

## Play Reviews



TED ALBRACHT/The Battalion

As the beautiful Song Liling, Francis Jue mesmerizes the audience with his presence.

### 'M. Butterfly' shocks audience with subtle story, surprising sexual twist

By Timm Doolen  
The Battalion

If attendants at "M. Butterfly" were expecting the opera by Puccini, they got a big surprise. The "M" does not stand for "Madame" but rather for "Mr." in this humorous drama based loosely on a true story.

Some people in the audience were not only surprised, but offended by this play about a French diplomat who falls in love with a young Chinese woman who turns out to be a man.

As the name might imply, the play has many similarities to the opera "Madame Butterfly," and in fact the main character, Rene Gallimard (Graeme Malcom), describes the opera to us in the beginning of the first act.

The streamlined version of "Madame" is that an American in the Navy buys a Japanese girl for

66 cents and eventually falls in love with her because she will do anything for him.

In "M.", Gallimard is stationed in the ambassador's office in China, and eventually falls in love with a local Chinese girl. He sees himself as Pinkerton from "Madame" and the girl Song Liling (Francis Jue) as the little butterfly who will do anything for him.

From the early '60s to the mid-'80s, Gallimard and the butterfly chase each other in China and later in France. Unbeknownst to Gallimard, not only is Liling a man, but also a spy for Communist China during the whole affair.

Gallimard and the "woman" are caught for spying, and then it comes out that the woman was really a man. Gallimard tells us of his overwhelming embarrassment.

The obvious question is how can a man who

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### Shakespeare with a Twist

Aggie Players dazzle audience with modern version of "The Merchant of Venice"



HUY NGUYEN/The Battalion

Rapulana Seiphimo, as Tubal, played three roles in the play.

By Terri Welch  
The Battalion

It's different, but it's dazzling. Injected with non-traditional perks, the Aggie Players' rendition of Shakespeare's "The Merchant of Venice" is something not usually seen or expected by most audiences. But that's what gives it class.

Shakespeare is often associated with confusing phrases and unfamiliar words, but the stories he tells and the characters he tells them with are intricate and exciting.

The Aggie Players pick right up on those hidden treasures. And as the program states, "Shakespeare cautions us about the dangers of judging too quickly and of basing our judgments on religious icons, the color of caskets or gender."

The actions and gestures translate these ideas and guide the audience with such ease that even if you are unfamiliar with the details of the story, it is easier than ever to follow along. However, it would be wise to at least know the basic plot.

Aside from the story, the actors themselves pour out expression and enthusiasm. It is definitely a balanced cast. No single person steals the show and not one pulls the energy down, a difficult measure to accomplish.

The characterization of each of the actors baffles the mind and a few overwhelm reality.

John Flores gives an outstanding performance as Shylock and the Prince of Arragon. His believability and interpretation both convince the audience of his intentions, his feelings, and ultimately his frustrations.

Flores was not alone in his excellence. Jessica Lowe has real class. Her portrayal of Portia is unmatched and her energy and stage presence seem to consume the entire theater.

Although at times she seemed more melodramatic, Lowe's manipulation of Shakespeare's difficult language remains impeccable.

In his debut performance at Texas A&M, South African student Rapulana Seiphimo went above and beyond. With such ease, he came and went and had the audience wrapped around his little finger. His memorizing techniques and powerful presence held the moment of each scene.

But again, it is not the story or the cast that linger around. It is the liberties taken with the script.

Here and there, the production is scattered with modern day music. Almost entirely through the

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