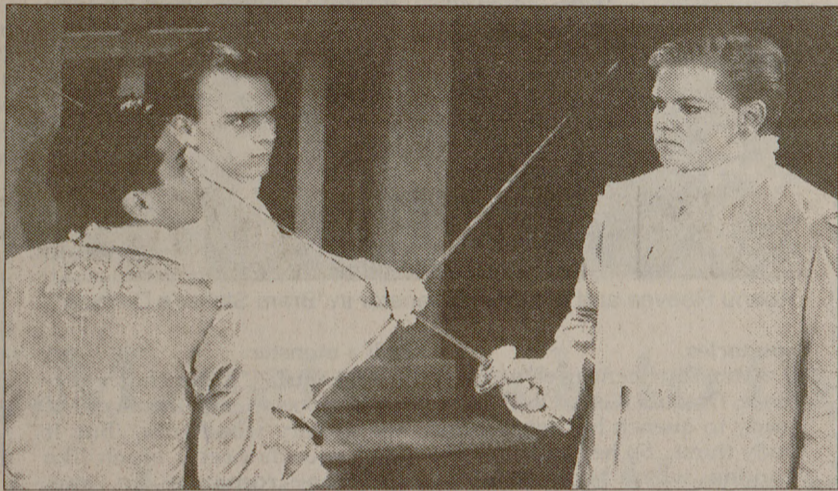




## Aggie players triumph with 'Les Liaisons Dangereuses'

By ANAS BEN-MUSA  
Reviewer of THE BATTALION

"Les Liaisons Dangereuses" (Dangerous Liaisons) By Christopher Hampton Starring Christina Vela-O'Connor, John Flores, Kristi Cobern Directed by Robert Wenck Playing at Rudder Forum



John Flores, Chris Rogers and Michael Whiteside star in the Aggie Player's production of "Les Liaisons Dangereuses."

Aggie Players complete their fall season with a "magnifique" version of "Les Liaisons Dangereuses."

Set in 1780s France, it is a story about about two fiendish friends, the Marquise de Merteuil and the Vicomte de Valmont, who plot together to embarrass their relatives and acquaintances. If you loved the film version, the play is just as intriguing.

From the very moment I walked into the theater, I realized Aggie Players had created something special.

Set designer Jimmy Humphries created an impressive and ingenious set with good use of space—the set trickled onto the aisles. In addition, the more intimate scenes made use of a rolling bed. It was a crafty way of establishing different scenes on the same stage.

The costumes created by Joanne Johnson were also impressive: simple, elegant and beautiful.

Johnson and Humphries used the few resources they had imaginatively, but the creativity did not end with the sets and costumes.

Christina Vela-O'Connor's portrayal of the deliciously ruthless and vile Marquise de Merteuil amazed me. As in previous plays, Vela-O'Connor brings a sense of

dignity and nobility to her characters.

Although Merteuil is a despicable woman, Vela-O'Connor is able to make her character likable in a devilish way.

You cannot help but like a character who considers "cruelty such a noble quality." Merteuil is an immoral and cold person, but throughout the play I looked forward to seeing what she had planned in her evil mind.

The play would have been impeccable if Kristi Cobern had not distracted me with her exaggerated gyrations as the fragile and virtuous Madame de Tourvel. Cobern was shaking and quaking so much I thought she was having an epileptic fit. Although de Tourvel is a weak pathetic creature, Cobern over-emphasizes the character's inability to stop Valmont's pressing advances.

Thankfully, John Flores' performance as the Vicomte de Valmont

saved the scenes with Cobern. He was able to carry the scenes with Cobern and direct the attention of the audience to him. His snide remarks and facial expressions kept the play moving along.

Flores was also the play's sound designer. His choice of concertos by Vivaldi lent an even pace to the play.

Another good performance is Ashley Galaway's free-spirited Emilie, Valmont's lover. Galaway's small part was refreshing. She had a contagious laugh that had the whole audience chuckling.

"Les Liaisons Dangereuses" creates a memorable picture of 18th-century France. Don't let Cobern's maniac trembling distract or discourage you from going. Vela-O'Connor, Flores and Galaway are too good to miss.

The play runs Nov. 18-21 in Rudder Forum.

## Love conquers death in 'Once On This Island'

By MARSHALL LOVE

Feature Writer of the BATTALION

"Once On This Island" By Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty Starring Tonya L. Dixon and Darius de Haas

Love overcomes death. Who could have guessed?

"Once On This Island," an OPAS-sponsored production, was performed in a full Rudder Theater last night. The musical is based on a novel written by Rosa Guy.

The relaxing Caribbean music and the free, wild dancing are wonderful. The drums play hypnotic jungle rhythms that set the mood for the mystic music. The cast performed a fairy tale plot that I enjoyed as I would a great children's story.

However, I really expected more. Scene by scene, the plot led me to expect anything but what the ending offered.

The conclusion was not one of those exciting, intriguing ones. It was more of a what the heck, up in the air, incomplete sort of ending.

The plot develops with a series of well performed, dramatic, and highly entertaining scenes that, in the end, go in what I would call the wrong direction.

Set on an island in the French Antilles, the play tells the story of a dark skinned peasant girl named Ti Moune, played by Tonya L. Dixon, who falls desperately in love with a rich, light skinned boy named Daniel, played by Darius de Haas.

Ti Moune offers her life to Papa Ge, the demon of death, in order to save Daniel, who has been injured in a car crash. Papa Ge grants her

wish, but if she and Daniel don't fall in love and stay together, he will kill her.

Ti Moune and Daniel do fall in love, but Daniel's father doesn't approve of his son's affair with a peasant girl. To Ti Moune's dismay, Daniel marries the girl his family had long wanted him to marry.

The powerful dancing and singing throughout the play led me to expect an equally powerful conclusion that just didn't happen.

Here it is: the demon of death had no choice but to kill Ti Moune, who is reincarnated as a tree.

However, she's not just any tree. She is a beautiful tree near Daniel's home that grows to be so big that it breaks down the front gates, which are never to be closed again.

So, as the singing in the final scene told me, Ti Moune's death succeeds in preventing class separation in the future because the gates have been opened.

As a finale, Ti Moune is a tree holding open a gate and I am somehow supposed to be satisfied. I wasn't.

Though the play's comment on Haitian life and class system is noteworthy, the play's overall theme of love conquers death is undermined in the way it is presented.

Yes, love has conquered death, but only through death. Ti Moune dies and is reincarnated as a tree while her true love marries someone else! If love conquered death, it was by a near margin.

Even with the play's less than impressive ending, I enjoyed "Once Upon This Island" for what led up to the final scenes.

The simple costumes and props were a good choice. The modest production resulted in showcasing the cast's talent rather well.

I would even like to see the play again, but I would definitely leave the theater before the final scenes.

I'd rather write my own ending to an otherwise entertaining and colorful musical.



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