

Mummenschanz creatures delight A&M audience

By Keith Spera

REVIEWER

Toilet paper became a turn-on, day-faced creatures stretched each other's nose, and a couple of men made of inflated garbage bags beat the stuffing out of one another Monday night in Rudder Auditorium when the three members of Mummenschanz brought their innovative theatrical show to Texas A&M.

Ever since this Swiss trio began to gain worldwide acclaim in the mid-70s, their shows have been hailed as a new form of theatre — one that combines elements of puppetry, acting, dance, magic and mime.

Their version of mime is not that of the typical curbside white-faced performer who works for nickles thrown by passersby. While the Mummenschanz cast members — Bernie Schürch, Floriana Frassetto, and Andrés Bossard — wear black tights similar to those worn by their streetworking counterparts, the similarities end there.

At last night's show, presented by MSC Opera and Performing Arts Society as part of their Theatre Series, Mummenschanz used colorful, clever costumes and props to create illusions and silent creatures that appeared to be complex living beings. At times, it seemed impossible that a human was capable of accomplishing the contortions needed to give the creatures life.

Some of the creations were made of foam rubber. Others were inflatable bags of plastic with humans inside. For the more subtle skits that needed changing facial expressions, humans in black tights paraded about with heads made of clay, toilet paper rolls, and pads of paper.

The creatures ranged from a fluorescent-green foam-rubber Mr. Mouth — a big pod with a huge mouth splitting it in two — to a 10-foot yellow Slinky-like tube that played catch with the audience using a big pink balloon.

Sometimes, the onstage characters, while not looking much like humans, had a tendency for exhibiting very human characteristics.

A pair of mime creatures who had faces made of ice trays filled with golden cubes gambled for one another's cubes, with one creature getting greedy and stealing all but one of the other creature's cubes.

Another pair of beings had facial features made of pink and blue rolls of toilet paper. The blue being attempted to seduce the pink one with sheets of his paper, only to be met with a game of hard-to-get.

More successful in the dating game was the creature who had an electrical plug for a head. He found a compatible mate with an electrical socket for a head. When the two "joined," the stage lights suddenly surged on. The creatures skipped offstage, and the lights came up several more times, implying that the "joining" continued offstage.

At one point, one of the Mummenschanz cast members, dressed as a hand, "saved" the audience from an enormous inflated head — at least 20 feet tall and 30 feet wide — that started to ease off the stage and onto the audience. The hand came surrying in front of the first row of seats and shoved the head back. Chuckles and applause from the audience rewarded the hero hand.

The show, entitled "Mummenschanz 1969-1989," presented a hodge-podge of skits drawn from the troupe's 20-year history. With any luck, the next generation of Aggies will one day get to see the 40-year history of this talented bunch.



Don't worry, bee happy

A sure sign of coming spring. Bees are beginning to pollenate flowers of the Brazos Valley area, like this one in the flower garden in front of the Systems Building.

Photo by Mike C. Mulvey

Sea Grant works to correct man's impact on ocean life

By Kelly S. Brown

STAFF WRITER

Beneath the raging ocean waters lives a world that's unimaginable to most people — a place of beauty and wonder, where the marine life's ability to survive is continuously challenged by other creatures in the sea — or that's the way it used to be.

Today the marine environment is being disturbed and challenged by the creatures on land. The water quality is declining, populations are burgeoning, habitats are deteriorating and shellfish are being contaminated.

While sea life is being threatened by man, he may be the sea's salvation. Society is leaving it up to the caretakers of the ocean to cleanse the sea and research it to better understand it, but they can only do so if given ample funding.

Among the caretakers are researchers for Sea Grant, the nation's coastal ocean science and research program. The Sea Grant network encompasses more than 302 universities and affiliated institutions, with 29 individual Sea Grant programs — Texas A&M being one of the largest. The program has brought close to \$2 million annually to the College of Geosciences.

The Sea Grant concept, which is patterned after the Land Grant Act of the 1860s, is to promote better understanding and use of marine resources through research, education, extension and information transfer.

The program is administered through the U.S. Department of Commerce and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Federal funds are matched by support from states and the private sector.

Mike Hightower, program coordinator for the Marine Advisory Service, said Texas Sea Grant programs and activities had a \$56.3 million direct impact on the Texas coastal economy in 1987.

The Department of Commerce appropriated \$1.8 million, while

\$475,000 were state matched, Hightower said. Indirect impacts were around \$150 million.

Hightower said \$20 million of the estimated direct impact came from the commercial fishery industry; \$2.8 million from aquaculture; \$15 million from recreation and tourism and \$2.4 million from seafood processing and marketing.

"The seafood industry is just one example of how our research stimulates the economy," Hightower said. "Two years ago the United States imported \$6 billion worth of seafood. Obviously, it has an enormous impact on the economy."

The Sea Grant Program has research going in "just about everything in every county along the coast," Hightower said.

One of the 37 programs funded in the past two years involved the development of shrimp aquaculture.

Hightower said imports now account for more than 75 percent of the shrimp consumed in the U.S.

In a Texas Sea Grant report on the economic impact the program has, it stated that a steadily increasing percentage of these imports are high quality, pond raised shrimp. In order to remain economically competitive in the world shrimp market, domestic producers must strive to maintain a quality product on-board the vessel.

The solution was a 20-minute video which described on-board handling practices designed to maximize the storage life of the product on the vessel.

The benefit shows that if Gulf and South Atlantic Shrimpers follow recommended procedures and reduce their rejects (pieces, black spots and spoilage) by only 5 percent, they can realize an annual additional profit of \$15,000 per boat. If all Gulf shrimpers participated, they could realize an annual savings of \$97.5 million.

Another example given in the report listed the Sea Grant's challenge to develop an innovative mitigation program to offset damage to coastal

habitat resulting from marsh destruction by a chemical company.

The solution was to work with officials from the City of La Marque and Galveston County to obtain funds from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) for developing a coastal park and 31 acres of coastal habitat in conjunction with a growout facility and public fee fishing program for redfish.

The benefit was that they obtained a \$380,000 grant from TPWD which was matched for \$380,000 by the chemical company for a total of \$760,000 to develop the facility.

Hightower said Sea Grant does make a difference, and they can only continue to advance the accomplishments if given the chance.

Each Sea Grant program has to meet local needs, earn state support, participate in national efforts, and maintain congressional support.

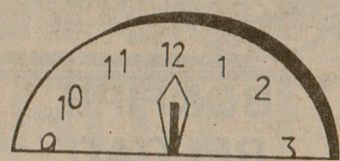
Secretary of Commerce Robert Mombacher will be in town today to speak at the Brazos County Republican Party's annual Lincoln dinner. Officials at A&M's Sea Grant hope Mombacher will be interested to hear the strides their program has made, as well as the challenges still ahead.

The A&M Sea Grant Program publishes Texas Shores quarterly to circulate what's going on with their research and programs. In one of their advertisements it shows the skeleton of a fish with a plastic six-pack holder in his teeth.

The advertisement says, "Before you toss that six-pack holder overboard, stop and consider. That fragile-looking plastic ring can last 450 years. Plastics do not rot. They don't go out with the tide. They accumulate and they kill. Both fish and shorebirds get entangled in the mess. Some even mistake plastic for food. The result: thousands die needlessly. So, next time you take the plunge in the Gulf, stow the garbage or, at the very least, toss the degradable stuff and keep the plastics. We shore appreciate it."

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Adams hopes for speaking engagements

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Randall Dale Adams, jailed for more than 12 years for a murder he says he didn't commit and freed partly because of the movie "Thin Blue Line," said Monday he hopes to build a future by speaking about his ordeal.

"This is a case and a story that must be held before the public," Adams said in an interview at his mother's home. "I want to get some speaking engagements, talk to people, law schools, places where lawyers and judges are trained. They must know my story."

"If I can support myself and do that, I want to take that avenue. But failing that, I'll get a job. In that case, Randall Adams could just filter into the mists of time."

In the meantime, Adams, a quiet, introspective man with a dry wit, is enjoying his newfound freedom and trying to find some private time.

Adams, 40, was freed last week from a Texas prison he had inhabited since being convicted in 1977 for the murder of a Dallas policeman. He was sentenced to die.

He was released Tuesday after the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals reversed the conviction.

Prosecutors announced Thursday they would not seek to retry him.

Adams' story was chronicled in filmmaker Errol Morris' documentary "Thin Blue Line," which questioned evidence and prompted Texas officials to re-examine the case.

Adams spent Thursday night with his mother, Mildred, who sold her house in suburban Grove City to help pay her son's legal bills. After taking a short drive Friday around Columbus, which has doubled in size since he last saw it, he spent the rest of the day with his family in Grove City.

He spent most of Saturday and part of Easter Sunday shopping for clothes and other necessities. On Sunday morning, Adams attended an Easter church service.

"Randy took a flower out of his lapel and gave it to the pastor," said Adams' mother. "Then the whole church clapped. That whole church was just so glad to see that boy."

He tried to rent a videotape of "Thin Blue Line," but was told it was not in stock.

"The guy there said I shouldn't rent it because all they do in it is talk," he said, smiling.

Adams had other errands to run Monday, in-

cluding applying for a driver's license and a Social Security number. He also went to rent a post office box to accommodate the stream of letters and gifts for him.

"I've been given just about everything you can think of — an Easter bunny, flowers, this watch," he said.

But Adams was calm in the face of the publicity storm his release created. He said the family has agreed to put its private homecoming on hold for now.

"We're trying to snatch as much private time as possible. My family understands," he said, adding that his mother has become almost as much a celebrity as he has. "I'm afraid I'm going to have to get her an agent."

He said he tries not to think about the time he spent in prison, which he said "is as bad and worse than any movie you've ever seen. I carry the scars."

His face filled with pain and he spoke slowly when he recalled his brush with death in 1980. Three days before his execution date, a stay was issued.

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