



Annette Torregrossa (graduate-music) concentrates on her cello at the recent concerto competition for a position as soloist with the Penn State Symphony Orchestra.

## 'The Basement': an obsession with horror

By JIM ZARROLI  
Daily Collegian Staff Writer  
"The Basement," by Kate Millet, Simon and Schuster, 352 pages, \$10.95.  
"It was Sylvia Likens. She was me," writes Kate Millet in "The Basement." Like millions of people, Millet first read about the torture-murder of 16-year-old Sylvia Likens when it was still fresh news, back in 1965. She was studying at Barnard College and stumbled upon the story in Time Magazine, and reading it was instantly obsessed with the inexplicable horror of it all.

Why, Millet wanted to know, did Indiana housewife Gertrude Baniszewski lead her children and as many as 15 neighborhood kids in the two-month torture-murder of 16-year-old Likens — a girl who had done nothing to make anyone hate her — while neighbors, school officials, clergymen and even the Likens family sat back and let it happen?

What led Gertrude and her band to put the pretty, friendly girl, who with her sister had been left to board in the

Baniszewski house by her traveling parents, through the beatings, burnings, scaldings, brandings, sexual abuse — in short, any degradation the killers could think of to break her spirit?  
"Coming altogether by chance upon this actual barbarism and reading in sick fascination mixed with horror and anger. And fear," Millet writes. "The fear, especially, an enormous fear."  
"The Basement" is the end result of Millet's "fourteen year obsession" with the case, and with Sylvia herself, with whom, Millet explains, she has come to identify. It is an intensely personal book; the author is always struggling to comprehend, to test theories on us, to bemoan the crime's stupidity and the moral inadequacies of those who let it happen.

The energy she seems to spend in thinking the case through is enormous. The book is, in fact, a think-piece, not a factual study of a famous crime; there is none of the meticulous, dispassionate concern for detail one comes to expect from book-length accounts of famous crimes — none of the detail that might

have allowed both reader and writer to stand back, to possibly even enjoy the crime's heinousness, to say "Look what crazy people are capable of!" "The easiest thing to say is that (Gertrude) is crazy," Millet writes. "And we say it. The comfort of that explanation. That we deal here merely with a madwoman."  
What Millet is striving for is to understand what would have made her herself act as Gertrude did, or accept it so passively, as Sylvia seems to have done. In doing so, Millet even commits the ultimate violation of privacy by entering the consciousness of Sylvia and her murderers, trying to bring their thinking in line with her own until you wonder where Sylvia or Gertrude ends and Millet begins.

Millet's struggle to find that connection gives the book energy, and perhaps it doesn't matter that Gertrude is never fully understood. ("I am a fraud. My Gertrude never the real one. For it was all a secret. And remains so. Nothing in the courtroom or the light of the day, the tedious forms of respectability, nothing there ever explains.")

There is a noble quality to the book; the author, you sense, truly is horrified by the crime and wants to get to the bottom of it.  
When she does settle upon an explanation, it is one that is somewhat hard to accept. Sylvia, she decides, was murdered for sex. She "would not have been subjected to her specific tortures if she were not a girl. . . . How can we imagine a boy in analogous circumstances, based as they are upon specific sexual guilt by cultural definition?"  
But there are numerous cases — the Panzram killings, the recent Gacy murders, etc. — in which sex was used as a weapon against a male victim, too. To impose a feminist angle on the Likens case is cheap and artificial. Sexual abuse is, as Millet understands, the ultimate degradation one can apply to a living person, but it is merely a symptom of something deeper and more important — something she fully grasps: "the best and last, the compulsion and the relief so subterranean of prolonged human cruelty."

## Dinner theatre 'Accommodations' to be presented

Lonesome production, Hungerford said. Hungersford based on the "Three's Company" theme, this light three-act comedy follows the story of two women and one man living together in an old Greenwich Village apartment, together with an ancient, footed bathtub.

The play, by Nick Hall, is being presented by the State College Community Theatre at Gatsky's Nov. 15 through 18. It is the troupe's first attempt at a dinner

represents a cross-section of the community, Hungersford said. Hungersford, a former member of many actors' associations, has danced and acted professionally. She has taught at the University, and has appeared in several SCCT productions, including this summer's "Dark of the Moon."

## 'Le Petit Prince': of innocence and truth

By JOE MATTIVI  
For The Daily Collegian  
"Draw me a lamb, please!"  
The simplest and the most complicated of requests. The pilot could scarcely believe his ears. Forced down in the Sahara, he finds himself face-to-face with another traveller — an extraordinary little person, the personification of purity and innocence — the wide-eyed, inquisitive and sometimes determinedly single-minded Little Prince.

Although he renounced a "brilliant" but misunderstood career as an artist when he was a child (this rendering of a boy constrictor digesting an elephant was continually mistaken for a hat), the pilot complies with the strange and wonderful request and his life is unwittingly changed forever. And happily, as a result, so are ours.

The French-speaking community of State College had the opportunity to meet the Little Prince and share in his long journey through the galaxy thanks to the adaptation of Saint Exupery's book, "Le Petit Prince," by the Bernard Uzan Theatre Troupe, which visited Schubb Auditorium for a single performance Thursday night.  
The fable is simply charming. Inhabiting an asteroid not much bigger than a house, the little prince has three pint-sized volcanoes (two active and one extinct) and his beloved, a rose, and incurably egotistical rose, the Prince is totally loving and "as ingenious as a new born child," said Elaine Uzan, who performed the title role.

In the same style that Peter Pan has been played by Mary Martin and now Sandy Duncan, Uzan played the role when, just a few weeks before the tour was scheduled to begin, both simultaneously started puberty and their voices changed! My husband screamed, "Elaine! and I came to the rescue."  
Uzan is a competent, adaptable actress who enamored the audience with the sincerity and sweetness she radiated.

Bernard Uzan, however, as the Pilot/Narrator, lacked the inebriated enthusiasm which his wife possessed. In spite of his sense of humor and his obvious talent as a director, he seemed remote and somewhat mechanical at times.  
Virginia Rodarmor in her brief appearance as the Rose was coquettish, vain and completely fetching.  
Jean Sadowski's portrayal of the Fox and the Serpent was solid and visually interesting (thanks to imaginative costuming and the incorporation of music), but little more than adequate in the most important scene of the play. Fortunately, such is the strength of the author's message that the beauty of the moment shone through and the audience was visibly touched.  
By far the most exciting performance of the evening was given by Nicholas Guy in his interpretation of the inhabitants of various planets visited by the Prince en route to Earth. Ranging from pathetic to hilarious, his split-second changes in personality brought about by the mere doffing of a new hat are proof of a seasoned, first-rate actor.  
The stark stage and minimal props (understandable for a highly mobile travelling troupe) provided an excellent launching pad for the imagination. Lighting also played an important role in the dramatization, especially a well-placed green spotlight shining "ad nauseum" on the drunkard's planet.  
The weakest aspect of the production's structure was the badly recorded, inappropriate music which interfered with, rather than enhanced, the action of the story.  
In the end the Little Prince returns to his planet, but not before learning the

Fox's secret: "Only the heart sees clearly; what is essential is invisible to the eyes. . . . It is a message men seem to have forgotten a long time ago, one we shouldn't forget."  
The play is a yearning for truth, simplicity and innocence, a search for times past and for the lost purity of youth. Let us laugh, contemplate the stars and renew the forgotten hopes of childhood. Then one day, when we least expect it, we may come face-to-face with a golden-haired child with large round eyes who asks us to draw a lamb for him, and his secret will be ours forever.

## Douglas running on empty in latest film

By JOHN WARD  
Daily Collegian Staff Writer  
Michael Douglas is one of the hottest film properties around, which may come as a shock to those who were weaned on "The Streets of San Francisco." His track record speaks for itself: coproducer of "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest," an acting stint in the suspense hit "Coma" and a combination of both in "The China Syndrome." With that history, the man can pick his own films. It's a mystery why he chose such a shallow effort as "Running."

The idea here was to take the money-making "underdog" formula of "Rocky" and redo it in a different sport. Instead of Stallone's boxer Rocky Balboa, we've got Douglas' runner Michael Andropolis, whose Greek name in connection with the marathon's Greek roots was not lost on me.

Instead of a loving girlfriend, there's a loving ex-wife. Instead of a cantankerous fight trainer, there's a cantankerous track coach. Instead of a climactic championship bout, there's the Olympics. Any enjoyment Stern could possibly have squeezed from the film is lost during the interminable running sequences. The director could argue that he was trying to show how taxing and wearisome training can be, but it's uncomfortably clear just how far one can take the marathon as fuel for excitement. After a while, all the camera tracks of Douglas pounding along in his Pumas become extra padding.  
Andropolis' narrow scope of priorities has forced him to chuck his job and alienate his family. His divorce from wife Susan Anspach is treated with the most childish of kid gloves, and Anspach suffers for it.  
With everything going against him, Andropolis tries out for the Olympics, and qualifies on a fluke. Only the top three finishers go to the Olympics, and Michael finishes fourth in the trials. Enter fate in the form of the third-place runner collapsing immediately after the race. For Andropolis, the road to Montreal is clear.  
The audience is not so lucky. The movie ends in a cop-out freeze frame, and nothing is concretely resolved. Given time and a lot more care, "Running" could have been a good movie. But it's ultimately left in the starting block.

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