

# Opinion

## OPAS brings performing arts, touch of class to campus



LEN CALLAWAY

It is difficult to make an expensive contractual agreement with a touring company knowing the MSC and OPAS might have difficulty breaking even — much less making a profit.

The fact that poorly-attended shows bring financial ramifications speaks volumes about the resolve of the OPAS committee to continue providing the students of A&M and Brazos Valley residents with high-quality performing arts and entertainment.

Over the past few years, OPAS has tried to reach out even more to the student body.

Season passes to all OPAS events may be purchased as a fee option at registration time, or performance tickets may be purchased right up to show time at the MSC box office.

OPAS opens this season with the classic musical "Smokey Joe's Cafe," and it promises — as always — to be a wonderful performance.

OPAS strives to provide its audience with a diverse selection of entertainment.

For instance, "Smokey Joe's Cafe" is a blues and rock-and-roll-filled dance spectacular of American culture.

The next performance hosted by OPAS, however, will be the St. Petersburg State Symphony from Russia immediately followed by the one-man play "Bully" which takes a unique look into the life of Theodore Roosevelt.

The Association of Former Students has been sending out satisfaction surveys to recently-graduated Aggies in hopes of pinpointing areas of particular weakness in the A&M experience.

An overwhelming majority of those former students surveyed have indicated that A&M leaves something to be desired in the areas of performing arts, visual arts and literary arts. Without a college of fine arts to promote these fields, OPAS is the only option Aggies have to experience true culture.

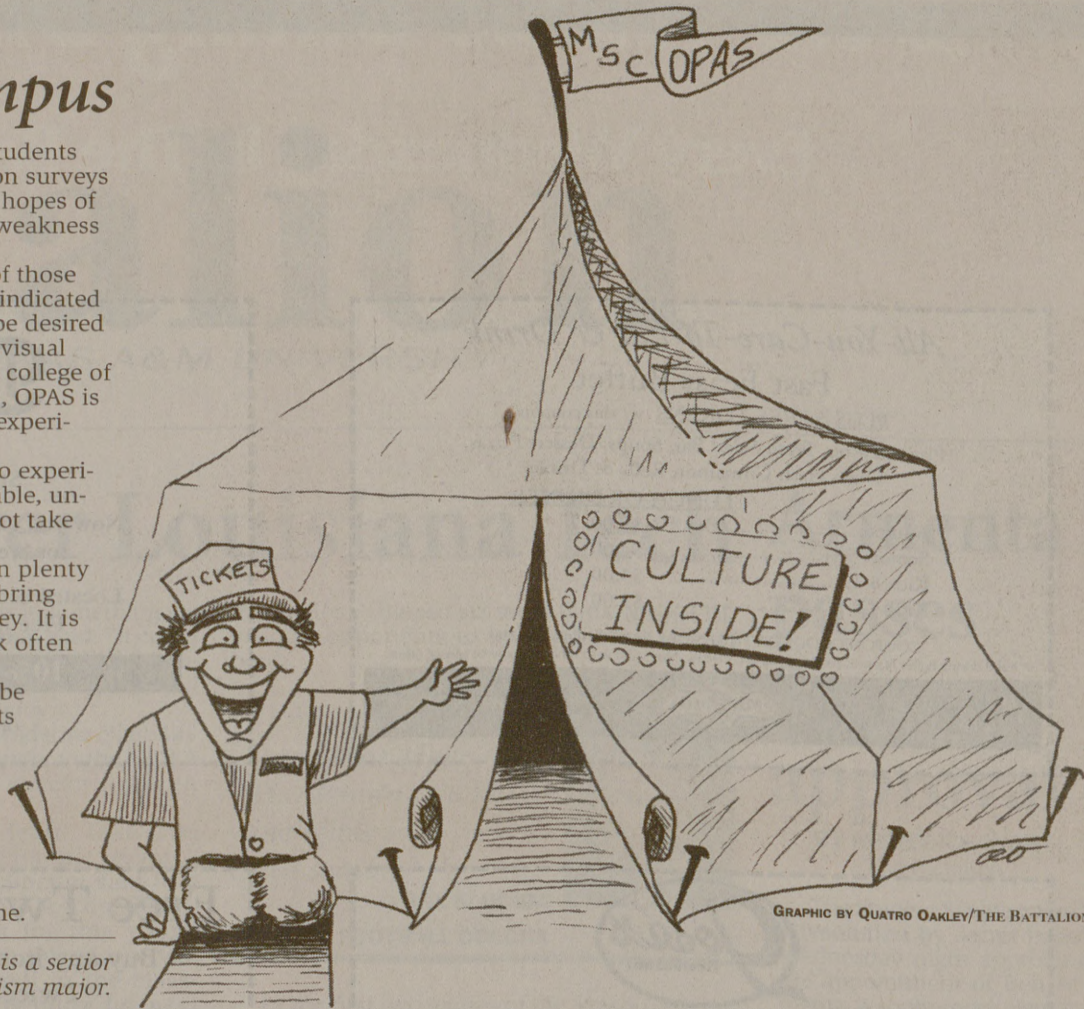
Although the opportunities to experience these great shows is available, unfortunately many students do not take advantage of them.

The OPAS committee puts in plenty of hard work in their effort to bring these shows to the Brazos Valley. It is disappointing to see their work often go unnoticed.

The OPAS committee should be lauded for the zeal and resolve its members demonstrate. OPAS deserves the support and attendance of A&M students.

Who knows, besides an evening of quality entertainment and outstanding performances, Aggies might actually learn something at the same time.

Len Callaway is a senior journalism major.



GRAPHIC BY QUATRO OAKLEY/THE BATTALION

## Pre-adolescent offenders require kid gloves Sexual activity drop credits new programs



CALEB MCDANIEL

Charges against the children, two of the youngest murder suspects in United States history, were promptly dropped.

The shocking re-opening of the case has prompted many legal analysts to ask some pertinent questions about police conduct towards the boys.

How can detectives fairly question suspects whose clearest notions of crime-fighting come from watching Batman and Robin? Can children accused of crime appreciate the real gravity of their situation? And should their confessions be given the same weight that is afforded adult admissions of guilt?

It is hard to say.

One thing is clear, though. The current methods used to question juvenile suspects need to be re-evaluated.

The first problem in the whole affair is that there is no physical record of the police interrogation that prompted the boys' confessions. The conversations were not recorded, and no transcript was kept. All we have is a police paraphrase of the dialogue. It is scattered with qualifications like "essentially said" and "in essence said."

Secondly, the boys were not advised by lawyers or youth counselors during the questioning. The parents were not allowed to be in the room, either.

The police insist that the boys were read their Miranda rights. But a seven-year-old boy does not know Miranda from John Mar-

shall. He cannot possibly be aware of what a "right to remain silent" means. He knows that he must be quiet in the school cafeteria; it might be some news to him that it is his "right" to do so.

Moreover, even if the boys were given an adequate explanation of their rights, it is easy to see why they would not have given them much consideration. The entire tenor of the interrogation was meant to lighten the gravity of the situation to get the youngsters to talk.

Police reports say that detectives chatted with the boys about basketball and their favorite TV shows before they even got to the business at hand. At one point, the detectives brought the seven-year-old a Happy Meal from McDonald's. The kid was in hog heaven, munching on nuggets and talking Michael Jordan — it was not the most solemn of occasions.

So is it clear that he understood how much his statements would affect his future?

Some might say it does not matter how the police obtained their confessions.

But remember that their confessions have since been disproven by hard, physical evidence.

This is not to say that the boys had nothing to do with the crime, but it does cast doubt on their ability to truthfully articulate any participation in the matter. Children are often eager to please their elders and feel approved. Happy Meals do not discourage

such an inclination, and it is plausible to think that the boys exaggerated what they knew.

Seven-year-old boys, after all, do not have the best reputation for having a firm grasp on reality. They live almost perpetually in a pretended world of imagination and fantasy, populated by ninja turtles and cops and robbers. Did they understand that the badge across the interrogation table from them was the real thing?

Again, these are not easy questions to answer. And the mistake of rushing to judgment against the boys should not be compounded by rushing to acquittal.

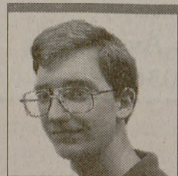
Nevertheless, the conduct of the Chicago Police Department betrays a fundamental ignorance of child psychology by the juvenile justice system. Much more care must be put into questioning suspects so young, especially if their prosecution depends entirely on the credibility of the youngsters' confessions.

Juvenile detectives need meaningful rules that preserve the justice system's respect for both due process and the pursuit of truth.

Confessions should be taped and analyzed by child psychologists. The seriousness of the situation should be stressed instead of diluted. Parents should be given more access to the accused.

And in the future, accused children should be seen and heard with a generous grain of salt.

Caleb McDaniel is a sophomore history major.



DAVID JOHNSTON

After throwing money and condoms at the problem for years, teenage sexual activity is finally on the decline.

A recent study, the "Youth Risk Behavior Survey," shows a drop in sexual activity among high school students for the first time since the Carter administration.

Sex education advocates claim their efforts are responsible for turning the tide of teenage promiscuity, but that position can only be supported by a distortion of the facts. This recent decrease is a credit to the growing number of new school programs that focus less on sex education and more on encouraging abstinence.

Schools have been adding sex education to the curriculum since before 1985. Once students were armed with detailed knowledge of their bodies, however, sexual activity among young people began increasing more than ever. Using cyclical logic, school administrators decided they must bring more sex information to tender eyes and ears.

Nothing was able to curb teenage promiscuity — until now. Something has happened, something wonderful. Teens are having less sex and safer sex (if you believe in such an animal).

The "Youth Risk Behavior Survey" reveals the number of high school students who have engaged in sexual activity is down 11 percent. For the first time in almost 10 years, more than half of American high school students are still virgins.

Something has changed.

Increased fear of sexually-transmitted disease is an unlikely culprit. AIDS has been in the public eye for close to 20 years — the same period where teenage sex was increasing.

Today, the public has the impression — mistaken as it may be — that AIDS is either cured or at least manageable. The news is filled with a constant stream of reports of new drugs treatments or possible cures or vaccines for the deadly STD.

Sex education supporters claim their programs are finally starting to take hold. Now that students know every gory detail about sex, their curiosity is quelled, their knowledge allows them to act more responsibly and they are less interested in sex.

Driver's education does not discourage people from getting behind the wheel of a car. It only hopes to cut down on accidents. Sex education does not discourage sexual behavior, and — well, let us say insurance rates are high for young drivers.

If sex education was truly effective, it would have provided results sooner. Unfortunately, the programs have intrinsic flaws.

Even proponents of sex education admit students need a set of morals to accompany their new knowledge of their bodies. Instructors, however, are prevented from giving those morals because they might warp young minds.

If it is unacceptable for young people to get their sex knowledge on the streets, it is equally offensive to condemn them to seek their moral knowledge on the streets.

Sex education in its traditional form is incapable of reducing high school promiscuity. By giving students only part of the picture, the damage is greater than before.

But something has definitely brought about a change in high school behavior. Something untraditional is changing the habits of young people. People are finally tossing old-fashioned sex education out on its ear.

Abstinence-based sex education programs are having a dramatic impact on young people after operating only a few years.

Many school districts are teaching students the value of monogamous relationships and abstinence. Without preaching a set of morals, the new programs factually discuss the benefits of a responsible lifestyle, and as this study shows, they are finally making a difference.

Outside of the confines of the school, many organizations are stepping up to help train America's youth. The True Love Waits campaign, for example, is an international movement among young people. The campaign encourages teenagers to sign a pledge card committing to abstain from sex outside of marriage. The program began in 1993 and has already collected over half a million pledge cards.

The study also indicates teenagers are treating sex more seriously. Among those students in the study who said they had engaged in sexual activity, an increased number were in monogamous relationships, and teenage pregnancies and births are both on the decline.

As similar abstinence programs become more common, America's youth can anticipate better things. Teenagers who act more maturely about sex will be healthier, more emotionally stable and serve as examples to the next generation.

Teenagers and Aggies need to understand the significance of sex. Everyone should keep in mind no one is hurt by waiting, but acting irresponsibly can wreck lives.

Dave Johnston is a senior mathematics major.

### MAIL CALL Bad Ags trample code of honor

I got a little story for ya, Ags. Well it seems that some t-sips must have been on campus on Monday, Sept. 21, at the dirt parking lot between Reed Arena and the Horticulture Building, because no good Ag would hit another Ag's blue extended cab Chevy pickup and just walk away without leaving a note.

We know good Ags never lie, cheat or steal.

The only other solution is that there is a bad Ag on campus, so watch out Aggies, they will be the ones with the blue streak of paint on their car.

Well, bad Ag, I hope you are happy because now all good Aggies will know what a bad Ag looks like. Besides, I am sure there were plenty of good Aggies that witnessed your actions on Monday morning.

Not to worry though, you still have time to do the right thing and become a good Ag again. I hope you take this option because I would hate to think there was a bad Ag running loose in Aggieland.

April Herring Class of '98

