

# FEATURES

## 'A Village Fable' delights kids and adults

**Diana Kostigen**  
Features Reporter

"A Village Fable" delights audiences with a hopeful tale reminding everyone who sees it of important values like friendship, honor and virtue.

"I thought it was very appropriate for family audiences, and I'm thrilled to see UNCA doing a production like this," said Denise Crowell, an Asheville resident. "It was highly entertaining with moments of cheer, poignant moments and just a little bit of everything that touches all ages."

James Still wrote "A Village Fable," and John Gardner adapted it from "In the Suicide Mountains."

The play begins in a storybook land where three brave souls become heroes by emerging from social, political and gender-based demands.

Never fairy tale stories, like the movie "Shrek," may have helped change the idea of hero. The model hero no longer has to have both bravery and good looks. Instead, this new hero represents truth, kindness and has the courage to achieve their dreams.

Francesca Garvey, an undeclared freshman, plays Armdia the gypsy. Garvey grasps the audience's attention from her first moment on stage. Garvey's soprano voice has a feeling of hope and peace. Her impressive acting ability brings believability and emotion to this simple

and naive tale, and she touches on the subject of death with the utmost respect.

"A few of my friends were concerned that it is a little heavy regarding death," said Janette DeVan, a cast member and an undeclared junior. "But I don't think the kids reacted that way so much. In this play it's dealt with in a pretty straightforward way. They found a lot of the humor in it. They laughed in places that we hadn't really thought about, where we hadn't gotten laughter before."

Chudu, played by DeVan, represents everything seemingly unheroic. Chudu must deal with the problems of being an outcast, a loser and worst of all, a strange looking "goat man."

DeVan's character makes the biggest transition in the end. DeVan brings life to this character in a way that both children and adults can relate to. This makes Chudu's final victory worthy of praise and admiration, and brings audiences to their feet cheering.

"I'm excited because everybody understands this is for young audiences, though adults seem to be getting a real kick out of it," said Patricia Snoyer, the director and associate drama professor at UNCA.

"It's intended for families, but I can't wait to see 250 or 300 little kids out there and see how they'll respond."

The cast and crew of "A Village Fable" enrolled in a special topics theatre arts class. The members of the class plan to perform in local



Andrew Walker (left) plays the King and Francesca Garvey (right) plays a gypsy in the children's play.

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elementary schools.

"It's kind of a community service project to make it available to elementary school kids," said DeVan. Prince Christopher, played by undeclared freshman Aaron Stepp, epitomizes the bumbling hero.

Stepp plays the sensitive guy, the wimpy prince constantly overwhelmed by his father's overbearing demeanor. Stepp acting starts out restrained and unbelievable, but becomes brilliant at practically the same moment in which Prince Christopher realizes his own strength of spirit.

"They did a wonderful job acting, vocally their voices blended well, their energy was really, really good, especially for a small audience," said Crowell.

Nate Jurasech, a junior drama major who plays the six-fingered man, has the most impressive presence on stage. Jurasech brings both

humor and silliness to this yoda-like creature, portraying him as both wise and scary at the same time. The six-fingered man, fueled by pain and loneliness, provides the most profound words of the story.

"Monsters are never hard to come by," he said, giving an important truth to the audience.

The class required auditions for speaking roles in the production. Those who worked on the crew simply had to enroll.

"It's kind of an experiment. We're testing it out," said Snoyer. "The whole reason we're doing this is to give the actors and the crew a simulation of very real life opportunities that await them. A lot of young performers especially get some of their very first professional jobs in touring companies."

The excitement and zeal of the cast felt throughout the theater confirms the students' enthusiasm with

this project.

"Ev'van's really enjoying it," said DeVan. "It's hard work. We got up early and packed into vans, and we have to deal with new spaces. There are little challenges, but it's really exciting to take it to the kids."

The popularity of "A Village Fable" lies in the message and the reaction of the children.

"All these concepts about believing in yourself, turning what you perceive to be weaknesses into strengths, the ability to work together, there is safety in numbers, helping people is a good thing, not to pick on people just because they seem to be a little different than you," said Snoyer. "I think these are all excellent messages for young audiences."

"A Village Fable" also uses principles from Arts 310, even staying within its lines that sometimes life follows art.

## Singer-lecturer discusses issues of race and sex

**Rhiannon Richard**  
Features Reporter

Asian-American singer-songwriter, lecturer and painter on a mission, Magdalen Hsu-Li performed to a supportive audience in the Humanities Lecture Hall Feb. 20.

"I ended up here in Asheville, North Carolina at age 16 after a suicide attempt. I realized that I was either going to have to get my life together in spite of everything that had happened to me, or just disappear," said Hsu-Li on her lecture.

Raised in rural Virginia, Hsu-Li experienced hatred from children who did not understand her differences. They constantly called her names and treated her differently.

"I was experiencing racism and bigotry on a daily basis at school," said Hsu-Li on her Web site [magdalenhsu.li](http://magdalenhsu.li). She said she wanted nothing more than to just "be white."

As a result of her Asian appearance, she battled Tourette's syndrome and anxiety.

She first lost weight to try to fit in at school and at home, but soon took it too far, according to her lecture. She spent time in Asheville to help overcome her health problems.

She used her parents as role models of how she did not want to live her life. Her parents held prejudices despite their own hardships as Asian-Americans. When Hsu-Li confronted them, they refused to admit it to her or to themselves.

"They were unable to see their own programming and prejudices," said Hsu-Li. "I dedicated my life and music to raising awareness in myself and others about racism and discrimination."

She uses music as just one way to get her message across to her audiences.

"It was through music and art that I began to shape my true identity and learn to accept myself for being different," said Hsu-Li on her Web site.

Before the lecture Hsu-Li performed songs from her albums as well as a few new songs. Her songs strive to prove a point, to make people aware and, in her own little way, to change the world.

"One of the problems with our society is pigeonholing people and lack of awareness for the wealth of cultural diversity that surrounds us," she said on her Web site. "I hope I will always be defining issues of identity, raising awareness and bringing communities together through my music."

Her song "Divided States" calls attention to the lack of cultural diversity in America, something that worries her. The line "divided states of America" recurred throughout the song.

From behind the edge lyrics comes a beautiful voice that fits equally well with any instrumentation.

She alternates between playing guitar, piano and a drum. She also has a drummer to back her up.

"I liked the drums, and the piano was good," said Shavna Turner, a senior literature major.

Her song "As I Am" draws from her experiences at the hospital in Asheville.

She played the song "Monkey Girl" which the Gay and Lesbian American Music Awards once named "best out song."

Hsu-Li spoke of her difficulties in the music industry as a minority.

"My dream is to become the first Asian-American singer-songwriter to break the glass ceiling," she said.

### Review

*"I'm excited because everybody understands this is for young audiences, though adults seem to be getting a real kick out of it."*

Patricia Snoyer, director and associate drama professor

### Review

## 'The Vagina Monologues' breaks silence

**Shelby Thompson**  
Features Reporter

So men can pee standing up, so they can be ready for sex in two seconds, so their stuff's on the outside, whoop-ti-do. The seventeen women in the cast of Eve Ensler's "The Vagina Monologues" proved on February 21-22 that women have something special to talk about too.

The auditorium filled with lots of vaginas, both young and old, and a few men attended the play as well. The cast appeared wearing a variety of black and red ensembles, some in the form of sexy short skirts, some in dressy black pants and one Cyndi Lauper-style bright red, lacy dress. The stage, although simple, proved effective. A red cloth hung in the back decorated with strings of white Christmas lights. A couch and several chairs rounded the stage, and the whole cast sat together creating a comfortable, living-room-type environment.

Before they took the stage, however, the girls walked among the audience members and demanded participation. They handed out pieces of paper with one or two words on them and gave instructions on when to use the phrases.

The atmosphere remained mostly upbeat and lighthearted, discussing such topics as sex, menstruation and birth.

Other pressing topics, like rape, domestic abuse, genital mutilation and incest tightened the circle that connects all women. Almost every topic that affects women came up during the play. The cast all performed very well. Each performer added much love



Julia Davidowitz, a freshman, played an elderly woman in "The Flood."

and a little flair into their character's stories, whether through using an accent, wearing a short skirt or throwing off a thong in an act of liberation. All the things done in this quickly pulled together version encouraged women to feel good about their vaginas and

their desires to make those vaginas happy.

The audience got to scream out answers to various questions proposed by the cast. Some of the answers to these questions were quite humorous.



Lauren Jones who starred in the monologues last year narrated the play.

what would your vagina say in two words? The cast immediately screamed out, "slow down," while others chimed in with "speed up," "more, please," "thank you!" and the favorite, "Where's Brian?"

The play, sponsored by UNCA organization Women Acting In Liberation (W.A.I.L.), touched upon many issues facing women today. Performances of "The Vagina Monologues" take place all over the

country to help raise money for V-Day, a self-described "organized response against violence towards women."

Not only does the organization raise money for the cause, but also through the use of its play, they raise awareness and consciousness about violence against women.

complete comfort with discussing sex and pleasure in public. This escort set out to please women, to make them mean.

### Review

*"Each cast member added much love and a little flair into their character's stories, whether through using an accent, wearing a short skirt or throwing off a thong in an act of liberation."*