

AggieLife

THE BATTALION

Page 3

Days of Old: Ragtime

By KELLY PREISER
THE BATTALION

To many, being on the road for 10 consecutive months sounds daunting, but for 25-year-old Kenita Miller, it is worth it. Miller, a recent graduate of the American Music and Dramatic Academy in New York, is performing in her second Broadway musical. After finishing a tour of the Broadway production of *Civil War*, she now stars as Sarah in the award-winning Broadway musical, "Ragtime." Constant touring is a difficult adjustment, as the cast stays in some places for only one night, Miller said. She said it affects the cast members' sleeping and eating habits. But Miller said she is willing to make this sacrifice; she has dreamed of being in show business since she was a young girl.

"I've been singing all my life ... since I was three," she said. "I always knew I wanted to be on stage ... I want to [perform] until I am physically incapable of singing it."

Performing, Miller said, is more than the glory of being on stage.

Performing is a way of expressing yourself, she said. "I'm not very social, but when I sing, I let everything out."

Miller said she relates to her character, Sarah.

"She's a bit naïve but still strong ... very gullible," Miller said. "She's very emotional and lets her emotions make her decisions. I can relate to Sarah in that we're both kind of naïve."

While she and Sarah may have similarities, Miller said it is hard to imagine them being the same because Sarah's character existed in such a different time period.

"Ragtime takes place at the turn of the 20th century and centers around three dif-

ferent families with varying backgrounds. There is an upper-middle class, Caucasian family, a Jewish immigrant family and a black family from Harlem. The musical intertwines these families' lives with real-life events, such as Admiral Peary's expedition to the North Pole, the sinking of the *Lusitania*, the birth of the American Labor Union, the development of assembly-line technology and the dawn of the automotive and motion picture industries. Historical figures including Henry Ford, Harry Houdini, J.P. Morgan and Booker T. Washington also appear in the musical.

Miller said the story of "Ragtime" is much like current events.

"The story itself is kind of like what's going on right now," she said. "The main theme is that even though everyone's different, they can all live together. And they all end up together in a special way."

Miller said several of the cast members are from New York and deeply were affected by the recent events.

"It was hard to know if we could do it," she said. "A lot of us are from New York and a lot of us were affected. With everything that is going on, this is an outlet for us and one way we can give back."

It was also difficult for the cast members to place themselves fully into their characters without incorporating their modern-day views.

"At first it was hard, to be truthful," Miller said. "There are a lot of issues in 'Ragtime' that people don't deal with everyday anymore. Like the word 'nigger' comes up a lot. It's a touchy subject but we have to laugh at it and try to make it light-hearted. We can't take it too personally."

In preparing to portray her character, Miller researched the Ragtime era. Sarah was a washwoman and Miller looked into

what a woman in that role would have worn as well as what her lifestyle would have been.

Miller's goal in participating in this production is to be as truthful to the era, and to her character, as possible.

"My goal is to be truthful and to try to make it real," she said. "I want people to get sucked into it and really appreciate it."

The "Ragtime" cast has been touring since September. Miller said the cast members are very distinct individuals, but because they are all fairly young it is easier for them to relate to each other. The original cast comprised of 50 members. This production has only 28.

The Memorial Student Center Opera and Performing Arts Society (OPAS) brought "Ragtime" to Rudder auditorium last night and it will show again tonight at 7:30 p.m. There will be a lecture at 6:30 p.m. in MSC 224, hosted by the OPAS Guild Patricia S. Peters Lagniappe Lecture Series at which Dr. Michael Greenwald, a theatre arts and English professor at A&M, will preview the music of "Ragtime."

Coalhouse Walker Jr. (Quentin Earl Darrington) and Sarah (Kenita Miller) in the National Tour of Ragtime.



PHOTO COURTESY OF RAGTIME



Come to our seminars:

Strategies For Managing Your Income. You're 50. You're planning to retire. We'll show you how much income is enough and the best ways to receive it.
Date: **Monday, 11.5.01**
Time: **4:00 - 5:15 pm**
Place: **College Station Conference Center, 1300 George Bush Drive**

Developing an Investment Strategy. Learn the fundamentals of diversification, asset allocation, and other smart techniques of long-term investors.
Date: **Monday, 11.5.01**
Time: **6:00 - 7:00 pm**
Place: **College Station Conference Center, 1300 George Bush Drive**

One-on-One Counseling. Get personal financial guidance to help you reach your financial goals.
Dates: **Tuesday, 11.6.01**
Wednesday, 11.7.01
Thursday, 11.8.01

RSVP: Call Shelbi Croft at 1.800.842.2006 to schedule an appointment.

**IN INVESTING,
TIMING IS EVERYTHING.**

**WHICH IS WHY WE
PROVIDED THE SCHEDULE**

ON THE LEFT.

*Managing money for people
with other things to think about.™*

1.800.842.2006 • TIAA-CREF.org/moc

**INVESTMENT STRATEGIES
THAT ARE CLEAR
AND CONCISE.
EVEN IF OUR NAME ISN'T.**

Aside from our name, we've always been in favor of making things simple. So contact us for smart, easy investment techniques to help you reach your financial goals.

TIAA-CREF.org or call 1.800.842.2776



*Managing money for people
with other things to think about.™*

RETIREMENT | INSURANCE | MUTUAL FUNDS | COLLEGE SAVINGS | TRUSTS | INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT

TIAA-CREF Individual and Institutional Services, Inc., and Teachers Personal Investors' Services, Inc., distribute securities products. © 2001 Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association-College Retirement Equities Fund (TIAA-CREF), New York, NY 08/20

TIAA-CREF Individual and Institutional Services, Inc., and Teachers Personal Investors' Services, Inc., distribute securities products. For more complete information on our securities products, call 1.800.842.2776, ext. 5509, for prospectuses. Read them carefully before you invest. Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association (TIAA), New York, NY and TIAA-CREF Life Insurance Co., New York, NY issue insurance and annuities. TIAA-CREF Trust Company, FSB provides trust services. Investment products are not FDIC insured, may lose value and are not bank guaranteed. © 2001 Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association - College Retirement Equities Fund (TIAA-CREF), New York, NY 08/20.