

When STUDENTS & CULTURE collide



Tim Moog THE BATTALION

They Might Be Giants performed last fall in Rudder Auditorium. MSC Town Hall, which sponsored the show, brings comedians and other popular performers from all types of modern music to campus.

Town Hall faces many obstacles in bringing popular and diverse acts to campus

By Libe Goad
THE BATTALION

They Might Be Giants took to the Rudder stage in December 1994 and people were standing and singing along. Some progressed to bunny-hopping down the rows of chairs.

But not every student was there to simply have a good time.

Down the side aisles in Rudder Auditorium, people wearing t-shirts with glow-in-the-dark print stood calmly and watched the crowd and the show. Others wearing the same shirts stood in front of the stage, while still more were outside taking tickets.

They were all members of MSC Town Hall, and they are still making things happen today by bringing musicians and performers to A&M, guaranteeing

students entertainment on campus.

Students in the organization are in charge of advertising, security, ushering and other aspects in planning shows.

This year, Town Hall will be expanding in several directions to try to continue booking a variety of shows. In the past, R.E.M., Garth Brooks, the Violent Femmes and the Indigo Girls have illustrated the diversity of Town Hall's shows.

Bryan Quarles, Town Hall chairman, said one way the Town Hall committee plans to diversify entertainment is by working with other student organizations to bring performers to A&M.

Comedian Bill Bellamy performed last spring through a joint effort with the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity, and Town Hall has also worked with the NAACP to cosponsor programs.

Heather Murray, assistant of opera-

tions, said Town Hall tries to schedule a variety of music, but the group has difficulty getting performers to visit A&M and to receive input from students.

Town Hall held its first forum last February to explain why it has difficulty getting performers to visit A&M and to receive input from students.

Students and the committee discussed scheduling limitations the organization faces, such as promoters' perceptions of A&M as solely a big country music market.

The organization has also seen several well-known artists slip through their fingers for reasons unknown.

"We talked to a promoter about bringing Pearl Jam," Quarles said. "Stephen F. Austin University got the show, and we didn't."

Town Hall also ran into problems

when it tried to book the alternative band, The Breeders.

The band was tentatively scheduled to play until the fire marshal said fire codes would be violated in DeWare Field House.

"The audience numbers were cut in half, and we couldn't put on the show," he said.

Quarles said Town Hall will hold other forums to give students the opportunity to offer feedback and learn the scheduling process.

"If a student says, 'How come all you bring is country music shows,' we can tell them why," he said. "They don't understand the aspects that go into booking a show."

Town Hall has had some shining moments in its history, including sold-out Garth Brooks and Clint Black shows,

and Lyle Lovett's performance which started his national tour.

Quarles said he wants to have more free outdoor shows to give little-known performers greater exposure.

In 1992, the Gin Blossoms played outside at Rudder Fountain before opening for Toad the Wet Sprocket.

"They were virtually unknown then," Quarles said. "Now, they're huge."

Murray said Town Hall will focus on lesser-known bands instead of spending all its energies on booking big names.

"We want to have the smaller shows so we can bring more here," she said.

Quarles said he looks forward to catching more bands before they become popular.

"It's exciting when we have up-and-coming things and they explode later," he said.

Aggie Players rely on closeness and devotion

By Rachel Barry
THE BATTALION

What started as a small student discussion group in 1945, went on to become the Aggie Players. Although A&M didn't have a theater arts department until 1977, the Aggie Players stayed focused on the stage.

The history and of the program's endurance is reflective of the importance many students place on theater. For senior English major Chris Blake who auditioned for *Death and the Maiden* and *The Crucible* Monday, the theater offers a creative outlet.

"The arts allow you to learn more about yourself," Blake said.

The Aggie Players produce shows throughout the school year. Auditions are open to any student willing to recite a two-minute monologue.

Blake said the program's small size is small in comparison to programs at other universities doesn't diminish the dedication of the students involved.

"The program is small," Blake said, "but the people involved are very committed, hard working and very talented."

Senior psychology major and Aggie Player Jeff "Jethro" Nolan said because the group is so small, it is imperative that they get along.

"It's a very cohesive group,"

Nolan said. "The people involved are very loyal to the group."

Despite the Aggie Players' existence since the '40s, support for the group has been waning in recent years. Nolan said the decline in interest may be linked to students' apathy.

"It's a disturbing trend," Nolan said. "This is a generation that has grown up with movies and TV."

Nolan said that students aren't always the biggest audience at Aggie Players' performances.

"Most of the audience is faculty," Nolan said. "Usually, the students who are there are there to get extra credit for a class."

Blake said having an impact on the audience and a love of theater keeps these actors motivated despite the sometimes unresponsive student body.

"When you are on stage, you are a part of something bigger," Blake said. "The focus should be on the work of the Theater Arts Department and not on its size."

"I think the quality should be looked at, not just the quantity," he said. "They do a lot of things, and they do them very well."

In an effort to increase the awareness of the program, Nolan said it is important to maintain the high quality of the productions.

"If the people come and see something they like," Nolan said, "then they'll keep coming back."

Theater Arts



Music • Dance

OPAS aims to stimulate intellectual audiences

By Amy Protas
THE BATTALION

Broadway shows and ballet at A&M. This is what J. Wayne Stark had in mind when he created the Opera and Performing Arts Society 23 years ago.

When Stark was director of the MSC, he didn't think there was a true audience for the performing arts and dreamt of a culturally educated and developed audience.

Karen Allen, a senior biomedical science major and MSC OPAS chairman, said the society hopes they are keeping Stark's dream alive.

"Stark's vision has become the philosophy of our organization," Allen said. "We try to broaden people's horizons and show them something different. You can't have a world-class university without performing arts."

OPAS brings touring plays, musicals, ballets and any other form of performing arts. The organization often brings "Texas Exclusives" to A&M. This year's primary example is the Central Ballet of China, which is making its one Texas stop at A&M.

"Every year, we try to have some kind of multi-cultural performance," she said. "We try to open the students' eyes to the world around them, distant and far."

Laura Ridge, a junior biomed-

ical science major, said having OPAS season tickets fills the cultural void for her.

"I bought tickets because I love that type of programming," Ridge said. "I was surprised they could get such a variety of shows."

Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Jesus Christ Superstar*, the New York City Opera's *La Traviata*, and the Guildhall String Ensemble reflect the variety of performances.

Jeffrey Cranor, a junior journalism major and editor of OPAS Inside, the society's newsletter, said he is most excited about *Jesus Christ Superstar*. The musical tells a story of the seven final days of Jesus' life.

"I can't wait for Superstar," Cranor said. "The performance will give A&M the chance to see one of Webber's first and most cutting-edge works."

The nature of the organization enables OPAS members to interact with the community on a regular basis. Half of the board of directors is made up of students and the other half is made up of faculty and the community members.

Jimmie Charney, a senior political science major, said OPAS provides an invaluable opportunity.

"I go to OPAS shows every year," Charney said. "The students have such a huge responsibility to bring the shows here. They go far beyond what we could