knife fight with another inmate. When the guards arrived, Murphy ducked into a nearby gymnasium where a drama workshop was in rehearsal. Stashing his blade in his pocket, Murphy rushed up to the director, Rick Cluchey, and said: "Hey, man, I wanna be an actor." Moments later, two guards burst into the gym only to find Murphy intently reciting some lines from "The Iceman Cometh."

Not only did the ruse work but Murphy struck up a relationship with Cluchey that was to change both their lives—and the lives of many other ex-cons. Over the next five years, Murphy and Cluchey, who was serving a life term for robbery and kidnaping, organized a highly polished drama group that staged as many as nine plays a year (including "Waiting for Godot," "The Brig," "Don Juan in Hell" and "The Dumb Waiter"). "Anything that was published," recalls Cluchey, "we'd just rip it off and do it. We never paid royalties. We'd just sit there in that joint and say 'Come and get it.'" Largely because of his drama work, Cluchey was paroled in 1966.

Popular: Last February, his workshop surfaced outside the walls. Formed as a nonprofit company called Barbwire Theater and dedicated to promoting penal reform, the group's only requirement is that all its staff have one thing in common—a stretch in stir. And the formula seems to work. For the last eleven months, Barbwire Theater has been playing to packed houses in community theaters across the country. Next week, the troupe takes off on an extensive tour of

West Coast colleges, beginning at Stanford University. Its sole offering is "The Cage," a one-act, acid-etched portrait of prison life at its rawest, written by Cluchey during his eleven years of on-the-spot research.

"We're trying to effect changes in the system," says Cluchey, now 36. "But first, in order to get your attention and not just preach at you, it's got to be good art." By nearly unanimous opinion, drama critics from San Francisco to Washington agree that Barbwire Theater is good art. "The most impressive aspect of 'The Cage,'" wrote Richard L. Coe of The Washington Post, "is that in writing and production it has a professional tone, far more disciplined than what often passes for 'art' on or off Broadway."

Gritty: In plot and action, "The Cage" is as gritty as anything on or off Broadway. The 80-minute play explores the relationships of four men sharing a prison cage. ("This is not a cell," says one of the players. "A cell represents life.") The four are Hatchet, a professional murderer whose name represents his favorite tool of trade; Al, a bitchy, jealous, aging queen; Doc, a dominating black homosexual, and Jive, a sensitive young epileptic convicted of murdering his girl friend. Caged together, they begin to feed off one another until, in the end, Hatchet strangles Jive, then turns to the audience and charges: "I have done your will."

After a ten-minute breather, the actors troop onstage and—looking reassuringly respectable in their mod clothes—invite questions from the audience. For the most part, the queries are timid and the answers predictable. "The wall works both ways," Cluchey, who plays Hatchet, told his audience in Atlanta recently. "You can't take a man and simply warehouse him, store him someplace. Let's tear down the walls and replace them with treatment centers; let's replace the prison guards with psychologists and sociologists."