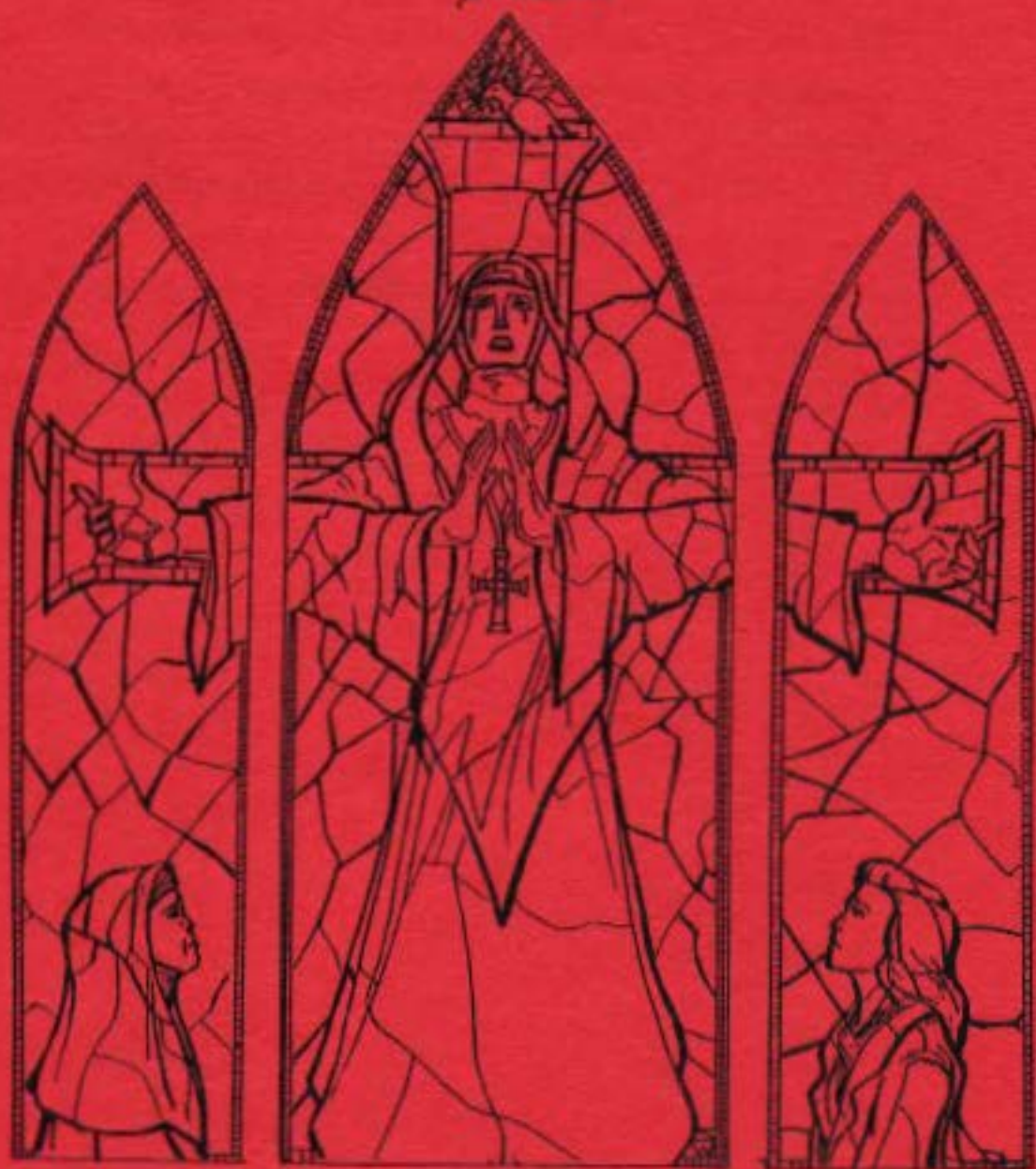


WPCC Performing Arts
Presents



Agnes of God

November 7 - 9 7:00 PM

November 10 2:00 PM

Phifer Studio

Tickets \$5.00

"Who is she? That is what you must discover . . . and you must find your answer in psychological truth, not in objective truth. And while you are searching, get on with your own life and accept the possibility that it may be purchased at the price of hers and that this may be God's plan for you and her."

*Produced by special arrangement with
Samuel French, Inc.*

Agnes of God

by John Pielmeier

The Cast

Dr. Martha Livingstone	Cheryl Oxford
Mother Miriam	Jada Lawing
Sister Agnes	Susan Cato
Chorus	Beth Buckner
	Louise White

The Production Staff

Artistic Director	Beth Buckner
Music Director	Louise White
Set	Paul Wardzinski and the Guys
Lighting Design	Beth Buckner Mark Woodard
Lighting Technician	Shelley Poteet
Sound Technician	Ben Farrar
Costumes	Byna Forbes
Logo Design	Scott Woodard
Photography	Phil D'Angelo

There will be a ten-minute intermission.

'Agnes of God' a winning production

By Dawn McCombs

The WPCCC Performing Arts Program scores a grandstand, grand-slam hit with its production of "Agnes of God."

A trinity of actresses power John Pielmeier's play of the mind — and of miracles.

Cheryl Oxford in the role of the examining psychiatrist gives an intensely concentrated and emotionally expressive performance.

Jada Lawing delivers an assured portrayal of the steely yet compassionate Mother Superior. Her scenes of conflict with Oxford are superbly timed. Wise and conniving, funny yet not altogether unsinister, Lawing gives a complete and brilliantly etched portrayal.

Susan Cato adds more lustre to a rapidly ascending stage career with an impressively controlled and moving performance as Sister Agnes. It is a difficult role and Cato makes the charac-

Play Preview

ter real and convincing. Whether conveying saint-like innocence or struggling with the pangs of simulated childbirth brought on by hypnosis, Cato is wonderful in the part. Her singing voice is also beguilingly beautiful.

Shelley Poteet's expertly executed light cues and Louise White's musical direction make this show sumptuously sensual.

Beth Buckner's skillful direction highlights the play's emotional dynamics. Buckner's ensemble has gotten down to hard work, and they deliver an evening of blood and guts theatre.

"Agnes of God" will be presented today, Friday, and Saturday, Nov. 7 - 9, at 7 p.m., and Sunday, Nov. 10, at 2 p.m., in the



Susan Cato

Phifer Studio. Tickets are \$5 and are available at The Book Cellar.

For more information, call 438-6093.







Susan Cato, as Sister Agnes, and Cheryl Oxford, as the court psychiatrist, rehearse a scene from "Agnes of God," WPC-C's fall drama production.

Oxford to perform in 'Agnes'

Cheryl Oxford, WPC-C Coordinator of Performing Arts, will play Dr. Martha Livingstone, the psychiatrist in "Agnes of God," the college's fall drama production.

A confrontation between science and religion is the central conflict of "Agnes of God," by John Pielmeier.

A strangled infant is found in a convent. The court psychiatrist's investigation of the accused murderer, a young novice, (played by Susan Cato) becomes a compelling journey toward a renewal of faith for the agnostic psychiatrist.

More accustomed to working behind the scenes as a director, Oxford joins a trio of actresses on

stage in this play of the mind — and of miracles.

"Jada Lawing and Susan Cato are so good in their roles as the Mother Superior and Sister Agnes," Oxford said. "Acting opposite them has given me a real challenge. I'm remembering why I have so much respect for serious actors.

"Our director, Beth Buckner, and music director, Louise White, are crafting a show that I am very proud to be associated with."

"Agnes of God" will be presented Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, Nov. 7 - 9, at 7 p.m. and Sunday, Nov. 10, at 2 p.m. in the Phifer Studio. Admission is \$5.

For more information, call 438-6093.

Lawing to play Mother Superior in 'Agnes'

WPCC Performing Arts major Jada Lawing will play Mother Miriam Ruth, the Mother Superior in "Agnes of God," the college's fall drama production.

Currently President of the Student Government Association at WPCC, Lawing is a 1995 graduate of Freedom High School, where she acted with the Playmakers in "Our Miss Brooks," "Three Murders and It's Only Monday," and "A Rose for Emily."

With the Old Colony Players, she has appeared in "From This Day Forward" and "A Christmas Carol."

With the Stagecrafters, her credits include "My Fair Lady," "Bye, Bye, Birdie," and "Spoon River Anthology."

While at WPCC, Lawing has been on stage in "Fried Green Tomatoes" (playing the role of Eva Bates), "How the Grinch Stole Christmas," and "Sorry, Right Number." She has worked behind the scenes for "Wait Until Dark" and "True West."

About the character of Mother Miriam Ruth, Jada observed: "She loves the church, but she's had her questioning times.

"She wants Sister Agnes (played by Susan Cato) to be innocent. She doesn't want Agnes to be taken away from her; Agnes's voice reminds Mother Miriam of her own childhood angel.

"She doesn't want Agnes to be able to remember the play's incidents. That helps her not have to remember, and it keeps Agnes innocent. Mother Miriam



Jada Lawing will play Mother Miriam Ruth in "Agnes of God," WPCC's fall drama production.

can go on thinking that Agnes was not conscious of the baby's death.

"Mother Miriam likes the psychiatrist (played by Cheryl Oxford), but she's scared for Agnes that Dr. Livingstone will take her away from the convent and away from God.

"The truth that's revealed about Agnes takes away Mother Miriam's faith in everything and everybody. She is left shattered by the experience."

About the cast, Jada said: "I'm personally glad that Cheryl Oxford decided to take a part and get back on stage."

"Agnes of God" will be presented Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, Nov. 7 - 9, at 7 p.m. and Sunday, Nov. 10, at 2 p.m. in the College's Phifer Studio. Tickets are \$5.

For more information, contact Dr. Cheryl Oxford, Coordinator of Performing Arts, at 438-6093.

Original stage play shows power of 'Agnes'

The Western Piedmont Community College Performing Arts program has courage and vision, and its 1996-97 season opener, John Pielmeier's "Agnes of God," shows the continued growth of this program.

Made into a movie starring Jane Fonda as the psychiatrist, the original 1982 stage play cuts to the heart of the matter without cluttering the stage with extra personalities.



ELIZABETH BRUTON

Review

The play features only three characters: Mother Miriam, the Mother Superior of the convent; Sister Agnes, in her fifth year as a novice; and Dr. Martha

Livingstone, the reluctant psychiatrist. (The virtue of the cinema can also be its vice; the vivid scenes, the temptation to people the screen with extras and the possibility of multiple plots work against the starkness that both reveals and conceals in a staging such as this.)

A dead newborn has been found in Sister Agnes' cell (bedroom), and the psychiatrist must decide if Agnes is sane enough to stand trial — or if she might be innocent.

Each character brings her own baggage to the situation. Mother Miriam is Agnes' aunt and is unaware that Agnes' mother had abused the girl; she believes her function is to protect the girl's innocence. The psychiatrist, a lapsed Catholic, mourns a sister who died of untreated appendicitis after entering a convent. And Agnes talks to an angel, her protectress from the abusive mother she still loves and from outside evil that still intrudes on her sheltered life.

Pielmeier raises tough issues in the play: the possibility of present-day miracles, the unintentional cruelty of the discipline of conventual life and his perceived sexual repression of women who enter convents.

He offers neither answers nor faith. Rather, his intention appears to be to expose. While his strength is his rich, multifaceted characters,

he also uses the stage as a forum. Occasionally, the play crosses the line between stage to podium.

Guest director Beth Buckner has done a fantastic job. She takes her three-woman cast through a range of powerful emotions revealed in honest soliloquies and dialogue.

Cheryl Oxford as Martha Livingstone must fight for truth at the cost of facing her own weakness. In the process, she finds her lost faith. Oxford faces the audience forthrightly. Her compassion for Agnes and strength in facing the resentment that the Mother Superior embodies are the play's guiding forces.

In spite of her youth, Jada Lawing turns in an outstanding performance as the middle-aged Mother Miriam. Her anger, authority, love and motherliness are all there. Lawing, in a difficult role for a woman of any age, promises remarkable talent and potential.

But Susan Cato as Sister Agnes brings chills. Hers is the role of the broken angel, the childlike woman, torn between an evil past and God's love in the present. She is both victim and victor. Cato finds the pain, the raw emotion, the divergent halves of Sister Agnes' personality and conveys them with power and restraint.

It would be too easy to overplay this role. Cato IS Agnes, easy to love, easy to fear, easy to pity — and impossible to touch. Cato's youthful soprano voice conveys that painful, joyful place where Agnes lives.

Buckner and Louise White, who represent the other nuns, enter singing for the church services that punctuate the routine of convent life. Joined by Cato and in one scene by Lawing, these women create beautiful classic a capella harmony, the music of monks and nuns the world over.

The Performing Arts program at Western Piedmont Community College is clearly a top-quality endeavor, and a feather in the cap of director Cheryl Oxford.

Elizabeth Bruton is a member of Catawba Valley Community College's English faculty and seminarian at Charlotte's Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. She has a master's degree in English, has done doctoral work in literature with a specialty in drama.