

Hard facts, questions in 'The Official Story'

By MARK DAVIS
Staff Writer

Everyone knows that problems exist in Argentina, but few can envision what daily life must be like for the citizens there. That the people of Argentina enjoy none of the rights and privileges which Americans do may be realized, yet most Americans never stop to think about how terrible it would be to live under those circumstances.

The movie *The Official Story* changes all of that. It doesn't merely make the viewer stop and think about the problems in Argentina; instead, it hits him right in the face with those problems, exploding right in front of his very eyes.

Lest anyone think the brutal portrayal of the Argentinian regime is exaggerated, Norma Aleandro, the star of *The Official Story*, received death threats and was given 24 hours to leave the country following statements she had made decrying the country's lack of human rights in 1976. After a five-year exile in Uruguay and Spain, Aleandro returned to Argentina. This is her first movie since returning.

cinema

Aleandro plays Alicia, a high school history teacher, the wife of a powerful businessman (Hector Alterio), and, most importantly to her, the mother of an adopted 5-year-old girl, Gaby. As the film unfolds, we see the torment and distress of the Argentinian people, yet Alicia seems almost oblivious to it all. Marches and rallies calling for decency on behalf of the government are commonplace. Alicia goes right on attending parties with her husband, doing her job, and looking after her daughter as if nothing in the outside world could affect her.

Her life begins to fall apart when her old friend, Ana (Chunchuna Villafane), returns to Argentina from exile. In the most tender, heart-wrenching scene of the movie, the two friends get together, and Ana describes the torture inflicted upon her because of her involvement with a suspected revolutionary. Ana also tells Alicia that the babies of the many women taken into exile were stolen by the government and sold to families

willing to ask no questions. To Alicia's horror, Ana suspects that Gaby may be such a child.

This is the turning point of the movie, and from here, Alicia becomes a new person - strong, tough, and determined to find out the truth about her daughter no matter what the truth may mean. She begins a thorough investigation in which she checks all the existing records she can find and questions her husband, who is evasive about the process by which he acquired Gaby. The film ticks away until its climax, in which Alicia is forced to confront everything she has shielded herself from in the past. In the end, nothing is resolved, and only some hard questions are left.

Aleandro won the award for Best Actress for this movie at the Cannes Film Festival, and it is not hard to figure out why. This is the role of a lifetime for her, and she neither overplays nor underplays the anxiety-ridden Alicia, managing to capture the Kafka-like anguish of a woman whose world is suddenly turned upside down.

The other "star" of the picture is director Luis Puenzo, who co-wrote the screenplay as well. His direction

zeros right in on the terror in this strife-torn country. Almost every scene involves close-ups, a technique which is eerily effective in the way it underlines the emotions of the characters. Nowhere is this more evident than in the scene with Alicia and Ana.

Puenzo also frequently cuts back and forth to things that are seemingly unconnected. For example, he mixes demonstration scenes showing Argentinians demanding that their children be returned with shots of Gaby sleeping or playing. The result is that we see how everything is related and that no one is safe. The effect is ominous.

The Official Story demands a response. It exposes a highly disturbing situation that has no apparent end in sight. Whether or not steps will be taken, unfortunately, is not in the hands of those most likely to be appalled by this movie. If nothing else, though, *The Official Story* serves to remind Americans, for the most part, how petty their problems are compared with those of others around the world. At movie's end, even those most critical of our government are ready to offer a prayer of thanks for being born in the U.S.A.

Chapel Hill High's 'Barefoot' performance nearly flawless

By IAN WILLIAMS
Staff Writer

Reviewing high school plays is always a touchy subject; high schools rarely have the equipment, directorial talent, and acting experience to really deserve a bad review. Yet Chapel Hill High School need not worry; the drama department scored on all three counts and produced a thoroughly enjoyable interpretation of Neil Simon's comedy *Barefoot in the Park* at the school Saturday night.

Barefoot in the Park, for those who haven't seen the Robert Redford-Jane Fonda version, is about a pair of newlyweds, Paul and Corie, that go from a made-in-heaven romance to the verge of divorce in their dilapidated one-room apartment in New York City. The fight scenes contain some of the best Neil Simon dialogue, and the addition of other characters such as Corie's mother and the eccentric Victor Velasco rounds out this classic comedy.

Evelyn Mann, who played Corie, was sufficiently full of the energy and vitality that the part calls for. Nerves probably led her to scream some of her lines into aural oblivion. Nonetheless, it was a fantastic job by an actress who, due to cast problems, only had two weeks to

theatre

rehearse a very difficult part.

Victor Velasco, the strange, Mediterranean-type gentleman that lives in the attic of the building was played by Leu Strophe. He looked and acted the part, but some of the best lines in the play were muddled by poor diction. Sometimes timing got in the way of a good line. But what the audience doesn't know won't hurt it, and he pulled the part off well.

A brilliant casting move was made by placing the young black actor Russell Dula as the male newlywed Paul. It was inspiring to see a "mixed marriage" in a play written at a time when such a thing would have created incredible uproar. Not only that, but Dula is talented. His portrayal of the straight-laced lawyer was hilarious, and the scene where he finally got good and drunk was even funnier.

Yet the award for the best performance on Saturday night has to go to Fabiana Politi, for her interpretation of Corie's mother Ethel. It is hard to go wrong with a character that has blue hair and sleeps on a board in New Jersey, but Politi added an extra zaniness and sarcasm that sets her apart from high school Ethels of the past.

Another pleasant surprise was the set itself. Chapel Hill High definitely has equipment that could lend itself to almost any production, and the crew took full advantage. The stairs, skylight, decorations, etc. were all very believable, and enhanced the comedy around which the play revolves.

The entire cast is to be commended for their performance as a whole. It is one thing to know the lines, but entirely another to act with them. Given this group's inexperience and the incredible hurdles of actor illness and lack of time, they pulled off a play that seemed to be nearly flawless.

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Old Dorms

state can't build residence halls with tax dollars."

Also, since the University is already raising money from alumni for its 200th anniversary, further fund raising might be difficult, he said.

Boulton said Old East renovations would probably triple the rent. "Who wants to live in a national monument when you're paying triple the rent?" he asked.

The fact that Old East is a national monument complicates renovations even further, he said.

Kuncl said, "From a visual stand-

point, the dorm has to appear as close to the original as possible."

It took the University two years to approve a new door for the dorm, Boulton said, because the new door had to be as similar to the original doors as possible.

But because the dorm is a national monument, many students do not want Old East changed into an office building.

Old East has a lot of heritage involved with it, said Roy Greene, president of Old East, in an interview Saturday. "Many of the guys around here know

the history of the dorm," he said. Some of students are even living in the rooms their fathers and grandfathers lived in, he added.

"I hate to think that anything that has been a dorm for that long would be turned into an office building," he said.

Greene said he and George Rowland, president of Old West, were reassured by Kuncl that the dorms would be around for a while longer.

Rowland said Sunday that he thought the plans to change the dorms was another example of the University

not caring about student input. He added that he thought Housing was trying to push students off central campus.

Kuncl said he understood the strong feelings about Old East and Old West. They are very important buildings to have on campus, he said, because a lot of pride goes with them.

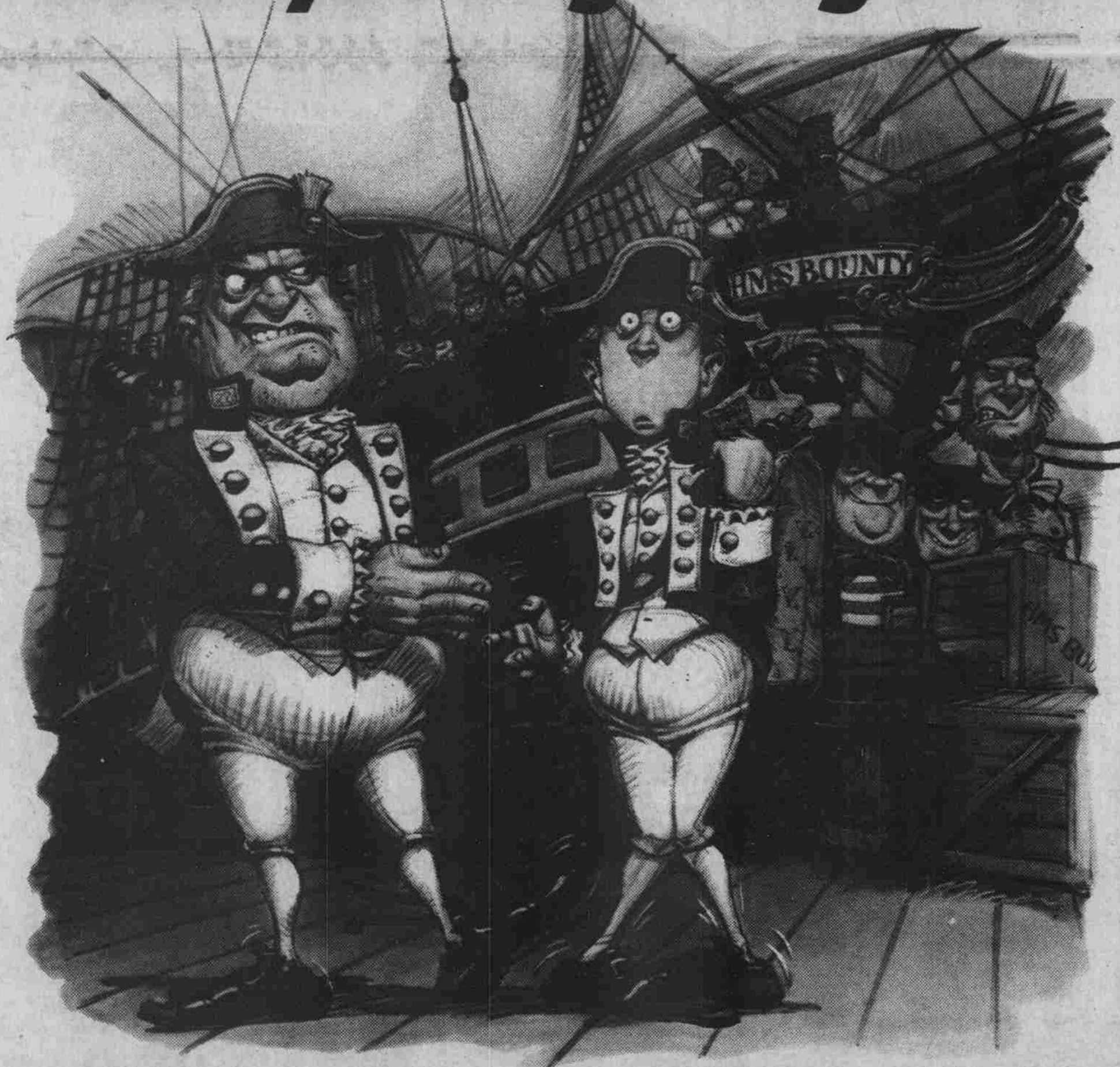
"If we would ever consider... (converting the dorms)... the decision would not be made without student participation and input," he said.

Kuncl and Boulton agreed the elimination of living spaces in Old East and

Old West might create some housing problems. Each of the dorms contains 90 spaces, and Kuncl said with the number of students wanting to live on campus and the number of freshmen that have to be assigned, the University needs those spaces.

Boulton said he suggested years ago that the University build the new dorm, because he knew that in the future dorms like Old East and Old West would no longer be useful for living space. If the University closes 250 spaces elsewhere, he said, Carmichael will provide 500 new spaces.

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