

Spartan Daily  
Feb. 12, 1973

# War's tragic stupidity exposed in 'Battle Ax'

By NANCY BAKER

Dressed in black dresses, carrying obscure black notebooks, "The Co-Respondents" are dynamic actresses who believe in their message and enjoy their medium.

Patricia Larson and Sandra Nisbet performed a collection of readings Thursday about women and war entitled "Battle Ax" in the San Jose State University Theater. They veered from their usual emphasis on women's rights to a program exposing the "masculine" sport of war as tragic stupidity.

With transitions smoothed by the folk singing of Denise Livingston, a music student on tour with them, the Readers' Theater moved from the humor of "Lysistrata" by Aristophanes to the disgust of Robert Sherwood in "Idiot's Delight," and the Despair of Arthur Miller's mother in "All My Children."

Timing, comic and tragic, effectively kept the audience of 150 involved with selections from Euripides, Jane Addams, Bertolt Brecht, Sarah Cleghorn, Daniel Berrigan, Irwin Shaw, and Beatrice Raveral.

Both actresses received B.A. degrees from San Jose State, have completed Masters and taught drama. Friends for more than 15 years, they combined their talents last year when they realized they had a message and an unusual means of communicating. This is the aspect of drama they are excited about. Patricia Larson finds theater a means of "talking with people about the women's program who would not ordinarily listen." In the context of the play they are able to combine two ideas, using both Virginia Woolf's words, "We are outsiders, living in a male-dominated society," and Robert Sherwood's message, "War is dead Hannibal, and we are alive."

This performance was sponsored jointly by the Drama Department and Woman's Studies. Thursday evening's performance was sponsored by the Women's Center, and the final presentation on Friday was hosted by the Associated Students' Planning Board. Friday, the program was entitled "Enter Laughing," an historical approach to the feminist movement.



PATRICIA LARSON

The Daily Olympian,  
Sunday, January 7, 1973

# Evergreen Invites You To Readers' Theater

Three Olympia area actresses will present a 45-minute program this Monday night on women's roles in society as depicted in writers from Moliere to Virginia Woolfe.

The trio, Patricia Larson, Denise Livingston and Sandra Nisbet, have formed a readers' theater group called the Co-Respondents. Their appearance, which will begin at 8 p.m. in the reference al-

cove of the college library, is sponsored by the Federally funded Eye-5 program.

The Co-Respondents also will appear in North Thurston High School January 9, starting at 8:15 p.m.; in the Tumwater Library, January 11, starting at 7:30 p.m., and in Fort Steilacoom Community College Coffee House, January 12, starting at 8:30 p.m.

All these presentations are free and open to the public.

San Jose News  
Wed., Feb. 7, 1973

## Feminist Reader's Theater

# Women Speak About Women

By PHYLLIS STOKES

Staff Writer

San Jose State isn't what it used to be. I grew up to be a university.

The two alums back on the revamped campus this week have changed a bit too. The two, Sandra Lewis Nisbet and Patricia Branch Larson, were graduated in the '50's with majors in drama.

They returned this week, accompanied by Evergreen State College coed Denise Livingston, to present an unusual reader's theater production which is rapidly gaining

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the trio acclaim from both dramatic and feminist groups.

They call themselves the Co-Respondents, and they present a program where women speak out about women. Three performances are scheduled on campus Thursday and Friday.

"Battle-ax," about women and war, will be presented at 12:30 p.m. in the University Theater Thursday under the sponsorship of the Women's Studies and Drama Department at SJS and at 7 p.m. in Engineering 132, sponsored by the Women's Center. On Friday "Enter Laughing," focusing on women and equality, will be presented at 1 p.m. in the Umunhum Room of the College Union under the sponsorship of Student Activities.

Although Pat and Sandy both grew up in San Jose, they first met while attending San Jose State. Both drama majors, the coeds found their paths led in different directions but along parallel courses. Both completed

studies for their masters degrees — Pat from the University of Oregon, Sandy from Indiana University; both have taught — Pat at the department of theater, University of Connecticut, and Sandy at Oregon State University. Both have married and launched families.

Their paths crossed again when the women's husbands both accepted jobs teaching at Evergreen State College, Olympia, Wash.

They got launched on their present venture during preparations for a Women's Symposium, a three-day program scheduled on the Evergreen campus. The two faculty wives were asked to put together the reader's theater presentation as a lighter part of the symposium program.

The program was a success and such a success that the women went on a four as volunteers to draw attention to the campaign in Washington state to pass the Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

They played their program under all sorts of conditions — from an audience of six in a living room to a performance from the back of a truck parked in a field. The two found their format flexible and were able to polish their performance, which runs 45 minutes in length and allows for discussion following.

Sandra and Pat moved from volunteers to professionals under the direction of EYE-5, a pilot agency sponsored by the State of Washington in the creative arts.

Pat and Sandy both agree that the development of the Co-Respondents has been more than fun — it's rather changed their lives, too. While seriously involved in putting together a program to raise the consciousness of women, the women made a few discoveries on their own.

"We were putting together the program," commented Sandy, "under the usual hectic conditions found in a home with pre-school children. Sometime during the

*'Many times I'm sure, our husbands didn't jump into change with gusto.'*

midst of all that confusion, it dawned on me that I would never permit my husband to work under this kind of conditions.

"The first performance was also the first time we had done the whole thing from beginning to end uninterrupted."

"We are pleased," confirmed Pat, "at the changes that Co-Respondents has made in our own lives. We have had to make significant changes to live creatively. Many times I'm sure our husbands didn't jump into change with gusto, but we have made changes."



SANDRA NISBET

Gazette-Times, Corvallis, Oregon,  
Tuesday, January 23, 1973

# Co-Respondents Give Performances At OSU

The Co-Respondents, a trio of two actresses and a singer from Olympia, Wash., will present two performances at Oregon State University Wednesday.

The performances will be given in Room 105 of the Memorial Union at 4:30 and 7:30 p.m.

The group is appearing under the co-sponsorship of the Department of Speech Communications and the Women's Study Group.

"Women Speak on Women" is the theme of this touring theater group which employs a readers theater style of presentation with selections read from a wide ranging list of authors, all of whom have

powerful, witty and relevant observations on the subject of women.

One of the actresses appearing with the group, Sandra Nisbet, was formerly on the staff of the OSU Department of Speech Communications. Patricia Larson shares the stage with Mrs. Nisbet and Denise Livingston is the vocalist-guitarist.

The group has toured much of the state of Washington performing for universities, women's groups and church organizations.

The Co-Respondents are participating performers in the Eye-5 program sponsored by the Washington State Arts Commission and the National Endowment for the Arts.



DENISE LIVINGSTON

## Statewide forum

The first Oregon Women's Conference, billed as "Feminism 1973," will be presented by eight organizations Oct. 26-28 at Surfides in Lincoln City.

Purpose of the meeting is to provide a state-wide forum to assess the present status of women's issues, determine goals, decide on areas for accomplishment in the next two years and strengthen relationships among women's groups.

A women's theater group will present a program of readings, Enter Laughing, at 7:30 p.m. Saturday.



## Women In Education Series At K-College

Dr. Florence Howe, professor of humanities at the State University of New York at Old Westbury, will be the first of three women educators to speak at the Kalamazoo College Forum Program's Women in Education series.

Her appearance at the college will be preceded by the Co-Respondents.

## Holy matrimony,

Fort Lewis, Wash.

By Spec 4 JOHN BLUCK

"Women working on garbage trucks, driving mail. It just ain't right," a young troop-said listening to "The Co-Respondents" Thursday at the Totem Service Club.

Following the performance, a male spectator asked why a woman would want to work on an auto assembly line. Another man jumped in, "Don't you think women's emancipation would take us away from love? Women's emancipation is a fight for economic reasons, but this gets away from true love."

Mrs. Larson said, "No. I think there's a possibility of finding true love if all are equal. Most satisfying is love between equals. Much of our play was the antagonism between man and wife. To me this isn't love."

Asked if woman should assume a dominant role in marriage, she said, "No, they both should be equal. Man shouldn't be a king in his house."

## Theatre Group Learns From Talking to Audiences

Colorado Springs, Colo.

Tuesday, Dec. 11, 1973

The Co-Respondents don't want people to just hear about women's liberation. They want them to really listen.

To that end, the feminist theatre group from Olympia, Wash., travels from community to community, presenting "theatre with a message."

"If you can entertain, then you have a chance of getting your ideas across as well," explained Co-Respondent Patricia Branch Larson. "Our programs are put together to not allow people to put up a lot of defenses. They are entertaining so people will listen to what we have to say."

"The women's movement is complex and so is theatre," explained Ms. Larson. "The genre is so good. We can deal with the complexities and the intricacies."

"The more we talk to other women, the more we see that we aren't alone in our views," emphasized Ms. Nisbet. "It is not just individual craziness but the result of social and cultural pressures."

After performances, the Co-Respondents hold discussion workshops.

10 Wednesday, September 26, 1973—Moscow, Idaho—IDAHOIAN

## Many Faces of Woman

Women of all kinds — young and old, hopeful and cynical, honest and scheming — some content and smug with their lot, others crying out in pain and frustration for understanding, were masterfully portrayed in a three-women reader's theater performance in the University of Idaho Student Union Building ballroom last night.



## They're feminists on stage and off

Palo Alto Times, Nov. 6, 1973

By MARY ANN SEAWELL

Two women who are involved in feminist theater find that the drama is not limited to their on-stage lives.

One, Sandra Lewis Nisbet, calls the women's movement "one of the most exciting things that's happened to me in my married life." Her fellow trouper, Patricia Branch Larson, agrees.

Mrs. Nisbet and Mrs. Larson have found that their off-stage roles have changed since they began touring. When they are away from their homes in Olympia, Wash., their husbands take over the child care and domestic responsibilities. This has worked out well, the women say.

"My husband really appreciates his fantastic relationship with the children," said Mrs. Larson. "He's as close to the children now as I am. They don't love or depend on Mommy more than Daddy." The Larsons, who have been married 14 years, have a girl, 8, and a boy, 6.

The Nisbets, also married 14 years, have two sons, 12 and 6, and a daughter, 8. "The first time I went away on tour," Mrs. Nisbet recalled, "my six-year-old clung to me and hugged me. I marked on his calendar the day I'd be back and he crossed off every day until I came home. The last time I left, I asked if he wanted me to mark his calendar and he said, 'Well, if you want to, but Dad is going to be here, isn't he?'"

"Changes aren't easy and it's not always pink balloons and roses. But rather than this drawing us apart, we're closer than we've ever been."

Patricia Larson and Sandra Nisbet have been friends since they were drama students at San Jose State College. After college, they traveled through Europe together for several months.

Mrs. Larson, who earned a master's degree from the University of Oregon, has taught in the theater department at the University of Connecticut.

Mrs. Nisbet, who has a master's degree from Indiana University, taught drama at Oregon State University and at a professional acting school in Los Angeles.

The Co-Respondents stress a low-key, non-threatening approach in their performance, but they refuse to set themselves apart from other feminists.

According to Sandra Nisbet, "Often someone in the audience will say, 'Well, you're fine but the others in the women's movement are strident and angry.' Our answer is that we wouldn't be doing what we're doing if it weren't for those other women. We're all in this together, but we're as varied as men are."

"When men are angry, they're called forceful and strong. Women are called crazy or in need of a good man."



The Canyon News

## Man's World?

Voices of women of all times reverberated through the Branding Iron Theatre at West Texas State University this week. Hard-edged voices. Soft, genteel voices. Resigned ones, angry ones.

Patricia Larson and Sandra Nisbet, the actresses in the ensemble, were handsome, spare-boned women who climbed agilely in and out of their reader's theatre roles as ladies of leisure, toil and ill fame, and found it easy to talk candidly with their audiences about the impact of their "liberated" roles on their own marriages.

Denise Livingston seemed to be the more reserved, soft-spoken member of the group, preferring to articulate her feelings about "the movement" through her music. But her soprano voice drove home a message as gutsy and outspoken as her two performing sisters.

The Co-Respondents began their performances on the West Coast, and have only recently ventured into the American heartland.

## Women's rights theme of drama

Daily Utah Chronicle, October 11, 1973

by CINDY BOSHARD  
Chronicle Staff

The stage is a feeble set of portable platforms set together in the front of the auditorium. Three empty chairs and a microphone are the only props. But when the Co-Respondents walk on those feeble platforms, scenery is not important, for the words and the actions are all that matter.

The Co-Respondents spent four months researching historical literature relevant to women's struggle. Rather than use some of the names and examples from familiar books, they found that "it has all been said before by so many different people, it really didn't matter who said it."

One act was especially emotional as Ms. Nisbet portrayed a young mother who worked 14 hours a day making men's clothes. The account was from the Report by the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics in 1884.