

Latin dances
ignite passions

By YVONNE SALCE
Special to The Battalion

Imagine men with bare, brown chests twirling women dressed in tight bandeaux that reveal tan bosoms. And as they turn and grind their hips, their tiny miniskirts flare up, revealing G-string panties.

If this type of dancing sounds foreign, not to mention racy, then you've caught the essence of lambada. It's been called the Latin version of dirty dancing, the dance rage of the '90s and labeled the forbidden dance.

Bringing men and women close together, lambada is by far a sexy dance. The dance, originally from Brazil, comes from the Portuguese verb "to whip."

Borrowing from the tango and merengue, also Latin dances, it is a fast-paced dance performed with the man's right leg between the thighs of his partner. So sensual, it was at one time banned in Brazil.

The dance's recent popularity has been sweeping people off their feet. Night clubs, tapping into the latest Latin rhythms, have been popping up all over the country. Houston, for example, has its own club named after the dance itself, not to mention producers who have used the dance to market such films as "Lambada" and "The Forbidden Dance."

Yet, some believe this Brazilian pump and grind is just a passing trend.

Antonio Caraballo, a Spanish lecturer at Texas A&M University, says the lambada is "a faddish new trend."

"The lambada, which has Afro-Caribbean traits, may not stay around too long," Caraballo says, "not just because of cultural and religious pressures, but because there are other more popular dances."

The salsa and merengue, both influenced by a strong Caribbean beat, have been around much longer, Caraballo says.

Salsa, living up to its food connotation, means "spicy." It comes from Cuba and Puerto Rico. "It has a very strong Afro-American beat with Spanish, African and Caribbean roots," Caraballo says.

On the other hand, the merengue, born in the Dominican Republic, means "to beat," as if beating an egg, Caraballo says.

Lisa Castro, a junior chemical engineering major and president of the Puerto Rican Student Association, says Latin music and dances are more popular than traditional Mexican and Spanish dances because of the body movements.

"It's not like Mexican music, where you dance in a square pattern. You have to wind your body, move your hips and bend your knees," she says.

Caraballo has instructed a dance exhibition sponsored by the Spanish Club and says people are excited about learning the dances.

Caraballo, a native Puerto Rican, says the dances aren't difficult to learn.

"The beat is very much the same in all of them," Caraballo says. "It just depends who's teaching it."

In the merengue, the steps are basic. Both partners bend their knees, there is very little hip movement and the dance doesn't have to look so sensual.

The salsa takes a little more footwork and is more difficult to learn. Caraballo says the elaborate steps resemble those from the disco era, as in the film "Saturday Night Fever."

Even though it was a box office flop, he recommends the movie "Salsa." The music and dancing are choreographed well, he says.

But, an even better way to learn is to have on-hand instructions. Those who missed the Spanish Club exhibition have another opportunity to learn why people are still dirty dancing after all these years.

Volunteer instructors will be helping out in the sixth annual "A Taste of Latino" dance Nov. 17, sponsored by the Puerto Rican Student Association.

The live band "Cibonei" will play salsa, merengue, lambada and other Latin rhythms.

Castro says the dance is open to everyone and serves as cultural points for students in the Department of Modern Languages. "Anybody wanting to learn or just practice is invited," Castro says. "We can find partners for everyone."

Tickets are \$6 and available in the Rudder Box Office. The dance will be held at the Brazos Center in Bryan from 8 p.m. to 1 a.m.

Yvonne is a senior journalism major and a member of the Hispanic Journalists Association.

'Palace' houses Sarandon, Spader's white-hot love

By CAROL GLENN

True love has no bounds. It's rare. It's indescribable. It has no age, ethnic or race restrictions. It's not about money. It's not even about morals or values. It's about having a special body chemistry with another person so powerful that it owns up to the cliché, "Love conquers all."

Based on the novel by Glenn Savan, "White Palace" takes a passionate and erotic look at a type of love, not readily acceptable in strait-laced conservative society, between an older woman and a much younger man.

The movie begins with a young advertising executive, Max (James Spader), going to the "White Palace" to pick up some burgers and fries before heading off to a friend's bachelor party.

After arguing with a fiery, forceful red-haired waitress (Susan Sarandon) who mispackages his order, he ends up at the bache-

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lor party watching slides of his friend's childhood.

Mistakenly a slide of Max's deceased wife slips into the pile of memories. Max stares at the screen speechless for a minute. By the look in his eye you can tell that they had true love.

Then she was killed in an automobile accident and taken from Max.

Max thinks that the love he had for his wife is unmatched until he meets Nora the waitress. After being picked up in a trashy blue-collar country bar, Nora seduces Max and makes love to him as no other woman, including his wife, ever has.

Sparks of passion grow between the couple, until Max realizes that he can never live

without Nora. But how can he explain this to his strict Jewish family, yuppie friends and conservative advertising colleagues.

This movie is a common older woman, younger man romance. The twist is that Max has difficulty letting go and saying goodbye to his deceased true love.

Director Luis Mandoki really plays on the audience's emotions when dealing with the tragedies that Max and Nora endure before coming into their fiery hot sexual desires for each other.

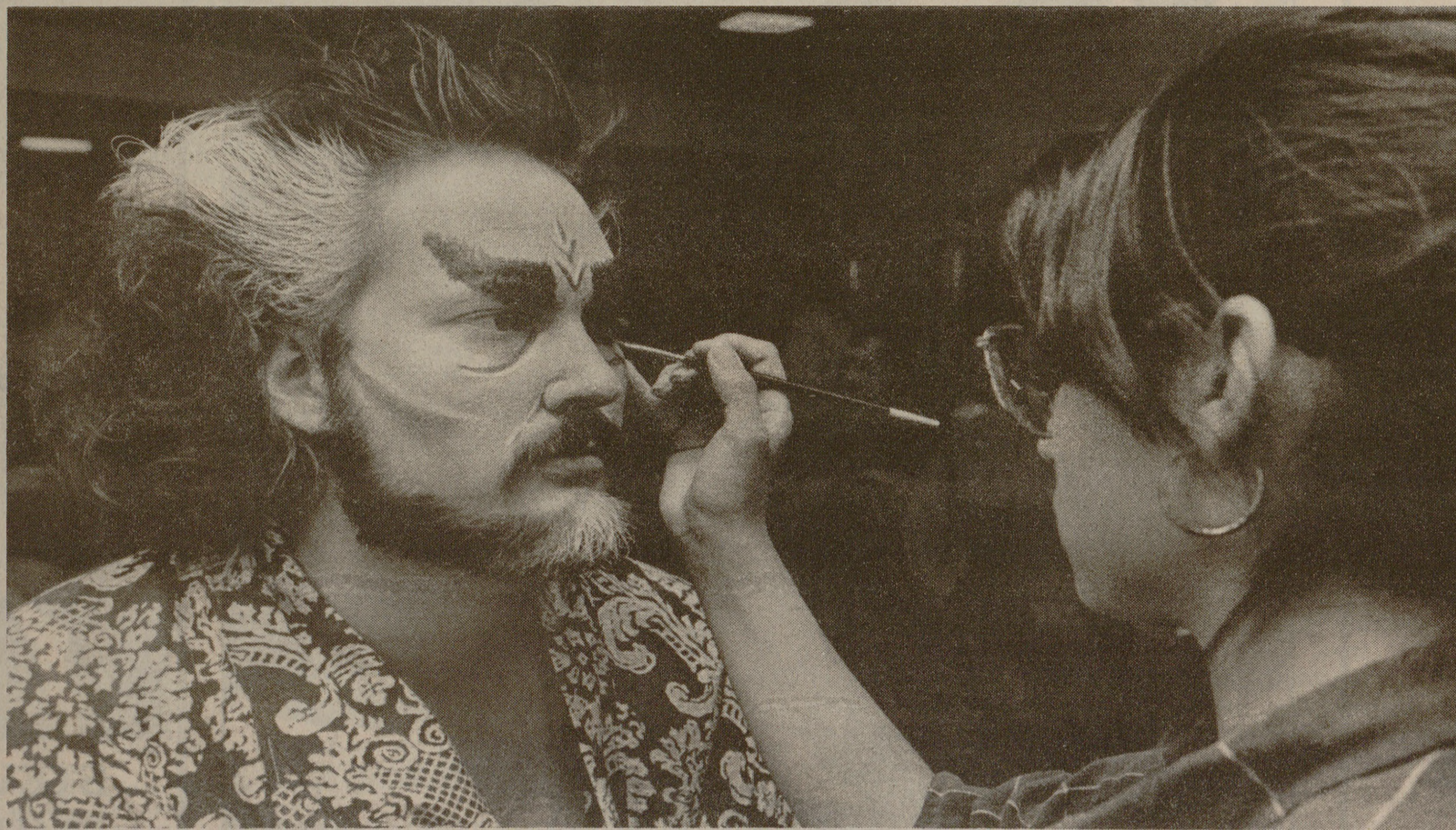
But, unlike many boy-meets-girl movies, this one really has some substance. The audience encounters a love that is the envy of many people, but instead of being blessed the couple is condemned by outsiders' judgments.

Many people today try to be more open with their attitudes regarding relationships, but inevitably unjust condemnations creep

into the lives of lovers and spoil their happiness. Maybe it's envy, maybe it's self-pity, maybe it's just plain selfishness.

OK, so maybe it's a little hard to believe that a 43 year-old woman who flops hamburgers for a living, lives in a unkept trashy house and has Marilyn Monroe for a hero is attractive to a 27 year-old well-groomed advertising executive who lives in a yuppie world of "wanna be's." But hey, this is a fantasy for the romantic and this is what people pay to see. Most everybody enjoys looking at the world through rose-colored glasses every now and then.

"White Palace," which is rated R and is now showing at Cinema 3, takes a fairly believable and sensual look at a love affair between two people who are lonely and hurting. It brings them to a common ground sparking a lasting relationship based on true love, not social pressures.



Makeup designer Lanell Pena puts black eyeliner on Roy Jay, who plays the Mikado in the Aggie Players' production.

SÓNDRINA N. ROBBINS/The Battalion

Mikado plots for romance, comedy

By RUDY CORDOVA JR.

The Aggie Players continue their international season with Gilbert and Sullivan's hilarious musical comedy, "The Mikado." It's a story set in Japan, but full of the typical themes found in most of G&S's operas.

A young wandering minstrel, Nanki-Poo, falls in love with Yum-Yum. But of course, all hope of happiness is gone since Nanki-Poo is already promised to another woman and Yum-Yum to wed The Lord High Executioner Ko-Ko.

The Mikado steps in to announce that since no one has been executed for one year, that Ko-Ko must immediately find someone to behead. Nanki-Poo volunteers to be beheaded, since life without Yum-Yum is worthless.

However, there is one stipulation that he warrants before committing to the execution. Nanki-Poo must be permitted to wed Yum-Yum and live with her for one month. After the execution, Ko-Ko could resume his

plans to marry Yum-Yum.

This becomes the basis to the hilarity which makes this opera one of most loved operas by Gilbert and Sullivan.

"The Mikado" is directed by Theatre Arts professor Robert Wenck who has been with A&M since 1954. This will be Wenck's second time to direct a Gilbert and Sullivan musical in two years, his last being "The Pirates of Penzance" in 1988.

The set and costumes are designed by Theatre professors Jimmy Humphries and Susan Kelly, respectively. Rob Ward, a junior electrical engineering major from Houston is the lighting designer.

Performances of "The Mikado" are at 8:00 p.m. tonight and November 2, 3, 7, 9, & 10 in the Rudder Theater. On Thursday, November 8, the performance will begin at 9:00 p.m. Tickets are \$8.50 for the general public and \$6.50 for students. For more information and reservations call the MSC Box Office at 845-1234.



Katisha, played by Christina Vela O'Connor, makes a grand entrance singing.

SÓNDRINA N. ROBBINS/The Battalion

Players prepare for performance

By RUDY CORDOVA JR.

"If you ain't havin' fun, you're doin' it wrong."

Professor Robert Wenck, or "Coach" as he is known in the Theatre Arts Program, adopted that slogan many years ago. And it's no wonder that everyone involved in the program has fun.

When the Aggie Players prepare for the production of a musical, the cast and crew assume their role necessary for a "good show." (That is the traditional way of saying good luck in the theater.) Their production of "The Mikado" is no exception.

Stephany Tramel, who plays the role of Yum-Yum in "The Mikado" says, "I'm so excited about this musical. It's so much fun working with him (Wenck)."

Tramel, a sophomore theatre arts major, says that "The Mikado" is her first Gilbert and Sullivan production. "This is my favorite musical. The situations are very funny," Tramel says.

"The humor is pretty much timeless."

The cast consists of 29 students, half of which are not theatre arts majors. Mark Anthony Sterling, who plays the part of Poo-Bah, is a senior sociology major from Port Arthur. He says the thing he likes most about "The Mikado" is that each section of dialogue adds to the story and keeps rolling.

"A friend of mine told me to see the musical at the library on videocassette. After I saw it, I got all fired up," Sterling says.

With so many people on stage at once, Wenck says that it's not directing as much as it is like "traffic management." As director of a musical, Wenck has the added efforts of a music director and a choreographer.

"It's been a challenge of blended efforts," Wenck says.

With three "directors," sometimes the stress can feel three times as harsh. Frank Coulter is the music director and Shawnee Jones is the cho-

reographer who is responsible for the movement on stage. They both have the task of making sure that they go along with what the director wants.

Christina Vela O'Connor, a junior theatre arts major from Laredo, says that it is difficult with that many people in charge. "It's hard work because everyone jumps on you. But it's still so much fun," she says.

This is O'Connor's first time in a musical production. She says that it's different being in a musical compared to a drama, where only one person is directing. "It adds to being an actress. It's given me so much more experience," she says.

Wenck likes to direct shows with many aspects of the arts. He says that in the future he would like to direct "H.M.S. Pinafore" and "The Gondoliers." Gilbert and Sullivan are in a class of their own, according to Wenck, who believes that they have an understanding of our own problems.

Gilbert, Sullivan create opera art for audience's enjoyment

By RUDY CORDOVA JR.

Gilbert and Sullivan are famous for their contribution to opera in Britain and for the popularity of the American musical theater. Their influences opened many doors to the Old World and the New. It is this kind of feat that has made their musical comedies, or operas as some may argue, cherished works of art.

William Schwenk Gilbert, a Hampshire Englishman, grew up with the influences of his father as a naval surgeon and an Italian opera lover. No doubt that from the day he

was born, November 18, 1836, Gilbert was exposed to his father's talk of opera and sea.

In school, Gilbert wrote and acted in several plays. This, however, was not his principle liking. Gilbert received his B.A. in law studies from the King's London College. After years of unsuccessful court cases, he resumed his life as a journalist. This started his infatuation with writing. By the time he met Sullivan, he was known as a comical genius of theater.

Arthur Sullivan was born in South London, May 13, 1842. In contrast to Gilbert's wealth was Sullivan's lower-middle class af-

fluence. Sullivan's family knew poverty. His father was a labor worker and a struggling musician. This, in turn, influenced Sullivan's musical ability.

Sullivan was sent as a Mendelssohn Scholar to the Leipzig Conservatory. The rest of his life he spent as a music teacher and composer.

This set up the meeting of these two men from different backgrounds. By the time they met, both Gilbert and Sullivan were well-established in their careers.

A theater manager approached them about collaborating on a production. Gilbert

wrote the words and Sullivan composed the score.

The team of Gilbert and Sullivan went on to produce many operas. Their most famous works include: "Trial by Jury," "H.M.S. Pinafore," "The Pirates of Penzance," "The Mikado," "Ruddigore" and "The Yeoman of the Guard."

Texas A&M Professor Robert Wenck of the Theatre Arts Program gave his reasons for Gilbert and Sullivan's success. "You can do them at any level. They are full of mindless fun, pretty music, spectacle, liveliness, and a sense of mischief," he says.