



DEREK DEMERE/THE BATTALION

'Good Woman of Setzuan' poses questions of morality

By MARIUM MOHIUDDIN
Staff writer

Playwrights have the capabilities to move hearts and minds and to shape opinions. Bertolt Brecht was a German playwright who asked the questions of life in his plays and let the audience answer them. His view of life was both optimistic and pessimistic.

"The Good Woman of Setzuan" presented by the Theater Arts Department brings to life one of these morality questions. It is a tale of a woman who is commanded by the gods to be good. In return, they will save her from prostitution and poverty.

Dr. Robert Shandley, director of "The Good Woman of Setzuan" and an assistant professor of German, said he chose this play because he has studied 20th century German drama and believes Brecht was the most influential playwright of that time. "Brecht is one of the popular playwrights of this century," Shandley said. "He wrote this play when he was in exile. It was during World War II, and he was in a different mind set than most people. He fled Nazi Germany, and then he fled America during the McCarthy era. He had a utopian view of life. It is political theater and something that has not been

piece of bread was separating us? The theater is not there to answer the question but to leave it for the audience to answer. He leaves the audience hanging at the end."

Susan Kelly, associate professor of theater arts, coordinator of the theater arts program and resident costume designer, said this is the biggest production of the semester and the costumes enhance the actors capabilities.

"The costumes are traditional Chinese costumes," Kelly said. "They are mainly green-gray and blue-gray. We used a muted color palate. The play is harsh so the clothes have to be in cooler colors. The costumes support the actors and their characterizations. The little details bring out the characters. It helps to solidify the acting."

Kelly said Brecht's plays are set in towns that do not exist, so the costumes are not set in a certain time.

"The costumes were researched from Chinese photographs from the turn of the century," Kelly said. "The lead character has the nicest costume. It is richer but still subdued. Nothing is flashy."

Tara Pannell, lead in "The Good Woman of Setzuan" and a senior theater arts major, said this is the first lead she has gotten and has been preparing for this role since the beginning of the semester.

"I play two characters, Shen Te (a woman) and Shui Ta (a man)," Pannell said. "I am on the stage the whole time so it can be difficult, and it is very emotional. It is hard to pull off a male character. There is one part in the play where I have to change between the two characters on stage. It is difficult because I have to say a monologue at the same time with emotion."

Pannell said to prepare for the role, she used instances from her life.

"In acting you use emotional memory which is taking things from your life," Pannell said. "But you cannot use your grandfather's death because those emotions do not relate. It was easy to portray these emotions because all women have been through situations of unfairness in society. The other actors also do an incredible job, so it is easy to react and work off of them."

Pannell said playing a man was difficult because she had to change her actions.

"Playing the woman was not hard because I could relate to her wanting to please everyone," Pannell said. "It was hard to relate to the man because he is hard, mean and unattached. It was weird because as the woman, you care so much about a character, and then you have to turn around and be unemotional."

Pannell said she turned to many sources to aid her in developing her male character.

"I was told to watch *The Godfather* and to pay close attention to Michael Corleone," she said. "I watched him because his mannerisms are deliberate, and he does not move much."

"It was a struggle playing a man. I had to change everything from the way I walk to how I smoke a cigarette."

"The Good Woman of Setzuan" will be playing at Rudder Forum from Nov. 13-15 and Nov. 19-22. Tickets are available at the MSC Box Office.

"The theater is not there just to entertain us but to teach us to behave better."

Dr. Robert Shandley

Director of "The Good Woman of Setzuan"

none here before."

Shandley said the play tries to present moral questions about materialism and poverty in ancient China.

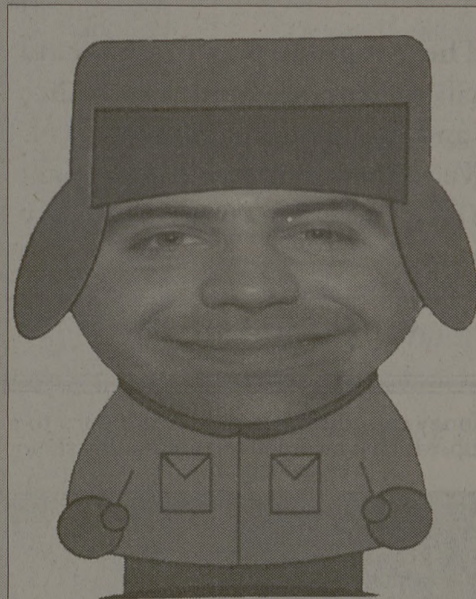
"The problems he sets up are not problems in Asia," Pannell said. "He put it in China so people would not concentrate on where the play is. For Westerners and Europeans at that time, China was as far away as you could get. It gets us to focus on the issues he wants to talk about."

Shandley said Brecht is a moralist and believes the theater is a moral and political institution.

"The theater is not there just to entertain us but to teach us to behave better," Shandley said. "The moral and political lesson is how to be good and stay good without exploitation. Would we be good to each other if we were starving and only a

A New Breed of Laughs

'South Park' proves to be more than a comedy of flatulence and cursing



TRAVIS IRBY
Columnist

Springer episode.

Sure the lovable cherubs of "South Park" curse a blue streak, but they do it in a way that illustrates concern for their comrades.

The show's stars each represent a different segment of society.

Kyle is the only Jewish kid in South Park, and he must deal with the pressures coming from religious conflicts.

Stan, the resident genius of the gang, must deal with his romantic feelings for his classmate Wendy.

Every time he gets close to her he throws up.

Then there is muffled mouth Kenny, who speaks as if his mom was Charlie Brown's teacher.

Every episode, Kenny experiences one violent death after another.

In one episode, the Mir space station crashed right on top of the orange-hooded youth.

Cartman is a violent, ill-tempered fat boy, who must deal with a smothering mother and a speech impediment as bad as Kenny's.

These lovable tykes use gentle humor to deal with today's societal conflicts. The issue of tolerance was addressed when Stan found out his dog was homosexual. Not many shows would address the "powderkeg" of homosexual housepets.

There was an episode dealing with the ramifications of genetic engineering. Genetic horrors like evil, mutant clones were shown, but positive aspects like animals with four butts were given a spotlight. Not since *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, which the episode spoofed nicely, has genetic engineering been handled with such dignity.

When the children have trouble dealing with these problems, like a modern-day Aristotle in an apron, Chef is there to help. Voiced by Isaac Hayes, the crooner of such '70s hits like "Shaft," Chef serves the kids their school lunches, while dispensing advice in the form of songs like "I Wanna Make Sweet Love To You Woman" and "Love Gravy."

There is a host of other characters including a psychotic teacher who speaks through a hand puppet, a duplicitous mayor, Stan's mean, metal-mouthed older sister and even Jesus is on hand with his own cable access show.

This small, fictional town is a microcosm of the world.

It is a great country when a sense of humor that can get someone fired from a job or thrown in jail can also make a million bucks. Credit Matt Stone and Trey Parker for coming up with the best low-brow comedy brainstorm since the phrase "pull my finger."

In the heart-moving words of Eric Cartman, "Follow your dreams. They can come true. I'm living proof of this. Beefcake. BEEFCAKE!!"

America has a new bunch of antisocial animated icons to look up to — the youngsters of the TV series "South Park."

They make Bart Simpson look like a boy scout, and Beavis and Butthead look like a couple of small timers when it comes to these juvenile delinquents.

Kenny, Cartman, Kyle and Stan are the stars of "South Park," Comedy Central's new animated series.

The foul-mouthed quartet has worked their way into America's heart, courtesy of the show's creators Trey Parker and Matt Stone. The show revolves around the adventures of the aforementioned 8-year-olds while inhabiting the small mountain town of South Park, Colo.

Here Kenny, Stan, Kyle and Cartman deal with a variety of issues, such as aliens, tolerance, euthanasia and celebrity worship, with the vocabulary of a sailor and the sophomoric wisdom of a child.

"South Park" is an animation style looks like a bunch of cardboard cutouts pasted on construction paper.

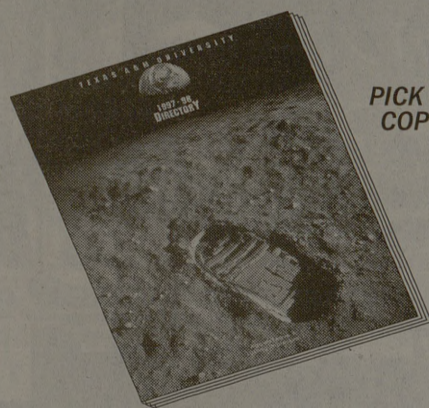
The simplistic style makes "Beavis and Butthead" look like a restored version of "Fantasia."

With its simple, unexaggerated style, "South Park" offers one of the most compelling and complex shows on television today.

One of the show's strong points is its unflinching look at the vernacular of today's youth.

"Kick ass" is a favorite saying of the show's foursome — and that is one of the tamer sayings of the lovable scamps.

The show has more censorings than a



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- MSC Film Society — *Raiders of the Lost Ark* Fri, Nov 14, 7 p.m., *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* Fri, Nov 14, 9:30 p.m. and *Air Force One* Sat, Nov 15, 7 p.m. and 9:30 p.m.
- Theatre Arts — *The Good Woman of Setzuan* Fri, Nov 14, Sat, Nov 15 and Wed, Nov 19 thru Sat, Nov 22, 8 p.m.
- Omega Psi Phi — *Apollo Night* Sat, Nov 15, 7:30 p.m.
- MSC OPAS Jr — *Mr. Taps* Sun, Nov 16, 2 p.m. and 4 p.m.
- BVSO — *Carmina Burana* Mon, Nov 17, 8 p.m.

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