

A player in his own write

An A&M student scripts his own future

BY MANISHA PAREKH
staff writer

If, as Shakespeare wrote, all the world's a stage, Guillermo DeLeon is right at home. DeLeon, a senior theater arts and English major, has participated in over 32 plays since his freshman year in high school. And though he started out interpreting the words of others, his interests have taken him to the other side of the curtain: playwrighting.

"I am trying to paint my own mythology," DeLeon said.

To this end, DeLeon has been creating the characters that bring his dreams and beliefs to life. He has written five plays since coming to Texas A&M.

Two of the plays, "Death by Disco" (co-written with senior theater arts major Dan Grimm) and "Murder at the Blue Note," were performed by local junior high school students. His other three plays, "La Llorona," "Watson's" and "Kelly Pierce," were written for the A&M theater program.

DeLeon became interested in the theater while in high school.

"We did a reading of 'Romeo and Juliet' in class one day, and afterwards a cute cheerleader came up to me and asked me if I wanted to try out for the school play," DeLeon said. "I got cast in the play and she didn't."

DeLeon decided to pursue a major in theater arts because he wanted to teach people how to act. However, his new dream is to become a playwright.

"I want to create an understanding of my beliefs," DeLeon said.

For DeLeon, who was raised in the Rio Grande Valley, exploring and understanding his beliefs is a part of healing the rift between his faith and his culture.

"I have a lot of conflict between the Catholic church and the curanderas (medicine women)," he said. "My plays are a way of trying to see how it all comes together, what I've learned to believe."

DeLeon said his inspirations are his dreams and his friends.

"I get a character in my head and that's what the play's about. The characters are kind of like my friends," he said. "And my friends inspire the attributes of the characters."

DeLeon said he writes his plays for a multi-cultural audience.

"I think that it is important to show that problems are universal. I don't want to limit myself to one group or area, he said."

Once the script is finished, then the hard part starts for DeLeon: the performance of the play.

"Having ideas and ideals in my head is frustrating because sometimes it (the performance) is exactly like you saw it in your head, and other times it's not," he said. "It's scary to see your dreams up there on stage."

"But I do want to know what people think, and that's the only way."

Amy Hilburn, a junior community health major, played the role of Maria in DeLeon's first play staged at A&M, "La Llorona." To her, the writing showed quite a bit of skill.

"I grew up with those legends (of the Valley), and his writing, characters and descriptions were very real," Hilburn said. "His writing was very authentic. He is very versatile."

For his latest play, "Kelly Pierce," DeLeon moved away from the serious tone of his last two University plays, opting instead for a light comedy.

"Comedy is important. It is a lot harder to do because it is a lot more intellectual," he said.

The play follows the trials and tribulations of a couple who have just broken up because of a misunderstanding.

Jim Patton, a senior theater arts major, is directing "Kelly Pierce." Patton, who also acted in "Watson's," said DeLeon's writing has a lot of potential.

"His writing is quick. You can see a lot of ability in the work," Patton said.

Nancy Castellanos, a senior journalism and theater arts major, said that the play is a lot of fun.

"It's good schtick. It's a situational comedy that's a little risqué," Castellanos, who also is starring in the play, said.

And although, DeLeon enjoyed writing the comedy, he said sees himself concentrating more on tragedy.

His next play, which he already is working on, is a continuation of the tragic theme through "La Llorona."

"It's part of a trilogy," he said. "It has to do with a confrontation between a curandera and a bruja (witch)."

DeLeon would like to eventually teach at the university level and have one of his plays performed by a professional theater group.

"A play can only die if it doesn't get used," he said.

“His writing is quick. You can see a lot of ability in the work.”

— Jim Patton
senior theater arts major



PHOTO BY MIKE FUENTES / THE BATTALION

Dr. Dolittle talks to audiences, The Mask of Zorro cuts its way to the top



Dr. Dolittle
Starring Eddie Murphy and Norm MacDonald
Rated PG-13
Playing at Hollywood 16

Eddie Murphy continues his transition from adult comedy star to kinder, gentler, Disney-owned star acceptable to most parents with children.

Following the trend of *The Nutty Professor*, *Dr. Dolittle* gives Murphy another opportunity for elaborate sight gags, usually involving a flock of animals, and some smart jokes that will slip by some.

The extensive voice cast is a plus, with Norm MacDonald getting almost as much screen time as Murphy as the voice of Lucky the dog.

Chris Rock's trouble-making guinea pig never really takes off, but will amuse younger audiences.

Garry Shandling contributes the voice of a penguin who has trouble with his spouse (Julie Kavner of "The Simpsons").

Jenna Elfman ("Dharma And Greg") portrays

an owl with a knack for organization, and Albert Brooks plays what is likely the only suicidal tiger role in movie history.

Dr. Dolittle has the standard slow, piano-backed "moral of the story" moments that are mandatory in family comedies today, but it should entertain all to some extent.

Parents only have a small amount of profanity to worry about, and no real concern over matters of violence or sexuality.

Fans of the Murphy of old may be disappointed with *Dr. Dolittle*, but he may earn new fans in the children. (B-)

—Gray Whitten

The Mask of Zorro
Starring: Antonio Banderas, Anthony Hopkins, and Catherine Zeta-Jones
Rated PG-13
Playing at Hollywood 16

With a black mask, a gleaming sword and the desire to see the evil persecuted and justice spread across the land, Zorro is the old-is-new hero with a black costume and a passionate past.

Zorro has captured the attention of audiences for almost 80 years and has had a long and illustrious career of 36 movies across 6 countries.

The Mask of Zorro was finally released Friday after countless previews, starring Antonio Banderas, Anthony Hopkins and making her debut, Catherine Zeta Jones.

The story begins with Hopkins as the legendary Zorro saving Mexicans from the tyrannical rule of the Spanish governor Montero.

When the governor discovers the true identity of Zorro, he destroys Zorro's life by imprisoning him.

This is when the film fast forwards 20 years to the jail break of Zorro (Hopkins), the return of the governor to California, and the creation of a new Zorro (Banderas).

The film will be an enjoyment for many because it was directed by Martin Campbell, of the *Bond* film *Goldeneye*. Thus, a lot of action can be expected.

It was nice to see a departure from the many summer movies filled with special effects. *Zorro* is filled with people actually punching, hitting and sword fighting other people.

However, *Zorro* does mimic movies from the past with a predictable plot, a predictable hero, a predictable villain, and a predictable love story.

It was similar to sitting through *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*, but this time the main characters had better accents.

But *Zorro* succeeds, because of the refreshing cast of actors, who have genuine talent.

Many times "hero movies" are given to the typical action stars, but inserting Hopkins was a well needed modification.



Anthony Hopkins (left) and Antonio Banderas (right) discuss the best way to fight evil in Zorro.

Hopkins brings depth and drama to the role. Winning an Academy Award is a good indicator of the talent he delivers to the movie.

Banderas' character may take on the same role as previous heroes but he adds more humor and not so much over-dramatization.

Hopkins and Banderas save *Zorro* from walking down the predictable and overdone path.

The movie is simple and lighthearted and will accomplish what a movie is suppose to do: entertain. (A-)

—Marium Mohiuddin