



James Mehling/DN

Moms to battle in play

By Paula Lavigne
Senior Reporter

A child is neglected by its mother and is thrust upon another woman who cares for it, loves it and raises it over time. Several years later, the biological mother, a wicked woman, demands the return of her child.

Sounds like headlines from a recent court case, but it's not. It's the theme of a play called "The Caucasian Chalk Circle" by German playwright Bertolt Brecht. The play is being performed at Howell Theatre this weekend.

Brecht's play, set in the Russian province of Georgia more than 700 years ago, is an age-old tale questioning the justice of ownership rights, which remains an issue today.

Director Ronald Wainscott said the play raised the question, "Can people control people?" "Does your child belong to you because it came from your body, or does it belong to whoever will take care of it better?" he said. "It all ties up into economic issues and can be elevated to governmental levels."

The play focuses on a meager kitchen maid, Grusha (Joan Korte), who, in a time of crisis, is given this child to protect, because the biological mother was too busy worrying about saving her possessions to rescue her child.

Grusha raises the child and comes to love it. When the biological mother comes back and demands her child, the battle begins. A trial, overseen by a pseudo-judge, Azdak (Mike Solomonson), is held to determine who the rightful mother should be.

Korte focuses on her character's emotional life by trying to make it as real as possible, she said.

"I remember reading the script and coming across one particular speech and thinking,

'Whoa, that's going to be a roller coaster ride. That's not something I can logically figure out; it's something I'm just going to have to do,'" Korte said. "And that's not always easy."

Korte said she was motivated by what her character wanted most — her child.

"I want my child back, and they're telling me I can't have it," she said. "I might die."

Knowing several friends who have adopted or given up children has helped Korte relate to her character.

Although on the surface level, the play tells the story of a custody battle, Wainscott said that on a deeper level, it touched Brecht's analysis of communism.

"Brecht was an idealistic communist," he said. "(His plays) make perfect sense as a reaction against Hitler and the Nazis. They resonate with problems of that very time, the '40s and '50s."

Wainscott said the play held even more significance today.

"Now, with the supposed fall of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, this play has a lot of resonance it didn't have before," he said.

These dark societal issues, which could make the play cold and alienated, are often overshadowed by a lighter comic action, Wainscott said.

"When you describe what's there, it sounds like a hairy play," he said. "It has a happy ending. It's uplifting. It's underscored by music played by actors on stage."

"The Caucasian Chalk Circle" will premiere tonight at Howell Theatre at 8 p.m. Performances will run at 8 p.m. on Friday and Saturday and on April 19-21. There also will be 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. performances on April 23. Tickets are \$9 for adults and \$6 for students.

Shakespeare Day to feature old, new styles

By Paula Lavigne
Senior Reporter

The modern is pitted against the traditional for Shakespeare's birthday bash today sponsored by the English honorary Sigma Tau Delta.

The 1994 Shakespeare Day Celebration will mix Stone Temple Pilots and Shakespeare for the fifth annual Sonnet Reading Marathon, and then the Shenandoah Shakespeare Express will perform "Much Ado About Nothing" in traditional style.

Stephen Buhler, faculty adviser for Sigma Tau Delta, said the sonnet readings would center on performing the famous bard's sequential readings in traditional or original style.

"The past performances have included people reading sonnets while standing on their heads," he said. "People this year are going to do a

kind of chorale approach with some lines in unison, sometimes as a group."

This year's performance also will include an attempt by Buhler to set sonnet 116, "Marriage of True Minds," to the Stone Temple Pilots song "Plush," entitled "Plove."

"There is still a tendency to see Shakespeare as boring and not a lot of fun," he said. "This allows the opportunity to play with Shakespeare and to see other folks doing it all for the good."

Presenting Shakespeare in a public forum is often difficult, Buhler said.

"It helps people in the process of feeling they can approach Shakespeare on their own and get more from the text," he said.

Anybody is allowed to sign up for the event and everybody is encouraged to come and watch, Buhler said. Following the marathon, the

Shenandoah Shakespeare Express, a traveling group of young performers based in Harrisonburg, Va., will present their rendition of Shakespeare's "Much Ado About Nothing."

Jim Warren, managing director of the traveling group, said the group's approach to Shakespeare was ironically unique, because it was more than 400 years old.

The contemporary approach to Shakespeare uses electric lighting and elaborate sets and places the audience far away from the actors, he said, unlike the way Shakespeare was originally performed.

"I think the thing you notice first is that we are trying to perform the plays with the same theatrical conditions, and limitations, Shakespeare wrote them for," he said.

He said Shakespeare used natural

light, placed the audience close to the stage and refrained from using elaborate sets or costumes. Another aspect of original Shakespeare was performing toward the audience, Warren said.

"Shakespeare also had a small company, no more than 15 people, with actors usually playing more than one role," he said. "It was a kind of theater that was the theater of the imagination."

Instead of dimming the lights to signify nighttime, the actors had to act it, he said, relying on the audience's imagination and the actors' ingenuity.

In Shakespeare's time, the actors dressed in contemporary clothes instead of historically accurate costumes, Warren said. He said the actors in his group did the same by wearing Bugle Boy pants and turtlenecks instead of Elizabethan attire.

By taking this approach, he hoped the actors would dispel any Shakespeare stereotypes. These originated when Shakespeare was introduced in the public school system as a great literary genius that students had to read because it was good for them, "sort of like spinach," Warren said.

"I don't think most young people think Shakespeare is 'Wow, that's fun,'" he said. "Even good school systems make Shakespeare into this cultural icon and not a cool guy who wrote plays that talk about the human experience."

The sonnets will be performed in 229 Andrews Hall from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Admission is free. "Much Ado About Nothing" will be performed in the main hall of the Wick Alumni Center at 8 p.m.

Film cuts cheesy flicks to pieces

Comedy Central show hits big screen in Lincoln



Tuesday night more than 294 UNL students lined up outside the Mary Riepma Ross Theater for free cheese. No, not the government surplus kind.

They came to see a free screening of "Mystery Science Theater 3000," the Comedy Central TV show that takes cheesy movies and "cuts them to pieces."

"Free Cheese — The Tour" was conceived in response to hundreds of phone calls Comedy Central received from students across the country. The tour, with stops at 25 colleges throughout the United States, features a special episode of "MST 3000." The tour began in March and will conclude this month.

"MST 3000" stars Mike Nelson as a lab temp marooned in outer space by mad scientists who are using him in an experiment to test the effect of cheesy movies on the human species. Silhouetted in the lower right-hand corner of the TV

screen, Mike and his robot pals Tom Servo and Crow make wisecracks about the movies they — and the "MST 3000" viewers — are forced to watch every week.

The movies are usually low-budget monster flicks from the late '50s and early '60s. The "MST" versions usually go something like this:

SCIENTIST: "You've heard of Loch Ness, haven't you?"

POLICE DETECTIVE: "Yes, it's a lake in Scotland."

SCIENTIST: "And the Loch Ness Monster?"

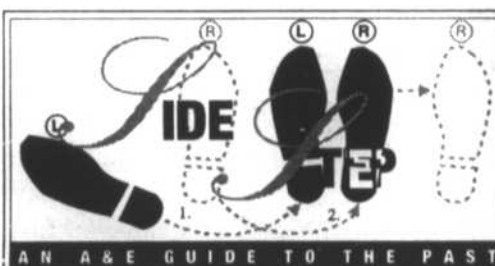
CROW (The cynical "MST 3000" robot made out of a lacrosse helmet, a bowling pin and assorted tupperware pieces): "That would be a monster in a lake in Scotland."

Tuesday's experiment featured the 1987 Hollywood bomb "The Outlaw," starring "the very huggable" Jack Palance. The film, described by Mike as "breastical-boobical-chestical-groovical fun," is a wonderfully awful mix of scantily clad women, phony fight scenes, cheesy dialogue and an almost nonexistent plot.

"The Outlaw" was originally designed to be a serious adventure flick, but it just turned out so bad that one couldn't help but laugh at it.

And with the help of Mike, Tom and Crow, it became downright hysterical.

— Todd Ellington



Week of April 11-April 15

Ten years ago this week:

Concerts

-Billy Joel performed live at Bob Devaney Sports Center on April 9th—"From A Piano Man To An Innocent Man." The 16-song show closed with 3 encores.

Movies

-Jonathan Demme's "Swing Shift," starring Kurt Russel and Goldie Hawn, played at the Cinema Twin.
-"Moscow on the Hudson," starring Robin Williams, played at the Cinema Twin.

Twenty years ago this week:

Concerts

-Grammy Award nominee Jimmy Martin of the Sunny Mountain Boys played live at the East Campus Union

on April 12th—voted "Bluegrass Entertainer of the Year."

Thirty years ago this week:

Movies

-Man's Favorite Sport," starring Rock Hudson, played at the Stuart Theater.
-"Shock Treatment," starring Stuart Whitman, played at the Nebraska Theater.



—Compiled by
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Kai Wilken/DN