

To be or not to be

Alpha Psi Omega brings new life to Shakespeare's works with blacklight, music

BY MATTHEW PARKER

The Battalion

William Shakespeare never saw a black-light performance. He never heard the music of Era 2. William Shakespeare did, however, write for the common man.

On Wednesday and Thursday in "The Fallout Theatre," Alpha Psi Omega, Texas A&M's national honorary theatre fraternity, explored the common man's language in a show that would have amazed the bard himself.

The show is called *Shakespeare Pastiche: An Expression of Humanity, Dance and His Sonnets*, and it is all performed under black light.

A pastiche is a literary, artistic or mu-

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— Amber Bel'Chere
Alpha Psi Omega President

sical composition made from bits of various sources. The show's artistic design is basic: simple black dress with white gloves and white makeup. The mood is almost overpowering, and Shakespeare's works become the show's focus.

To benefit the Twin City Mission's food pantry, Alpha Psi Omega put together a breathtaking display never before seen in College Station.

Amber Bel'Chere, president of Alpha Psi Omega and a senior theater arts major, directed the show.

"I wanted people to know that Shakespeare can be done without men in tights," Bel'Chere said. "Some people have the [perception] of Shakespeare being stuffy. I wanted to bring it down to a ground level as a generational exploration."

The show opens and closes with Leslie Malitz, a senior theater arts major, dancing. She is dressed in black and a long-sleeve white robe. While the music of Era 2 plays, her flowing movement creates an aura of slow-motion photography.

Katie Davies, a senior theater arts major, sullenly speaks Sonnet 71, the "No longer mourn for me..." sonnet, which highlights the next portion of the show. When a white, glowing casket is carried onstage, the audience takes notice.

The humor of Sonnet 130 is a stark contrast from the rest of the production. Randy Symank, a sophomore theater arts major, admirably attempts to move the audience. Under the glow of red light, he pours out his heart over an overweight woman with bad breath. The text is humorous, but given the mood, the audience finds him more sympathetic than insulting toward the woman.

Shakespeare also wrote melodrama, and the best example of melodrama today is daytime soap operas.

The gestures of Courtney Sve, a freshman chemical engineering major, are over-dramatized for effect because that is what Shakespeare desired for Sonnet 60, though he did not hear the "Days of Our Lives" theme in his head when he wrote it. Poetry, music and gesture mingled to create an amazing and intense atmosphere.

Sonnet 116 was performed from 7-

foot ladders by Amber Verrett, a junior education major, and Keith Neagle, a sophomore English major. The use of flashlights was Bel'Chere's touch.

The quality of expression is epitomized in Sonnet 138 by Symank, Lauren Lanier, a junior speech communication major, and Neagle. The new interpretation creates an introspective mood with subtle action, meaning and intentions.

"He (Shakespeare) probably would have been shocked at first, but I think he would also have been fascinated by his sonnets under black light and done in such a manner," Bel'Chere said.

The closing dance is an eye-popping expression of theatrics in its simplest form. All the actors are frozen, while a dancer moves among them, moving their hands.

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