When the house lights went down and the stage lights came up, theater-goers at the Yvonne Theater were greeted by a peculiar sight: an audience. Musical Chairs, this year’s musical, presented by the Fine Arts department, is all-around peculiar as far as stage performance goes in that the entire story takes place in the audience of a theater during a fictitious play. The concept may sound strange, but it works wonderfully.

As a reviewer sitting in the audience, it was disjoining to see the interactions between three characters in the show, all theater critics from different newspapers, but the shining performances delivered by every member of the cast quickly dispelled any discomfort supplied by the unconventional angle of the show.

In short, it’s the opening night of a play written by once famous, now burned-out playwright, Joe Preston, and is all-around peculiar as far as stage performance goes in that the entire story takes place in the audience of a theater during a fictitious play. The concept may sound strange, but it works wonderfully.

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By Al Viciedo

Musical Chairs will be performed again tonight and Saturday, Nov. 20 at 8 PM.

(David Yashin), a nerdy guy who is supposed to meet Sally, the love of his life, for the first time. Initially, one might write off Yashin’s character as a comic relief element with his excessively geeky appearance, but he comes to represent the heart of the story and Yashin’s performance steals the first act, especially with his hilarious solo number “Sally.”

Each character in this show is so well portrayed that each stands out. The cast really took the adage, “There is no small part,” to a step beyond.

Appreciation must be given to the superb lighting design done by Brenda Veltre. Lighting played an integral role in setting different moods and creating an engaging design done by Brenda Veltre. Lighting played an integral role in setting different moods and creating a visually captivating atmosphere.

Jim Adams, lead singer and guitarist, and the rest of the band Jimmy Eat World played at The Stone Pony on Wednesday, Nov. 10.

‘Jimmy’ rocks the ‘world’
By Al Viciedo

Jimmy Eat World, with songs like “The Middle” and “Sweetness,” defined the teen anthems of this generation. The band performed to a sold-out crowd on Wednesday, Nov. 10, giving concert-goers a night they won’t soon forget.

Opening band, Gratitude, graced the stage around 8:15 and dove into a song that can be best described as emo modern rock. The heartfelt lyrics backed by thick guitar made for a very interesting sound. This is one of those bands to watch for. The lead singer also shared his political views on Bush after an outburst from the audience. “The blight is on your hands,” he stated as he continued to comment on the war in Iraq. The band closed out their set with their single “Drive Away,” a pop-rock song with a bit of a classic rock feel.

Razorlight’s lead singer, Johnny Borrell, proved to be a killer combination for a lead singer. From “Seventeen,” off of its first album Swoon, to play an eclectic mix of songs spanning all of its albums, proving that this band had something for every Jimmy fan. From “Seventy,” off of its first album Status Quo, to the guitarist-driven “Work,” off its most recent album Future, lead singer Jim Adkins exhibited his guitar prowess on the stage as he went in and out of impromptu guitar solos, keeping the audience in awe. Jimmy wrapped up the night by playing all of its hit singles, including “Sweetness” and “The Middle,” as the audience sang in harmony.

Jimmy Eat World certainly lived up to the greatness of its albums, giving a memorable show with an incredible 17-song set. The amazingly diverse set list along with Adams’ stage presence proved to be an unforgettable performance for the audience.

Most people were unfamiliar with Asian cinema until the 2000 release of Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon. Since then, the U.S. has been trying to seep more martial-arts extravaganzas into the film mainstream. The recent release of Hero showed off the talents, artistry, imagination and capacity of the director Zhang Yi-Mou. With a possible release date of Dec. 3, the U.S. will be introduced to another Zhang Yi-Mou creation, House of Flying Daggers. The literal English translation of the movie title is Ambushed from Ten Directions. This is a movie that blends superb martial-arts action with a tragic romance story.

This will be Zhang Yi-Mou’s second martial-arts movie. He collaborates with familiar actress, Zhang Ziyi, from his previous film Hero. Her other films include Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon and Rush Hour. Supporting her is a great cast with Andy Lau, a multi-talented superstar from Hong Kong, and Takeshi Kaneshiro, an icon in Hong Kong and the Japanese film industry. One might recognize Kaneshiro in the Sony PlayStation video game Onimusha: Warlords. The story is simple. It is set in the year 859 A.D. during China’s Tang Dynasty, one of the greatest empires in Chinese history, while it is falling apart. A police officer, Leo, suspects that a blind dancer in a brothel, Mei, is part of an underground rebel army known as The House of Flying Daggers. Thus, he sends his best officer, Jin, to get close with Mei and spy on the group. Ultimately, to be successful in engaging the audience, the story has a few twists and turns which includes characters falling in love, betrayal and entanglement in detrimental circumstances. The plot evolution may be predictable to most, but the movie is filled with such rich visual effects and cinematography, that the two hours pass by quickly.

Visually, House of Flying Daggers is stunning. Zhang Yi-Mou uses vibrant and colorful colors. All four seasons are eloquently portrayed, yet the movie only covers a short time span. Although the film relies a lot on computer-generated imagery (CGI) effects, they do not become overused. The audience may instantly recognize that the daggers ‘flying’ are created by CGI artists, but it is not necessary to have a negative impact.

Two particular scenes will separate this movie from others in the genre. First is the ‘echo game,’ which involves martial-arts, dance and drums. And second is a later battle in a bamboo forest. Both are likely to become reference points for future martial-arts films to come.

Although the ending is too over-dramatic, one feels satisfied after watching the film. As the credits roll, the theme—the only song sung in English—by opera diva Kathleen Battle fades in. The tune ties into the movie nicely. The score is from composer Shigeru Umebayashi.

Sony Pictures should push House of Flying Daggers the way Miramax did Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon. A wide studio release is needed, complemented by effective advertisement. Any less would be an injustice to this film. With beautiful cinematography, great fight choreography and high production value, this masterpiece is well worth your while.