

State and Local

Prize-winning playwright tries to expand theater department

By Tom Cawthra
Reporter

The director in Los Angeles was trouble... he was having difficulties relating a 1970s play to a 1980s audience, and the show had to go into Texas A&M's Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Charles Gordon, and the difficulties in California quickly got fixed.

"I went to L.A. and had to take a week to straighten the show out," Gordon explains. "I was living the life in New Mexico when they called me to help the director (in Los Angeles). He was in trouble because he didn't know how to direct the play for today's audience."

Gordon, the play's author, was the perfect solution. He directed the original production of "No Place to Be Somebody" in 1967 and made sure that the 1970-1974 Broadway production ran smoothly. After all, it didn't win the Pulitzer Prize, the Drama Desk Award and the Los Angeles Critic Circle Award for writing a play that audiences cannot understand.

Walter Kerr of the *New York Times* notes that Gordon's play is simple, though.

"The construction of the play is complex, rich, garish, improbable, overburdened, defiant and successful," Kerr writes.

The play began in the late 1960s and Gordon can recall the audience reactions.

"When the play first came out in the late '60s and early '70s, the audiences had never experienced such a theater experience," he says. "The impact was really tremendous."

Gordon, a veteran of the stage, began his theater career as an actor. He received a drama degree from Los Angeles State College in 1952. Upon graduation, he immediately moved across the nation to New York, where he was cast in Broadway productions. In addition to New York, Gordon acted in Venice and other European cities.

He came to A&M's theater arts department to join the Aggie Players as a distinguished lecturer. He teaches acting and playwriting and has encouraged several young actors to actively pursue theatrical careers.

Rudy Gordova, a sophomore theater arts major, says, "Being in Gordon's class makes me feel like A&M is really upgrading its theater program. He's done so much in the acting world and he has so much to share with us."

In Advance

Aggie Player's 'King Lear' opens Friday

The Texas A&M Aggie Players' production of "King Lear," William Shakespeare's tragedy centering around a story of political intrigue and family betrayal, opens Friday at 8 p.m. in the Rudder Theater to begin a two weekend run.

The performances will feature veteran Royal Shakespeare Company actor Jeffrey Dench as King Lear and Aggie Players' Pulitzer Prize winning playwright/actor Charles Gordon in the role of Gloucester. The remainder of the cast will be portrayed by A&M students.

"When he shares his past experiences, he brings them into the classroom with a special livelihood."

Gordon was asked to teach at other universities such as Sarah Lawrence, Columbia, Carnegie-Mellon and Harvard, but he chose A&M.

"I feel that in the way I see the theater of the future, you begin with the youth," he says. "You begin to share with them your thinking."

Gordon explains that he frequently is asked why he chose A&M, a University with a small-scale theater arts department, over other universities that are well known for large theater departments.

"Here (at A&M) we're learning," he says. "We're learning because we're a very new theater department. I envision a theater that includes the experience of all people. One of the main thrusts here is to provide an opportunity to recruit blacks and Hispanics — to recruit them for this department."

"I have always wanted to see, as far back as college, a more true American theater. That is, a theater that speaks to all the people who inhabit this country — all races, colors creeds."

Dr. Roger Schultz, director of A&M's theater arts department, says Gordon was hired as part of the department's efforts to recruit more minority students.

"Theater ultimately must be a reflection of today's society and a strictly 'vanilla' program does not do that," Schultz explains.

Director of Theater Roger Schultz said, "King Lear presents a wonderful opportunity for the students involved in it and the people of the community to come and see a production of one of the true classical scripts in the world."

The play will be presented in the Rudder Theater Friday and Saturday and on March 3, 4 and 5 at 8 p.m. Tickets for the production are \$5.50 for A&M students and senior citizens and \$7.50 for the general public. For reservations, call the Rudder Box Office at 845-1234.

Schultz says he and Gordon have been recruiting high school students in Dallas, Austin and Houston among other cities in Texas. The most common problem he noticed with minority recruitment is that the students feel they cannot meet A&M's requirements.

"I hear prospective students saying, 'We'd like to go to A&M, but we'd have to go to Prairie View (A&M) anyway, so why bother?' and I don't know why they're still thinking that," he says. "We have faculty and students who are concerned and who are capable of changing that attitude."

Schultz enjoys working with the well-known actor-writer-director, he says. He praises Gordon for his contributions to the department and spoke highly of his personal character.

"He's a man of tremendous vision," he says. "He can't help but make us understand where we're going individually and collectively as a group."

Schultz says the theater department is now about 20 percent black and Hispanic. He estimated the department's total student enrollment to be near 50.

Connie Freeman, a sophomore business major who met Gordon and asked if she could enroll in his Techniques of Acting course, says she plans to change her major and pursue a degree in theater arts.

"Going from business to theater — most people think it's crazy,"

Freeman says. "I feel good about it, though."

Freeman says that Gordon is the main reason behind her decision to make the move into the theater department.

"I think that he probably has the best sense of what the (acting) profession entails," she says. "He teaches us that acting is not just memorizing lines, but living the character's life. He encourages feeling the character's emotions by doing background research or relying on our own personal experiences that may relate to those of the character."

In addition to his daily classroom schedule, Gordon is preparing for a role in "King Lear."

He will appear in the Aggie Players' production that opens Friday night in Rudder Theater.

Meanwhile, he says he is waiting to hear from executives at CBS Television about a pilot he wrote for a potential network prime-time series.

Gordon says that television is something he would like to be involved with in the future.

"It's inevitable," he says. "I haven't done that much television as an actor because I am mostly a theater person. My moving into motion pictures and television is yet to come, and I don't see that so much as an actor. I see that pretty much as either a writer or a director."

He says his script has moved through several areas of the network.

"There is nothing official on the series yet because it's all been sent upstairs (to CBS executives)," he says. "The pilot has been written, but I'm waiting to see what the status of it is right now."

Gordon says a television script is edited and revised several times before final consideration is confirmed.

"It's been a month since I put in the last draft," he says. "Now that script — by the time I get it, I don't know what it'll look like."

Since his arrival at A&M, he has been checking in periodically with network officials.

"I've been going back and forth to Hollywood since I've been here," he says. "I'm still waiting."

Gordon says the producers of the program, MGM-United Artists, are pleased with the script about a black family in Harlem.

"They're very happy with it," he

See Theater, page 4

Professional actors work with students in 'King Lear' play

By Beth Ross
Reporter

The Aggie Players' "King Lear" is an experiment that brings the professional actor and the student actor together, director Faynia Williams says.

The award-winning British director is one of three visiting professionals at Texas A&M involved in "King Lear," which will run Friday, Saturday and March 3, 4 and 5.

Jeffrey Dench, a 22-year veteran of the Royal Shakespeare Company, plays King Lear and Charles Gordon, a distinguished visiting professor at A&M, an American actor and Pulitzer-Prize winner, plays the Earl of Gloucester.

Williams, six-time winner of the Edinburgh Theatre Festival Award, brings a British approach to "King Lear."

An American actor often examines internal motives in developing a character, says Michael Greenwald, the assistant director and voice coach for "King Lear." A British actor concentrates on a character's external influences. American directors emphasize the blocking of a scene — where an actor stands or moves on stage — but British directors focus on less-structured blocking, he says.

Williams interprets the Shakespearean tragedy in a fresh way. She says it is essential for the outcome of the play to be unexpected. She wants the actors to stretch their characters and make them more believable.

Dench says, "Faynia has made me see Lear differently. It's not the tragedy of King Lear — only the play of King Lear."

Jeff Carroll, a doctoral candidate in history, says Williams, like Shakespeare, works with the resources she has to sculpt the play. Williams gives actors more control over their characters.

Jonathan Burke, a freshman theater arts major, says Williams wants her actors to use their instincts and discover for themselves how a character should be developed.

Dench says, "The only shared experience is the play we're doing. So we're all learning from each other."

Steve McCauley, a junior theater arts major, says Dench and Gordon have two viewpoints of acting. Dench constantly looks for a new way to deliver a line or a new way to use the language.

Dench says the Royal Shakespeare Company's director, Peter Hall, and its master acting teacher and voice coach, John Barton, taught him the psychological depth behind Shakespeare and the verse techniques he uses in the role of Lear.

Troy Herbolt, a senior theater arts major, says when Dench sees another actor struggling with the poetic meter, he counts out the iambic pentameter to help him deliver the line properly.

Herbolt says Dench has taught him that theater is hard work, but it is important to relax and have fun.

Gordon, who won the Pulitzer Prize for his first play, "No Place to Be Somebody," considers himself a "consummate theater person" who writes, acts and directs — but his first love is acting. Unlike Dench, Gordon is a method actor who bases his character on himself and his environment.

Burke says the actors have learned to search for what feels right in acting out a character. "King Lear" has brought professionals and students together as actors in a learning experience, Williams says.

Dench says, "I don't feel that they're students. They're fellow actors. It's a company."

Correction

A cutline in Friday's issue of *The Battalion* incorrectly identified two local authors who were displaying their books at a Bryan restaurant.

The man identified in the cutline as George Gaentzen should have been identified as Walter Buenger, a Texas A&M associate professor of history, and the man identified as Sam Coines should have been identified as Sam Corner, a horticulture sciences project supervisor for the Texas Agricultural Extension Service.

You can't beat these prices on loose diamonds! This is a new list of Diamonds bought Feb. 18. Shop today for the best selection

ROUND DIAMONDS		ROUND DIAMONDS		MARQUISE	
Our Price	Compare	Our Price	Compare	Our Price	Compare
2.04 cts.	6,575 ⁰⁰	13,500 ⁰⁰	.34 pts.	165 ⁰⁰	300 ⁰⁰
2.02 cts.	7,750 ⁰⁰	15,000 ⁰⁰	.30 pts.	325 ⁰⁰	600 ⁰⁰
1.65 cts.	1,950 ⁰⁰	4,000 ⁰⁰	.25 pts.	225 ⁰⁰	400 ⁰⁰
1.51 cts.	2,975 ⁰⁰	6,000 ⁰⁰	.24 pts.	225 ⁰⁰	400 ⁰⁰
1.18 cts.	2,325 ⁰⁰	4,500 ⁰⁰	.22 pts.	165 ⁰⁰	300 ⁰⁰
1.17 cts.	2,395 ⁰⁰	2,600 ⁰⁰	.21 pts.	165 ⁰⁰	300 ⁰⁰
1.15 cts.	2,985 ⁰⁰	5,600 ⁰⁰	.20 pts.	165 ⁰⁰	300 ⁰⁰
1.12 cts.	1,350 ⁰⁰	2,600 ⁰⁰	.19 pts.	165 ⁰⁰	300 ⁰⁰
1.15 cts.	1,395 ⁰⁰	2,600 ⁰⁰	.18 pts.	185 ⁰⁰	310 ⁰⁰
1.09 cts.	2,750 ⁰⁰	5,500 ⁰⁰	.16 pts.	115 ⁰⁰	200 ⁰⁰
1.09 cts.	2,375 ⁰⁰	4,600 ⁰⁰	.14 pts.	115 ⁰⁰	200 ⁰⁰
1.09 cts.	1,875 ⁰⁰	4,200 ⁰⁰	.12 pts.	110 ⁰⁰	200 ⁰⁰
1.08 cts.	2,195 ⁰⁰	4,500 ⁰⁰	.10 pts.	63 ⁰⁰	120 ⁰⁰
1.04 cts.	2,650 ⁰⁰	5,200 ⁰⁰	.09 pts.	95 ⁰⁰	110 ⁰⁰
1.01 cts.	2,375 ⁰⁰	4,500 ⁰⁰	.08 pts.	78 ⁰⁰	100 ⁰⁰
1.01 cts.	2,195 ⁰⁰	4,000 ⁰⁰	.07 pts.	63 ⁰⁰	90 ⁰⁰
1.01 cts.	1,875 ⁰⁰	3,800 ⁰⁰	.06 pts.	55 ⁰⁰	80 ⁰⁰
.95 pts.	2,385 ⁰⁰	4,600 ⁰⁰	.05 pts.	48 ⁰⁰	70 ⁰⁰
.89 pts.	895 ⁰⁰	2,000 ⁰⁰	.04 pts.	45 ⁰⁰	60 ⁰⁰
.89 pts.	1,795 ⁰⁰	3,300 ⁰⁰			
.83 pts.	1,595 ⁰⁰	2,900 ⁰⁰			
.80 pts.	1,023 ⁰⁰	2,100 ⁰⁰			
.78 pts.	995 ⁰⁰	1,800 ⁰⁰	1.51 cts.	2,900 ⁰⁰	6,000 ⁰⁰
.77 pts.	985 ⁰⁰	1,800 ⁰⁰	1.11 cts.	2,095 ⁰⁰	4,000 ⁰⁰
.75 pts.	1,395 ⁰⁰	2,200 ⁰⁰	.88 pts.	1,475 ⁰⁰	3,000 ⁰⁰
.75 pts.	1,135 ⁰⁰	2,100 ⁰⁰	.79 pts.	985 ⁰⁰	2,000 ⁰⁰
.75 pts.	975 ⁰⁰	1,900 ⁰⁰	.71 pts.	1,350 ⁰⁰	2,600 ⁰⁰
.74 pts.	1,250 ⁰⁰	2,300 ⁰⁰	.57 pts.	1,185 ⁰⁰	2,400 ⁰⁰
.72 pts.	1,395 ⁰⁰	2,700 ⁰⁰	.54 pts.	1,225 ⁰⁰	2,300 ⁰⁰
.71 pts.	1,395 ⁰⁰	2,700 ⁰⁰	.53 pts.	1,095 ⁰⁰	2,400 ⁰⁰
.71 pts.	1,050 ⁰⁰	2,500 ⁰⁰	.51 pts.	1,225 ⁰⁰	2,100 ⁰⁰
.70 pts.	795 ⁰⁰	1,400 ⁰⁰	.46 pts.	375 ⁰⁰	700 ⁰⁰
.68 pts.	895 ⁰⁰	1,600 ⁰⁰	.28 pts.	315 ⁰⁰	650 ⁰⁰
.67 pts.	760 ⁰⁰	1,350 ⁰⁰	.27 pts.	285 ⁰⁰	500 ⁰⁰
.65 pts.	785 ⁰⁰	1,450 ⁰⁰	.10 pts.	105 ⁰⁰	210 ⁰⁰
.61 pts.	750 ⁰⁰	1,400 ⁰⁰			
.60 pts.	795 ⁰⁰	1,400 ⁰⁰			
.58 pts.	850 ⁰⁰	1,700 ⁰⁰			
.57 pts.	695 ⁰⁰	1,500 ⁰⁰			
.57 pts.	795 ⁰⁰	1,275 ⁰⁰			
.56 pts.	695 ⁰⁰	1,500 ⁰⁰	2.30 cts.	4,900 ⁰⁰	10,000 ⁰⁰
.54 pts.	750 ⁰⁰	1,275 ⁰⁰	.90 pts.	1,890 ⁰⁰	4,000 ⁰⁰
.54 pts.	795 ⁰⁰	1,400 ⁰⁰	.75 pts.	1,590 ⁰⁰	3,250 ⁰⁰
.54 pts.	695 ⁰⁰	1,600 ⁰⁰	.58 pts.	1,75 ⁰⁰	2,600 ⁰⁰
.53 pts.	695 ⁰⁰	1,300 ⁰⁰	.51 pts.	1,395 ⁰⁰	2,600 ⁰⁰
.53 pts.	795 ⁰⁰	1,400 ⁰⁰			
.53 pts.	695 ⁰⁰	1,250 ⁰⁰			
.52 pts.	695 ⁰⁰	2,000 ⁰⁰			
.51 pts.	695 ⁰⁰	1,400 ⁰⁰			
.51 pts.	795 ⁰⁰	1,600 ⁰⁰	2.78 cts.	13,200 ⁰⁰	26,000 ⁰⁰
.50 pts.	795 ⁰⁰	1,400 ⁰⁰	2.14 cts.	4,980 ⁰⁰	9,000 ⁰⁰
.50 pts.	650 ⁰⁰	1,400 ⁰⁰	1.44 cts.	2,995 ⁰⁰	6,000 ⁰⁰
.50 pts.	795 ⁰⁰	1,600 ⁰⁰	1.23 cts.	2,850 ⁰⁰	5,000 ⁰⁰
.49 pts.	595 ⁰⁰	1,150 ⁰⁰	1.22 cts.	3,175 ⁰⁰	5,800 ⁰⁰
.42 pts.	695 ⁰⁰	1,300 ⁰⁰	1.10 cts.	3,250 ⁰⁰	6,500 ⁰⁰
			1.05 cts.	2,675 ⁰⁰	4,600 ⁰⁰

WESTERN SIZZLIN STEAK HOUSE

Lunch Special \$2.79 daily

Each Monday All Steaks 1/3 Off

Tue.-Wed.-Thurs. Aggie Specials

- Chicken Fried Steak Dinner...\$2.79 (Reg. \$3.99)
- 8 oz. Chopped Sirloin.....\$2.79 (Reg. \$3.99)
- Grilled Chicken Breast.....\$3.39 (Reg. \$3.95)
- 8 oz. Sirloin Steak.....\$4.19 (Reg. \$5.19)
- 6 oz. Filet Mignon.....\$4.29 (Reg. \$5.97)



779-2822
1701 S. Texas Ave. in Brycan (next to Rodeway Inn)
11 a.m.-10 p.m.
not valid with other offer

Growing for the Future... Based on A Proud Past!

In 1988, the Texas Aggie Credit Union is committed to provide an expanded and improved variety of services to all its members. Last week, we opened our beautiful, new member service offices that will allow you to conduct all your banking business in privacy and comfort, whether discussing a personal loan or just talking with a member service representative.

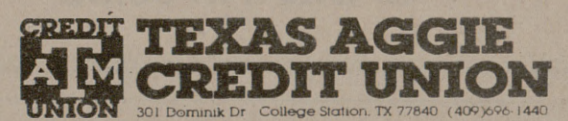
Your Texas Aggie Credit Union continues to offer all its members a broad array of very competitive and convenient financial services. In the coming weeks we will be adding some exciting new services and looking for ways to enhance those services that our members already enjoy.

Remember in Aggieland, the only bank you need is not a bank — its your Texas Aggie Credit Union!

Your Maroon MasterCard Headquarters.

Ask About Our New Preferred Membership Package

Texas Aggie Credit Union membership is open to all former students, faculty, staff and students of Texas A&M University and members of their families.



301 Dominik Dr. College Station, TX 77840 (409) 696-1440
Insured by National Credit Union Administration (NCUA)

TEXAS COIN EXCHANGE
Behind Shellenberger's 30-day money back guarantee
404 University Dr. East 846-8905