

AGGIELIFE

MAME collaboration



Roger Hsieh, THE BATTALION

Aunt Mame, played by **Anne Black**, and Patrick played by **Jerry Downey**, rehearse for *Mame*, Wednesday night at Rudder Theater.

By Amy Collier
THE BATTALION

The quiet of summer will soon be disrupted by the comical sounds and music of *Mame*. The first of eight performances is tonight in Rudder Theater at 8 p.m.

The musical comedy is a first-time collaboration of the MSC Dinner Theatre committee, the Aggie Players and Stagecenter, the community

theater in Bryan.

Dennis Koch, director of *Mame* and adviser to the MSC Dinner Theatre, said the three groups wanted to perform *Mame* in College Station because the opportunities to see musicals are rare.

"I think it will be a nice, light entertainment piece for students in the summer," Koch said. "They don't want to see something depressing. It's a fun show. It just seemed to be the right

Musical comedy opens tonight in Rudder

piece at the right time."

Mame is based on the title character's comical adventures in love, sorrow and happiness over a 20-year span beginning in the 1920s.

The cast has over 30 members, ranging in age from four to 65, and Koch said the numerous preparations required almost around-the-clock work since they were chosen in April.

"It's been real tough," Koch said.

"But I think we've done a really good job. I think everyone will be pleased with the results of all of our hard work."

Koch said that if the turnout is positive, there may be a musical every summer, possibly starting with *Bye Bye Birdie* next year.

"It will become a good summer tradition," Koch said. "There's so much talent in the area that we can do this."

Koch said he expects at least two shows to sell out and that groups such as Aggie Hostel, a reunion for former students taking place next week, have already bought tickets.

Mame is being performed at music halls and theaters across the country this summer and was even mentioned on "The Late Show With David Letterman" last week.

"We're really excited that this show is so popular," Koch said. "People still perform it and still attract audiences. It reinforces the fact that we picked a good show and people are going to come."

Kathy Symank, associate director for administrative services at the MSC, is playing Mrs. Up-

john in Symank's first play since high school.

"I auditioned for it because I thought the collaboration of the three entities was exciting," Symank said. "I wanted to be part of such a big production."

Symank said the production has more variety than the typical play.

"It's going to be different," she said. "It has a lot of pizzazz to it. This is just a different adventure. There should be more musicals in this town."

The sacrifices made for the play were numerous, Symank said.

"This was really a big time commitment," Symank said. "From backstage, it's a little hectic because there are so many cast members."

Ross Jarvis, a senior management major, is the director of the production's orchestra and plays piano for the musical.

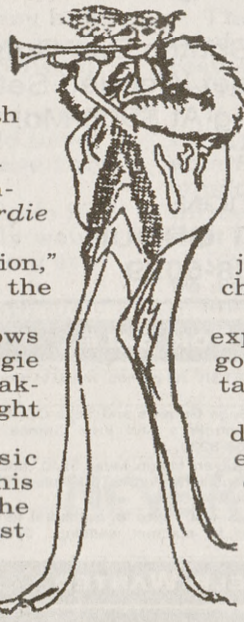
"I'm really excited because this is my first experience with the theater and it's a really good musical," Jarvis said. "It's a very entertaining musical comedy."

After at least five hours of rehearsal every day, Jarvis said the cast has learned how to evoke a wide range of emotions in its audience.

"I think there are going to be scenes that are very upbeat and exciting and then there will be some that will not leave a dry eye in the place," he said.

Koch said he encourages people to come see *Mame* to broaden their cultural experiences.

"I think people should get away from their VCRs and summer reruns and get some live entertainment," he said. "It will be a change to laugh and even sing along with familiar tunes."



Stretching the body and soul

By Libe Goad
THE BATTALION

Stress lurks around every corner. But instead of reaching for chocolate the next time stress attacks, some people lie flat on their backs and concentrate on the noises around them.

Dana Wingo, a yoga instructor for the University PLUS program, begins her class this way, using a technique that focuses on breathing, relaxing the muscles and allowing thoughts to flow freely.

"It lets people shift gears and focus the mind, breath and the body at one time," Wingo said.

University PLUS, an A&M noncredit activities program, offers beginner and intermediate yoga classes every Monday and Wednesday.

Program Director Dana Williamson said the program started offering yoga to help people unwind after a day's work.

"The main part is the meditation and relaxation for stress relief," Williamson said.

Every Monday and Wednesday, about 10 people meet at the MSC and spend 90 minutes stretching, strengthening and focusing on what's going on inside.

Wingo said people come to the class with various preconceived notions.

"One girl came in here with a notepad,

wearing hose and shoes. She sat down and was ready to take notes," Wingo said. "Then, some people come in here with the attitude, 'Yeah, that yoga stuff - I'll take strawberry.'"

The class practices a combination of Hatha and Keiman yoga that focuses on stretching and strengthening the body. Keiman yoga focuses on strength and flexibility, and Hatha yoga encompasses aspects of the physical, spiritual and philosophical realms.

"We don't get into the religious aspects here," she said. "Being in the Bible Belt, that's not a good idea."

Hatha yoga studies the natural movements of newborn babies and how people breathe when they sleep.

"That doesn't include how we breathe when we're on the beach, sucking in our stomachs," she said, "but breathing that extends to the fullest points in a relaxed way."

Bobby Lane, a yoga instructor for the Yoga Institute and Bookshop in Bryan, said yoga exercise places emphasis on posture and balancing the body.

"The body is like a car," Lane said. "If it is out of alignment, and you keep putting new wheels on the car - you're going to ruin the wheels."

Yoga focuses on the entire body and creates a new awareness of the body's movements.

Wingo said yoga exercise helped her overcome her problems with obesity and made her aware of her physical body.

"Before then, I existed from head-up," she said. "I thought, 'I'll never be thin, I'll never be attractive.'"

Her mother influenced her to start practicing yoga, and Wingo said it helped her become physically active.

"My friends and I would walk into the house and Mom would be sitting in some strange position," she said. "After my friends would leave, I would join her."

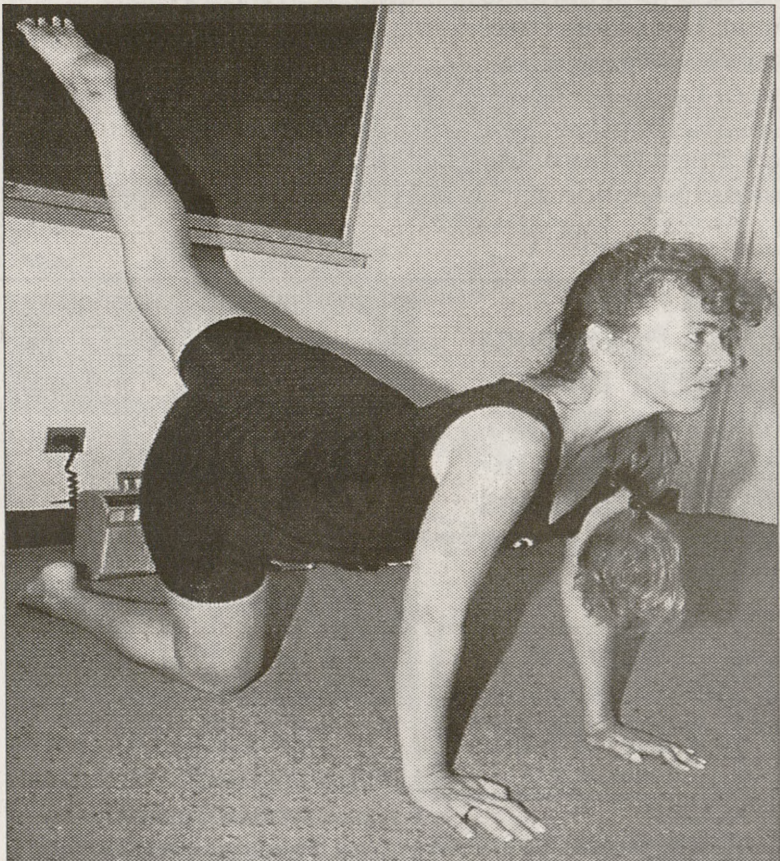
The yoga positions and breathing increase metabolism because it stimulates the internal organs and releases energy in the muscles.

"Yoga by itself isn't going to make you look like Jane Fonda," Wingo said. "I'll never be thin, but I'll never be obese either."

Despite the trend's increase, the A&M health and kinesiology department has not considered adding yoga to their list of classes.

Frank Ashley, coordinator of sport management, said he has not noticed a demand for yoga classes.

"If there was [a demand], we would look into starting a class," he said.



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Dana Wingo teaches a yoga class Monday and Wednesdays from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m in room 342 of the MSC.

Bobby Hall serves up the

BLUES



Nick Rodnicki, THE BATTALION

Local blues guitarist, **Bobby Hall** plays at Northgate Cafe every Thursday night.

By Amy Collier
THE BATTALION

Every time he steps in front of an audience, Bobby Hall said he loses five pounds from the energy he puts into his performances.

Hall started teaching himself how to play the harmonica when he was 8-years-old. He and his band, The Ice Cold Blues Band, have been bringing blues to the College Station area since 1990.

The band performs every Thursday night at Northgate Cafe.

Hall said that after years of practicing blues, his style of music and performing is comparable to that of late blues-artist Albert Collins.

"He's the best I've ever seen in my life," Hall said. "I try to copy his style, and I think I've just about got it down."

Besides performing this style locally, Hall also plays in Austin and Houston.

Although he attracts large crowds with his singing, harmonica and guitar, Hall said he has never taken a music lesson in his life.

"I was born with talent," he said. "God gave me a talent for me to use. It's just like walking. Music just came to me."

Hall said people can relate to the stories he tells with his lyrics.

"I base them upon my life," Hall said. "An artist should write about what pushes his life. That way you can sing from your heart."

"The music touches everyone's soul. You don't have to be from a certain culture. People should give blues a chance."

Hall said he also tries to connect with crowds by making eye contact with each member of his audience.

"You've got to be able to capture the audience,"

Hall said. "When I perform, I make sure I capture the audience. That has added to my success. The stage presence I have has brought me a very long way."

Hall said audiences' positive reactions give him a reason to continue playing blues.

"It's a fulfilling of the soul," Hall said. "It's a natural high. I'm like a junkie. I have to perform more and more. I'm normally very shy, but when I'm on stage, I'm energized."

Besides playing across the state at least three days a week, Hall said he does his most rewarding performances in nursing homes across Texas.

"It's a very strange feeling," Hall said. "It makes you feel very good on the inside, but it also makes you sad. I try to give as much as I can of myself to make me a better person."

When he is not performing, Hall is a local, self-employed maintenance worker.

"It's just about enough to have a 25-hour day," Hall said.

Even though there may not be a big market for blues in College Station, Hall said he plans to play here as long as he is happy.

"It's where I want to be," he said. "College Station loves me. They think I'm the best thing since sliced bread. They respect me as a person."

"I've played blues all my life, and people have to go to Austin, Houston or Louisiana just to listen to blues. People now have the opportunity to listen to blues without traveling."

Hall said he plans to keep entertaining people, and said fame and fortune are not top priorities.

"I would love to have my picture on the cover of Rolling Stone," he said. "But if it's meant to be, it's meant to be. I'm just enjoying making people happy right now. My reward is the soulful experience that I get. You can't put a price on what I get."