

# OPINION PAGES

## GUEST VIEW

### Societal affairs Endorsement deals compromise values

From The Sacramento Bee, Sacramento, Calif.

The shrinking availability of money for nonprofit institutions has produced a troubling new fund-raising technique that the American Cancer Society has just adopted. Recently, the ACS announced that it had sold endorsements to two commercial vendors, allowing each an exclusive right to use the group's imprimatur to sell products.

“Donations have been stagnant, the society reports; needs and demands have not.”

Under one deal, the manufacturers of the NicoDerm nicotine patch are to pay the cancer society at least \$1 million in annual sales royalties for three years. In a second arrangement, the Florida citrus marketers association agreed to pay at least \$1 million for one year.

Perhaps \$4 million is an important consideration even for an organization with a budget of roughly \$1.7 billion over those four years. Donations have been stagnant, the society reports; needs and demands have not. The society “determined that companies that are producing products that support the missions or programs of the American Cancer Society would be acceptable business partners for us,” a spokeswoman said.

But should a public-interest nonprofit promote Florida juice to the exclusion of all others? And what if another company introduces a nicotine patch that is judged superior to the NicoDerm product? Isn't the society then contractually obligated to continue recommending a second-best alternative?

More broadly, what does hanging out what looks like a “for sale” sign do to the society's credibility? Other groups in similar circumstances have chosen instead to offer nonexclusive endorsements. For instance, the American Dental Association seal of approval is available to all fluoridated toothpaste products that meet its standards, and the American Heart Association endorses low-fat, low-cholesterol foods. Wouldn't it have been wiser for the cancer society to adopt a similar standard?

Some citizens will surely see the ACS decision to do otherwise as compromising. One must hope the net result will not be a diminution of public support that cancels out the revenue derived from the two questionable arrangements the cancer society has made.

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## MEHSLING'S VIEW

IT'S A SAD DAY IN NEBRASKA...  
BUT HAVE FAITH FOR THE LORD  
WORKS IN STRANGE AND  
MYSTERIOUS WAYS.



## LETTERS

### Theater review was no 'Masterpiece'

The theater critics for the Daily Nebraskan evidently think that it is illegitimate for works produced at the Lied to have Christian subjects (“Religious Themes Overbearing in Masterpiece Drama,” Sept. 18). Do they also think that it is illegitimate for works produced at the Lied to have environmentalist, drug culture, atheistic, Marxist, Buddhist or New Age subjects? Or do they object only to Christianity?

In reviewing “The Masterpiece,” critics Emily Wray and Aaron Saathoff said they thought the dancing “lacked crispness.” Fair enough. They faulted the sound quality. Fine. But why was it necessary for them to be “Keeping an open mind ...” about the work's subject matter in order to say something positive about the level of creativity? (Compare: Although the ballet was about vegetarianism, it was creative.)

Perhaps their real objection was that they weren't warned ahead of time about the work's subject matter: “Unfortunately,” they wrote, “the promotional posters gave no real clue about the actual story.” One might ask whether they also objected to posters that didn't say, quite clearly, that “Angels in America” is about homosexuality and AIDS, or that “Ran” is based on “King Lear.” Perhaps they also object to “The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe,” which is often shown — without warning — in children's theaters, and which, like “The Masterpiece,” is grounded in Christian theology.

Perhaps the posters bothered Wray and Saathoff, but their real ax is grinding away unmistakably in the last sentence of their review: “[W]e hope ‘The Masterpiece’ was the last time we ever again pray in the Lied Center.”

This review reads like an ad hominem argument and, whether intentionally or not, raises the disturbing prospect of religious prejudice.

It would certainly be legitimate for critics who believe that posters must specify content (like food



JASON GILDOW/DN

labels, presumably) to argue in support of their positions, though it would be troubling if any critic thought that only certain subject matters, including Christian ones, required warning labels. All critics should review the productions they see, whatever their subject matters, primarily on their merits (e.g. was “The Masterpiece” a good Christian ballet?). Or they should warn their readers that they are really only engaging in ideological (in this case, anti-religious) polemics.

James E. Ford  
professor  
English

### OPEN MIND?

I write this letter in regard to the article “Religious themes overbearing in ‘The Masterpiece’ drama” from the Sept. 18 1996 issue of the Daily Nebraskan.

A couple of comments to the authors: As to your comment that the “...ballet's plot mirrored the classic Bible's epic.” — Duh. That was the point.

Why should the promotional posters tell you everything about the production? Does every production at the Lied Center have a line at the bottom saying, “This production supports gay rights,” or “This production is an atheistic portrayal of life in a small town as seen through the eyes of a disillusioned pre-pubescent daughter of an ex-Southern Baptist preacher turned auto mechanic”? If the atheists, pro-life, pro-gay, or pro-anything-else productions do not have to identify themselves outright on these promotions, why do the Christians?

I don't understand your comment that “Ironically, the triumphant finale also featured rock music.” What do you mean? What is ironic about this? Perhaps you could explain to me the Christian doctrine of music stating that rock music is bad or evil. While you are at it, could you please find for me where Christianity says it's bad to dance, watch TV, read a good book or have fun once in a while? I thought not.

The line about “...vocals against various types of sin, including money” is another stumper for me. Although I didn't see the production firsthand, is it perhaps the case that it's the worship of money that they were referring to?

And how about you “Keeping an open mind ...?” The article starts with an insult (Yes, I see through the shallow attempt at humor in this) and ends with a condemnation. (And by the way, who is “we”? Just the authors, I hope.)

While we are on the topic of your hope that “The Masterpiece” be “the last time we ever pray again in the Lied Center” — why are you so opposed to this? It's OK to pray to the gods of multiculturalism, tolerance and art at the Lied Center, but not to the God of the universe?

Please, for the sake of your readers, get some education before you talk about something which you have apparently little knowledge of.

Charles A. Cusack  
graduate student

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