

# Opinion

## OPAS ticket option offers Aggies taste of culture



CORRIE CAULEY

some type of balance to the "other" side of adolescence. However, since field trips are

rarer in college and since Mom and Dad are not here to encourage students to partake in a little culture, there is now a way to counter the lack of civilization so often enjoyed by Aggies. For many students, the

thought of sitting through an opera is about as appealing as having teeth pulled, but the exposure and experience often prove unforgettable.

In past seasons, OPAS has been responsible for bringing in several world-class productions, including the national tour of "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat" and the Broadway productions of "Crazy for You" and "Cats".

This season promises to be another outstanding year for OPAS with twelve different performances including "Smokey Joe's Cafe," the St. Petersburg State Symphony Orchestra, the Russian National Ballet's performance of "The Sleeping Beauty," "Fiddler on the Roof," the NYC Opera National Company's performance of "Madama Butterfly" and the season finale performance of "Les Misérables."

The performing arts provide something for everyone — inspiration for the dreamer, a unique dating experience for couples, an excuse for girls to wear something more than the usual t-shirt and shorts and a reason for guys to finally do their laundry.

It was once said that if a man could not be moved by music, he had no soul at all. The upcoming OPAS performances are sure to enlighten, inspire, entertain and move.

Theater and opera are not just for pansies anymore. So for the guy living by the stereotype that men have no culture, a date to "Les Misérables" is sure to bring about compromise — if you go with her to the show, next weekend she will let you go fishing, right?

The new student option fee offers a new convenient way for students to enjoy the season's OPAS productions.

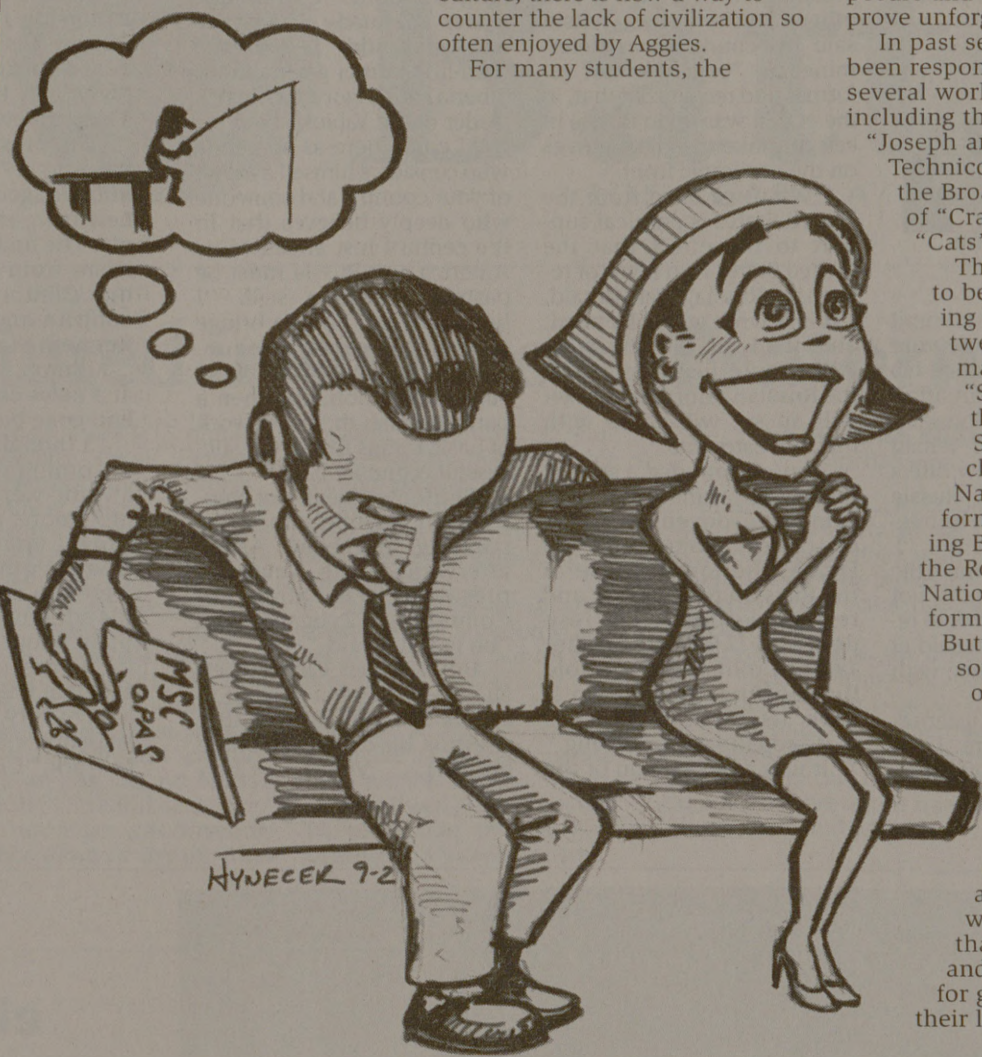
But whether Aggies purchased the new ticket option during registration or they choose purchase tickets individually throughout the season, students should definitely take advantage of the many incredible performances coming to A&M.

It is not often that one has the opportunity to see Broadway plays and Russian ballets, and OPAS has brought them straight to the A&M campus.

Culture 101 is not a college course, and unless students take advantage of options like the OPAS student season tickets, they will not make the most of the college experience.

It is important to balance culture with studying, class and the rest of college life in order to ultimately have "class."

Corrie Cauley is a senior journalism major.



## Textbook prices soar



MANISHA PAREKH

Ross Perot was half right; there is a huge sucking sound coming from near Mexico, but it is not the sound of American jobs going south — it is the sound from Texas A&M students' wallets after buying textbooks.

With courses requiring fancy new books each semester, the average student can spend anywhere from \$200 to \$600 on books for the semester. That money could easily pay for a lot of parking tickets. Instead, the money goes into the ever-growing cash cow known as college bookstores.

One bookstore's advertisements claim that it has "a tradition of Aggies helping Aggies." As many students can attest to after leaving this establishment, and the other fine bookstores, it seems more like "a tradition of Aggies robbing Aggies."

But many bookstores try to — forgive the pun — pass the buck and blame the publishers for the insane textbook prices. According to a pamphlet put out by Barnes & Noble College Bookstores, 67 percent of the book price goes to the publisher, nine percent to the author and 2.5 percent to shipping. But where does the other 21.5 percent go? That is correct — to the bookstore (or university).

Barnes & Nobles tries to smooth things over by writing, "though textbooks are expensive, they are a good value." Maybe from the bookstore end. But there is more. "But faculty members also know that even though they are expensive, the textbooks you study are an important part of your education, and what you learn from them will stay with you for a long time." It is reassuring to know that all A&M engineering majors will still always remember that the Romans washed their togas with urine.

Please, do not begin to believe that book buy back will ease the pain; it only makes the students feel more like suckers.

There are are many "small print" type things about book buy back. First, there is no guarantee that the textbook will actually be bought back. With new editions coming out faster than you can say "overnight billionaires," many students find their \$100 books are worth nothing in the span of several months. Often, professors, having been wooed by a certain publisher, will decide to use a different textbook the next year. And while the students are stuck with an investment that is worth absolutely nothing, professors are treated to a new book, free of charge.

The second problem comes when a bookstore does "buy" the book back. Many bookstores post signs claiming they offer the most money for used textbooks. It is a lovely statement that means very little once students realize buy back is simply a euphemism for "taking college students for every penny they are worth." Of course, that statement could be a little harsh. After all, you can enjoy a wonderful spread at McDonald's with the textbook buy-back money.

Perhaps if students stopped simply complaining and started doing something about this situation, things might change.

So, here is the proposal: call and e-mail your professors, your faculty advisers and the administration about the textbook situation. Let them know that enough is enough. Talk to your Student Senate representative and maybe the Student Senate can, for once, do something that actually benefits the Student Body.

It would certainly be quite an achievement if Student Body President Laurie Nickel actually managed to get the impotent student government to do something besides passing toothless resolutions and creating more committees.

If nothing else, student government could sponsor a kind of "book swap or sale" at which students can sell their old books to other students for a reasonable price.

There is no telling when this massive scam will finally end. But for the sake of students' pocketbooks, it needs to end soon.

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## Political scandals remove focus from important world affairs

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Over the past six years the American people have been treated to the newest and hottest soap opera in the history of man—the American Presidency.

The Clinton Presidency has brought scandal after scandal to the American people, and they have, for the most part, refused to take notice. Not until the Monica Lewinsky matter brought the American people into the president's most private quarters did they begin to take notice and exception.

Americans have become too comfortable and obsessed with their bank accounts. Things are pretty good from a financial standpoint, so the president has been in good graces with the American people.

This is what Political Scientists refer to as a pocketbook presidency.

The thing that the here-and-now, immediate gratification society does not understand is that decisions made long before Bill Clinton became the president are primarily responsible for the American economy's current level of comfort and stability.

If something does not deal with sex or immorality then Americans are just not interested. There are issues that present cause for much greater concern than that the Jones/Lewinsky scandals.

America needs to get its act together and come to the realization that matters of national security have been missed by this society of relatively poorly informed people.

The American people have heard little blurbs about Travelgate, Filegate, Whitewater, Paula Jones, Monica Lewinsky, Dick Morris and several other facets of the Clinton presidency and for the most part they have exhibited apathy.

Americans cannot continue to ignore issues awaiting their attention simply because there is no tantalizing hook phrase or racy subject matter. Does anyone still think the American way of life is a provocative concept worth worrying about?

Today, Americans as a people, are confronted by threats from all sides of the globe and they choose to sit in awe of the president's sexual appetite and pen-



LEN CALLAWAY

chant for non-truths.

America is being passive about our own continued dominance in the world and it does not take long for catastrophe to strike.

As a society, Americans are hunted and plagued by terrorists and defiant zealots in the Middle East. The lobby of an American-owned hotel franchise in Teheran, Iran boasts a brass placard in the lobby demanding "Death to America" to all that enter, and mock American flags are burned in the streets of several nations on a daily basis.

The financial markets in Asia are teetering on the brink of disaster and our president is accused of allowing the sale of technology to the largest remaining communist force on the planet.

In addition, in the international arena, Russian President Boris Yeltsin is about to lose control to a communist regime. Surely that situation coupled with the failing Russian economy will have ramifications here at home. America, naturally, is on the outs with the waiting-in-the-wings communist party. Is there another Cold War around the corner?

Americans do not know much about that proposition, but they know who testified before the Grand Jury in the Clinton matter yesterday.

They do not care about issues abroad and they do nothing to change the focus of debate in the country because somebody somewhere is having sex and that is a hell of a lot more fun and interesting to listen to than debating the finer points of presidential ethics and national security.

The concerns about the president's personal life are warranted, but not at the expense of giving the bank to the robbers.

To a large degree Americans have become a society captivated by junk. Hot, steamy, explicit — that is all they seem to want.

America needs to get its head back in the proverbial game and spend some time worrying about national security and global standing. Hopefully, it will not take a financial revolution and the threat of continued international conflict to magically re-prioritize America.

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## The Battalion

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## MOTOR MADNESS

### University Drive construction shows poor planning and disregard for students

Students returning to Texas A&M each year can always count a few certainties. Classes will be bigger, fees will increase, freshmen will be walking aimlessly around campus with maps and seemingly unnecessary construction will cause more headaches than it is worth.

This year's obvious example is construction on University Drive. One of the most highly trafficked streets in the Bryan-College Station area. It is one of only four true access streets to campus, and thanks to poor planning by the City of College Station, it is virtually closed.

Tearing up University Drive in August seemed a bad plan from the get-go. Students were already juggling to mill back from summer breaks, and summer school students were still trying to get to class. If the city was going to tear up a major road, it should have started as early in the summer as possible, before the massive return of students. If the city planners are doing their jobs, the construction would have been slated the week after the spring semester classes were completed.

The real question, though, is why all the construction was necessary in the first place. University Drive was not a street in serious disrepair; it was in fairly good shape. Certainly did not require the massive overhaul currently underway.

The current chaos that is University Drive is a problem on more levels than just poor planning, though. First and foremost it is a traffic nightmare. As if traffic near the University was not bad enough, the major access road is limited to one-way traffic to and from campus. Second, the construction is a dangerous situation. With cars backing up and getting stuck in intersections during light changes, the situation is begging for an automobile pile-up or worse — not to mention that pedestrians attempting to cross these jumbled crosswalks are literally racing for their lives.

The city never should have begun such a massive undertaking anywhere near the time of fall classes. No date should have been scheduled which might have possibly, with any complications, continued to the start of this semester. The University is welcoming one of its largest freshman classes, not to mention the tens of thousands of students who already called A&M home, and the city is making a mess even messier.

The city often chooses to forget that students are in fact residents of this community, and makes this attitude clear with decisions such as closing Munson Street earlier this summer. The catastrophe on University has only further indicated the city's complete disregard for the student residents of College Station.

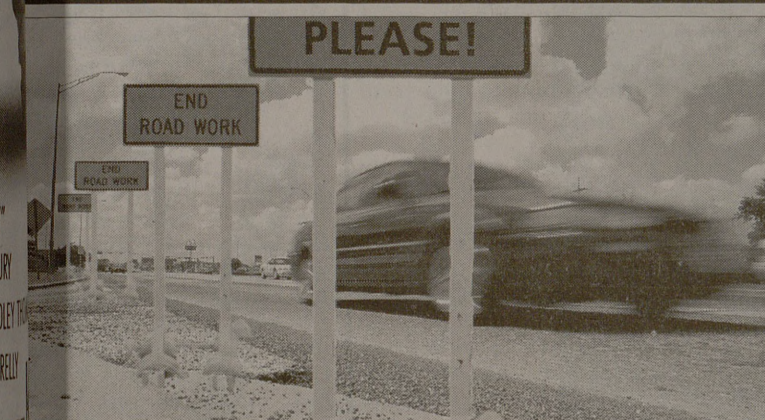


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