



By <sup>357</sup>  
**DANIEL  
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# THEATRE REVIEW

## *Of Men And Menace*

The fields of the agriculturally rich valleys of California in the 1930s were by and large worked by rough-hewn men. These migrant workers moved across farms and ranches, working at backbreaking labor to keep their bellies full and provide enough money for an end-of-month fling at the saloons and whorehouses in town.

Author John Steinbeck, who would go on to receive both Pulitzer and Nobel Prizes in literature, was no stranger to either the fields or the work. His experiences allowed him to produce many books that focused on the lives and working conditions of the migrant workers.

*Of Mice and Men* was a slim volume of fiction that told the story of George and Lennie, two such workers. The title of the book comes from a line in a Robert Burns poem lamenting the failure of the "best laid plans." Steinbeck's book was so successful that he later adapted it for the stage.

It is this drama that opens the 36th season of the University of Detroit Mercy's Theatre Company.

George and Lennie are two drifters about to begin a new job bucking barley bags at a ranch. Together they are an odd pair, George a level-headed sort with dreams of saving his money and buying a place of his own, Lennie a man-child, strong as an ox but with the emotional and intellectual levels of a dimwit.

George has taken it upon himself to function as Lennie's guardian, an impossible task given the world through which they move. While the men who work around them talk of guns and gambling and women, Lennie is preoccupied with the feel of pleasant textures.

An animal's furry coat, a finely cut piece of velvet, or the soft, flowing locks of a woman are all capable of giving him satisfaction. More than once, it has been Lennie's tactile fetish that has required the two men to



**Marissa Thorndyke and Matthew Klug**

move on to avoid trouble. When disruption threatens the bunkhouse of their new job in the form of a woman, the play takes a startling dramatic turn.

The Theatre Company's version of this oft-produced classic is a hit largely because of Matthew R. Klug's sensitive and moving portrayal of Lennie. Rarely will you find a Lennie who is able to capture an audience's emotions so strongly. His Lennie is childlike, lovable and sympathetic. In a play that makes overtures to several potent subtexts, Klug's presence dominates.

The production also benefits from some supportive chemistry between Lennie and George, here played by Curt Green. The two actors work well together, complementing each other even as their characters travel along different paths.

Cast members include a mix of UDM theatre majors, graduate students and guest artists. As can be expected, such an eclectic bunch performs with varying degrees of skill levels.

"Of Mice and Men" is directed by Arthur Beer. Scenic and costume designs are by Melinda Pacha. The set, while it leaves the opening and closing countryside scenes totally up to the audience's imagination, features well-crafted interiors of both the bunkhouse and barn. Lighting design and set execution are by Mark Choinski.

The production runs through Sunday, October 15. The Theatre Company performs at the Marygrove College Theatre, 8425 W. McNichols Road. For tickets, call the box office at (313) 993-3270. Additional information is available online at [theatre.udmercy.edu](http://theatre.udmercy.edu).