



Photo courtesy of Touchstone Pictures

Ellen DeGeneres and Bill Pullman star in "Mr. Wrong," the new comedy from director Nick Castle.

Wrong

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doesn't reach out and grab the movie-goer.

Director Nick Castle has a history

of making successful—but asinine—comedies, so "Mr. Wrong" should fit in well with previous hits "Major

Payne" and "Dennis The Menace." Still, the beginning of the movie does provide a few humorous mo-

ments, and the absolute perfection and smarminess of the initial romance between Whitman and Martha could melt the heart of the most headstrong cynic.

Trying to go beyond stupid comedy by making the story line into a proverbial nightmare, "Mr. Wrong" just wears thin over a short period of time.

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Astronomy professor links music, science

By Patrick Hambrecht
Senior Reporter

Galileo's dad was largely responsible for Professor Martin Gaskell playing a crumhorn in front of his Astronomy classes Monday and Tuesday.

And, according to Gaskell, the astronomer's father was entirely to blame for the rock 'n' roll phenomenon.

Gaskell played the musical equivalents of Mars, Venus and other planets on his horn, using the formulas that astronomer Johannes Kepler developed from the musical theories of Vincenzo Galilei, father of the famous Galileo Galilei.

"Do you realize the last time my wife and I played a concert, it was \$25 a head? So you're doing quite well. You're getting quite a bargain," Gaskell joked to the class.

Gaskell said Kepler applied musical theory to the planets in the same way modern scientists tried to explain the universe by using quarks and atoms.

Kepler is famous for discovering the three laws of planetary motion, and that planets rotate around the sun in ellipses instead circles.

"Venus is a boring planet, and Venus has a boring tune," Gaskell said, before blowing three identical notes in his crumhorn. The crumhorn is a medieval woodwind instrument, named for its crumpled, or bent, end.

"There are lyrics too," Gaskell said. "The earth was not a happy place in those days. The earth was going around the sun, singing 'Mis-er-y, Mis-er-y, Mis-er-y.'"

He said because of the earth's horrible tone, Kepler used an especially eerie note: A-flat.

"At the time, A-flat was a very weird, very far-out note," Gaskell said.

Showing Kepler's intellectual connection between music and astronomy is part of what a proper

liberal education is all about, Gaskell said.

"I view education as something more than what's in the book and what's on the test," he said.

Kepler applied his knowledge of astronomy to song to solve a musical problem of the 1500s.

"In their view, music had to be perfect, and it wasn't," Gaskell said. "Music is imperfect. If you follow the cycle of fifths from the note C up to C again, it's out of tune."

To attempt to solve the problem, Kepler relied on the theories of Vincenzo Galilei.

The elder Galilei, along with his contemporaries, is also responsible for the idea of a single voice singing over a pattern of chords, Gaskell said. This method has trickled down from opera to virtually all of rock and popular music today, he said.

"There is a wonderful continuity in music from the past to the present," he said. "They were trying to reinvent what the Greeks did with music."

Basing music on astronomical principles still is used in some space music today, Gaskell said, referring to a new-age music style with an unearthly, futuristic sound.

Gaskell used to think of pursuing a career in music, and still composes new pieces occasionally. He now plays organ at Trinity Baptist Church. But many astronomers, including two in his department, share his love for playing renaissance music.

"I think the interest has to do with the way brain is put together," Gaskell said.

Gaskell said he attended a recent astronomer's convention in Ames, Iowa, which featured a performance of renaissance music on classic instruments. At the end of the performance, any volunteers were offered a chance to perform on the medieval instruments.

"About half the room got up to play the instruments," Gaskell said proudly.

Voltaire

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castles and stripping them of antique furniture and paintings. Arab oil tycoons and the Russian mafia have been in the French headlines in recent years for snapping up choice real estate, particularly along the French Riviera.

"We're going to hate ourselves if we learn that the chateau has been sold," said Georges Vianes, the mayor of Ferney-Voltaire.

Voltaire, born Francois-Marie Arouet in Paris in 1694, lived in the stately chateau from 1758 until his death in 1778. At the mansion, he wrote his most acclaimed novel, "Candide," as well as his landmark treatise on tolerance.

"We must cultivate our garden," Voltaire penned in the concluding line of "Candide," which followed its hero's hapless journeys far from his home.

The message was that people should concentrate on improving their little corner of the world and being content with it.

Since 1846, the Lambert family has owned and maintained the mansion and its 15-acre grounds in Ferney-Voltaire, about three miles from Geneva. Two rooms of the mansion are open to the public.

When the 24 towns learned last month that the chateau would be sold, they sprang into action, launching a "Voltaire in Ferney" fund-raising campaign to buy and preserve it.

Money is coming in from Voltaire admirers around Europe and in the United States, and organizers say they may broaden their appeal via the Internet. A group calling itself "Voltaire Today" envisions an exhibit in the mansion.

"We're doing all this to encourage the owners to prefer a public solution over a private one," Vianes said.

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