

Russian troupe dances into B-CS

BY MELISSA PRICE
 THE BATTALION

Moscow Festival Ballet

Performing *Giselle*, *Carmen* and *Paquita* at Rudder Auditorium Feb. 13-15 at 8 p.m. For tickets call 845-1234

Artistic Director Sergei Radchenko will speak at 7 p.m. before each show about the history of Russian classical ballet. The OPAS Guild-sponsored Patricia S. Peters Lagniappe Lectures will be in 292B MSC.

It could be a scene straight out of "Days of Our Lives." Just as with a typical soap opera, one has to pay close attention to the performances of the Moscow Festival Ballet to figure out who is in love with whom and which character is going to die. But also like soap operas, the ballet can be quite entertaining.

The Moscow Festival Ballet, composed of top dancers from the legendary Bolshoi and Kirov Ballet companies, will perform at Rudder Auditorium tonight through Saturday Feb. 15.

Suzannah Taylor, MSC Opera and Performing Arts Society chair and a senior speech communications major, said students and community members should take advantage of the company's expertise.

"To bring the company itself is an exciting opportunity for us because it really is the best of the best," Taylor said. "There will be few chances for students on this campus to see a company of this caliber ever again."

The Moscow Festival Ballet will perform *Giselle* Friday night and *Carmen* and *Paquita* Saturday night.

The ballet was founded by dancer Sergei Radchenko in 1989 and has been pleasing audiences since its inception.

Taylor said the main difference between the Moscow Festival Ballet and the ballets OPAS has brought to Texas A&M before is that the Moscow Festival Ballet is a full-length ballet, whereas the others were excerpts or short, contemporary pieces.

Since it began performing, the ballet has completed two tours of Europe, including appearances in Germany, Spain, Italy, France and the Netherlands.

Jeffrey Cranor, OPAS director of audience education and development and a senior journalism major, said OPAS has strong ties to the Bolshoi Ballet because it premiered *The Nutcracker* at A&M in the '80s. He said OPAS strives to of-

fer a variety of performing arts to the students and citizens of Bryan-College Station.

"We try to keep our season as diverse as possible," Cranor said. "It's all a matter of giving people what they want. Some of what people want is what they expect part of it is what they don't expect."

Taylor said although ticket sales have been steady, she hopes Valentine's Day will boost sales. She said students often say they do not have enough money to attend.

"Many times students complain about the prices but they don't realize how much it would cost them to see this same performance somewhere else," Taylor said. "I would encourage them to take advantage of the opportunity now."

Taylor said the Moscow Festival Ballet appeals to everyone because the two performances are very different. She said *Giselle* is like a fairy-tale, whereas *Carmen* and *Paquita* are more exotic.

Cranor said some people consider ballets to be only for sophisticated, upper-class people, but OPAS tries to provide something for everyone.

"We want to educate people and develop them," Cranor said. "I think we've grown to think performing arts are an intellectual art form, but they are really for everybody."



Members of the Moscow Festival Ballet perform Act II of *Giselle*.

Memories from the toy box

Aggies remember, regret toys from their early years

BY MICHAEL SCHAUH
 THE BATTALION

Long before those innocent childhood toys became fodder for collectors and hobbyists, and long before they became kitschy icons of Generation X, they had another purpose — fun.

Texas A&M students remember the little plastic friends who accompanied their childhood. Caroline Mire, a sophomore environmental design major, definitely had her favorites.

"I had some 'My Little Ponies,' but I wasn't really into them," Mire said. "I did name my cat after one of them."

Jeremy Gutierrez, a freshman civil engineering major, remembers some toys he had — for a while, anyway.

"I had MASK, G.I. Joe, Transformers, but they got stolen," Gutierrez said. "These older guys stole them. I don't know why they'd want to play with them."

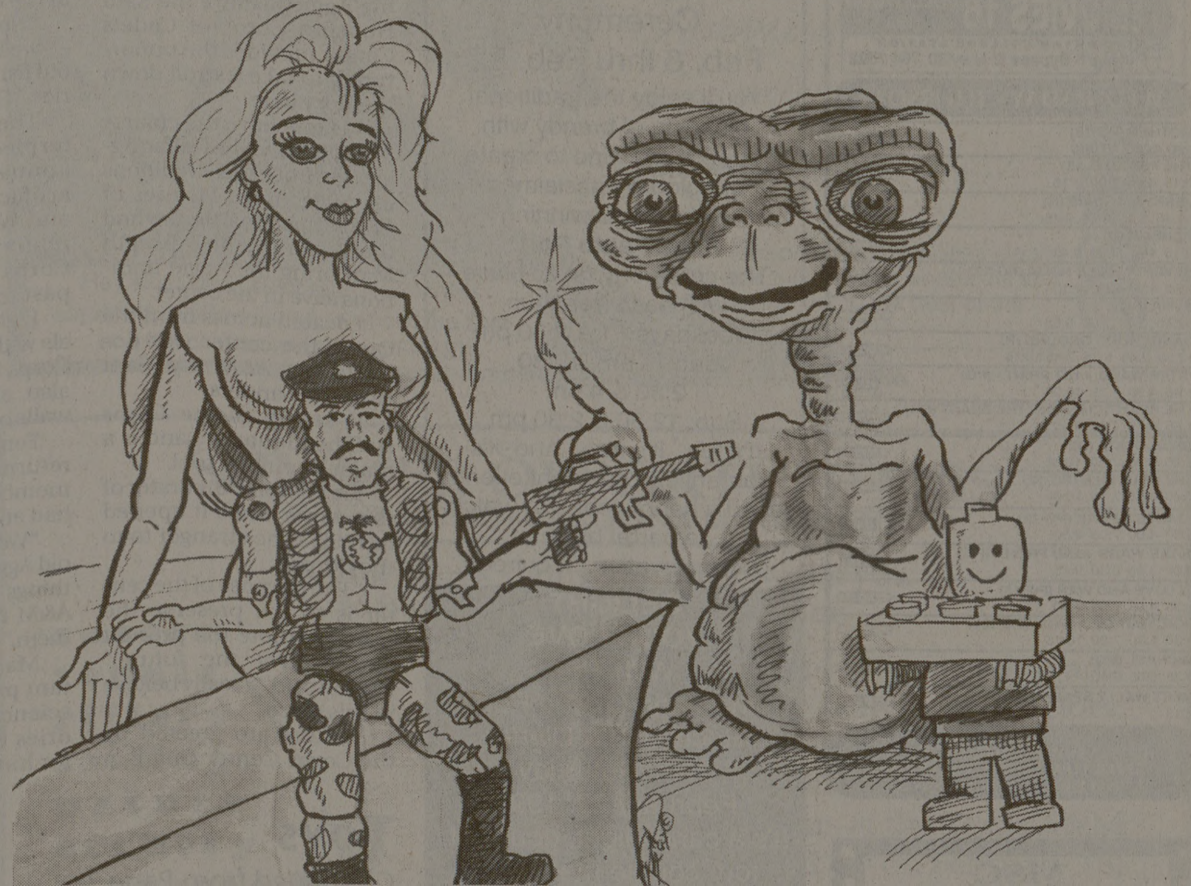
Toys seemed to be hot property in some families and caused more than a few fights among jealous siblings.

Katharine Marsh, a sophomore landscape architecture major, is still battling over her "Dolly Pops."

"It was a little fashion show where you'd pop the doll's clothes on, and there was this rotating stage," Marsh said. "My sister claimed the Dolly Pops were hers. Still today she thinks they're hers."

For both male and female students, that curvaceous plastic woman known as "Barbie" played a memorable role, whether it was "Barbie the Victim" or "Barbie the Avenger."

"My sister played with Barbies," Gutierrez said. "I cut off a Barbie doll's leg when I was little with a pocket knife my parents gave me. My sister



was crying and everything."

Gutierrez said his punishment was swift and severe.

"My parents took away the knife," he said. "They still won't give me the knife."

Junior English major Jennifer Presley made Barbie an unlucky pedestrian in the path of her beloved Tonka trucks.

"I hate Barbie," Presley said. "I hated Barbie then. Barbie and Tonka trucks made interesting combinations. Barbie and Ken got run over quite often."

Other students put Barbie in a more empowering position.

"I did the Barbie thing," Mire said. "One of my friends gave me a 'Jem and the Holograms' toy, and I

hated that doll. All my Barbies would gang up on Jem. She was the bad guy."

Other students had a more '90s approach to the voluptuous plastic icon. Kelly Zayas, a freshman theater arts major, had none of the 1980s gender-typing stuff.

"I liked to make Barbies act," Zayas said. "Barbie had the car. Ken was always looking for a ride. She had a suit — she was a businesswoman. Ken never did anything to my knowledge. I think maybe that caused some tension between them, I don't know."

But Barbie and Ken are just the tip of the plastic, made-in-Taiwan iceberg.

Josh Ethridge, a freshman micro-

biology major, had a more do-it-yourself ethic behind his childhood play.

"My brother and I used to play 'war' — we had toy guns," Ethridge said. "It was back in the '80s, during the Cold War. There were the Russians and the Americans, so we played the whole 'take over the world, bully the Communists' thing. I was always the Communists, too."

Varying degrees of violence played a part in other students' diversions, too.

"I had a little baby doll named Beth," Presley said. "I'd drag her around by her head, and my aunts told me they'd steal her and burn her."

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E.T., Speak and Spell prove students should hold on to childhood

If anyone is going to have E.T.'s baby, it's me. I've been sleeping with him for 14 years.

I'm afraid my parents didn't know what a love affair they started when they gave me an E.T. plush toy for Christmas in 1982.

While other kids were busy lugging around "blankies" and Cabbage Patch Kids, I was sharing stories of outer space travel with my extra-terrestrial friend.

I'm now 21 years old, but I still sleep with the doll, still carry lunch boxes to school and still find solace and stress relief in juggling.

Some of my toys have found their way into the attic and some are

Editor In Chief



Rachel Barry
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buried in my toy box at home, but many are here with me. Some are stacked on my desk at work, scattered through my room at home or carried with me every day.

Some people think I'm too sentimental. Some people think I'm too immature. Others think I'm just silly and mutter a little, "Isn't that cute" under their breath when they see me walk by with my

E.T. lunch box.

But it's not just about being sentimental or trying to be a bit goofy sometimes. There is something extremely therapeutic about playing with toys, no matter how old you are.

I remember the days when a Lite Brite could electrify my room, when Play Doh was the fifth food group and Sit-and-Spin was a self-propelled wild ride, not a vulgar insult.

A few hours and a box of Legos could liberate a vision locked in my imagination.

A toy brings back the sense of freedom and imagination children epitomize. Adults should take advantage of a tool that can open their minds and bring a smile to their faces.

Some toys were better at frustrating the left side of my brain than enriching my creativity. The most obvious one that comes to mind is Speak and Spell. My teachers, editors and friends can attest that this toy was one of the few that had no positive effect on my life or learning

ability. I still remember the chime and the computer voice repeatedly chiding me: "That is incorrect. The correct spelling is..."

These toys were the accents of my childhood, the things that added color and fun to my life. I may be at the age when people think it's time for me to put the toys away, but I don't think I'll be retiring my E.T. doll too soon. I'm not sure I could sleep without his alien head tucked into the crook of my elbow.

Until the day I do decide I need to pass the toys on to my kids, I'll still spend some time every day playing with a toy.

It's not about trying to hold onto childhood, just the ideals that accompany it — the happiness, the imagination and a few outer space adventures.

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