

News and Reviews Vol. 8, No. 3 Winter 2006

A Dream in Hanoi: A True Story of Love, Stage Fright, and Noodle Soup

>> Directed by Tom Weidlinger. 2002. 91 minutes. In English and Vietnamese with English subtitles.

The subtitle, "Love, stage fright, and noodle soup" hints at the complex and intimate portrait of Vietnamese and American interactions



revealed in this film. Twenty-five years after the end of the Vietnam War, the Central Dramatic

Company of Vietnam and the Artists Repertory Theater of Portland, Oregon, have joined forces to stage a binational and bilingual production of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" for Vietnamese



• Filmmaker Tom Weidlinger

audiences. Filmmaker Tom Weidlinger was with the production for most of the project, capturing a rich portrait of events as they unfolded, including footage of the frank, and sometimes frustrated end-ofthe-day commentary from both the American and the Vietnamese players. Although the film is not without local color—Hanoi traffic, Buddhist

temples, a mouth-watering Vietnamese meal— "Dream" is less "about Vietnam" than an up close and personal look at what it means to work with the Vietnamese in a Vietnamese setting, negotiating cultural and communication differences to complete a joint project. Weidlinger's ethnographic presence, an exercise in showing as well as telling, makes this film far superior to some other treatments of young westerners working in Asia. Interview subjects, both foreign and Vietnamese, are not talking heads reciting platitudes; they address the filmmaker as a friend and a confidant who is assumed to understand their situation. The viewer is "backstage" in every sense.

The Oregon troupe arrives in Vietnam filled with good intentions, charmed like many travelers by the city of Hanoi. Because actors from both casts are expected to deliver some lines in each other's language, the film includes hilarious shots



Above, top: Ngan Hoa as Hermia (left) and Doug Miller as Lysander.

Bottom: Tuan Hai as Puck (center) with his assistants.

of patient language instruction. In one memorable scene, we learn that the Vietnamese are taken aback by the physicality that their American counterparts bring to love scenes. While American actor Doug Miller (Lysander) explores Ngan Hoa's (Hermia) "comfort level," the chorus of fairies tells him that Vietnamese performers "aren't allowed to kiss" on stage and that kissing should be faked with "acting technique." In the next cut, however, we see that the actors seem to have achieved their own "little revolution" as Ngan races to embrace Miller and share (what certainly looks like) a full on mouth-to-mouth kiss, which is then met with applause from the assembled cast.



Co-producers of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" Do Doan Chau (left) and Lorelle Browning.

The American stage manager (a position that has no Vietnamese equivalent) complains about short workdays and long (two-hour) lunch breaks. In response, the Vietnamese

production assistant explains that while the Americans may be disciplined workers they omit the human side of personal interactions. In contrast, the Vietnamese, he explains, are more inclined to include personal concerns in their work relationships, and their work schedules reflect this difference in philosophy. Another disagreement arises when director Doan Hoang Giang directs actress Kristen Brown to perform the role of Helena as a reticent young woman, which is met with resistance from the outspoken actress who is convinced that the director has a gender *continued on page 2*

Contents

What's New?
How to Contact AEMS 2
Reviews of films and videos:
A Dream in Hanoi: A True Story of Love,
Stage Fright, and Noodle Soup1
The Year of the Yao
Rice Rhapsody4
The Tale of the Mandarin Ducks 5
Tsunami: The Wave that Shook the World
and <i>Tsunami: Wave of Destruction</i> 6
Guide to Distributors

Asian Educational Media Service

The Asian Educational Media Service (AEMS) is a program of the Center for East Asian and Pacific Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. AEMS offers information about where to find audiovisual media resources for teaching and learning about Asia, and advice about which ones may best suit your needs. In addition to *AEMS News and Reviews*, published three times a year, services include a free call-in/write-in service and a website. To add your name to our mailing list, request additional copies of the newsletter to use in workshops or to share with your colleagues, or ask for help in locating resources, please contact us.

AEMS is made possible by generous support from The Freeman Foundation and The Japan Foundation Center for Global Partnership.

For more information, contact:

Asian Educational Media Service Center for East Asian and Pacific Studies University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign 805 West Pennsylvania Avenue, MC-025 Urbana, IL 61801

Telephone: 1-888-828-AEMS (1-888-828-2367) or 217-265-0642 Fax: 217-265-0641 E-mail: aems@uiuc.edu Web: www.aems.uiuc.edu

Advisory Board

- Burnill Clark, President and C.E.O., KCTS Television
- Lucien Ellington, Editor, Education About Asia; UC Foundation Professor, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga
- Richard Gordon, *Executive Producer, Long Bow* Group, Inc.
- Peter Grilli, President, Japan Society of Boston, Inc.
- Karl G. Heider, Professor of Anthropology, University of South Carolina
- Ellen C.K. Johnson, Associate Professor, College of DuPage
- Laurel Kendall, Curator, Asian Ethnographic Collections, American Museum of Natural History; Adjunct Professor of Anthropology, Columbia University
- Gary Mukai, Director, Stanford Program on International and Cross-Cultural Education (SPICE)
- Editorial Board (Faculty and staff of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.)

Nancy Abelmann, Director of the Center for East Asian and Pacific Studies, and Associate Professor of Anthropology and East Asian Languages and Cultures

Clark E. Cunningham, Professor Emeritus of Anthropology

David M. Desser, Professor of Speech Communications and Director of Cinema Studies

Jacquetta Hill, Professor of Anthropology and of Educational Psychology

Blair Kling, Professor Emeritus of History

Staff

Program Director/Editor: Jenny C. Huang Yang Assistant Program Coordinator: Susan Norris Graduate Student Assistant: Rebecca Nickerson

Senior Advisor: David W. Plath

What's New?

Nancy Abelmann, New Director of the Center for East Asian and Pacific Studies

It is a pleasure to introduce myself to the AEMS community. I am an anthropologist, Koreanist (but one with East Asia interests at large), and an Asian Americanist. My interests are broad—from social movements to social mobility, and from higher education to media. I have published books on social movements in contemporary South Korea, *Echoes of the Past, Epics of Dissent: A South Korean Social Movement* (University of California Press,



Nancy Abelmann

1996); on women and social mobility in post-colonial South Korea, *The Melodrama of Mobility: Women, Talk and Class in Contemporary South Korea* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2003); and most recently on Korean film with Kathleen McHugh, *South Korean Golden Age Melodrama: Gender, Genre, and Nation* (Wayne State University Press, 2005). Currently I am completing *The Intimate University: College and the Korean American Family*, based on four years of transnational ethnography on the educational trajectories of Korean American public college students as they articulate with the educational histories of their émigré parents. I understand anthropology as an investment in social portraiture: as a mode of sketching social life—in all its complexity. It is thus a particular pleasure to find myself directing the Center for East Asian and Pacific Studies (EAPS), which houses AEMS with its commitment to media portraiture of Asia.

I am excited about exploring how AEMS can become even better integrated with EAPS and with the University of Illinois at large. I also hope that EAPS programming can feature AEMS more prominently and that where it makes sense EAPS and AEMS can co-program, and together provide educational outreach to the larger community—as we are currently planning for the spring 2006 Korean Film Festival. Further, I envision a partnership in which EAPS and AEMS can serve as national advocates for continued educational media production on Asia. Although AEMS is foremost a national organization—one whose services should enhance teaching about Asia at all levels across the country—I would like to think that the University of Illinois can function as an AEMS laboratory of sorts: a place for pilot programs and for face-to-face encounters that can enrich the AEMS mission. \blacklozenge

-Nancy Abelmann

Hanoi

continued from page 1

"issue," the American actress is determined to play the role buoyantly—"a little bit over the top."

As the work progresses, the potential for miscommunication and misunderstanding takes its toll. Along with tensions that result from miscommunication and cultural misunderstanding, other serious conflicts also begin to rise. The Portland director, Allen Nause, wonders if Doan sees him as simply doing the leg work, leaving the artistic vision to Doan. Dramaturge Lorelle Browning, whose five-year efforts brought the "Dream" project into being, disputes Doan's intention to introduce a team of Vietnamese Cheo actors as servants for Puck, a move she considers too "Broadway" and a departure from Shakespeare's original intent. Even more frustrating for the American company members is the bureaucratic frame in which the play is produced. When the troupe loses their opening venue, the elegant Hanoi Opera House,

they must move to a massive Russian-built structure with only seven days to reconstruct sets, lighting, and blocking. Even more challenging is the prospect of filling the enormous house, a difficulty that is compounded by the censoring committee's refusal to let the company sell tickets until they themselves have attended and approved the play. In both instances, the Vietnamese knew the bad news well in advance of the Portland troupe but kept the information to themselves in order to avoid confrontation until all the facts and options were known. Predictably, this creates a deep sense of betrayal among their foreign counterparts, but in the end multiple compromises are made on both sides. Nause accepts Doan's inclusion of the Cheo actors saying that "we can do things the Vietnamese way." Doan gently but firmly tells the cast to conform to the stage manager's rigorous schedule in the last days of the production. Producer Do Doan Chau pulls strings to get the authorities' permission to fill the house with guests on opening night. A respectable crowd shows up

The Year of the Yao

>> Directed by James D. Stern and Adam Del Deo. 2004. 84 minutes.

magine the cross-L cultural implications when a seven foot six inches tall 22-year-old basketball player from China who has never lived abroad arrives in Houston Texas to play for the Houston Rockets. In 2002, Yao Ming, who is already a national basketball hero in China, became the first overall NBA draft pick of the season, placing him in the international spotlight for the first time. The Year of the Yao is a delightful and warmhearted documentary by James D. Stern and Adam Del Deo that explores some of these implications as it chronicles Yao Ming's first season in the NBA.



Shaquille O'Neal (left) and Yao Ming.

The film opens with Yao getting ready to leave China and ends as he returns to his home country for the off-season. In between, we follow Yao on a cross-cultural adventure and watch as he struggles to adjust to American life, deals with endless media and public scrutiny, and attempts to succeed in the NBA. Things do not get off to a very auspicious start. Yao arrives at the training camp several weeks late and misses the Rocket's rookie orientation. As a result, he has only a few weeks in which to learn the team's plays, jargon, and drills-all in a language he cannot fully understand. Yet somehow Yao manages to get through this difficult period with help from his translator, a charming, somewhat awkward but enthusiastic 29year-old Colin Pine. In a sense, this film tells two stories; one follows Yao as he struggles to overcome cultural, linguistic, and psychological challenges to succeed in his first year in the NBA, and the other chronicles the development of a friendship between the basketball player and his interpreter. Clearly, Pine is more than just a translator; he is Yao's trusted guide through the maze of American culture. Pine introduces Yao to every-



Translator Colin Pine (left) and Yao Ming.

thing from video games and shopping to American Thanksgiving traditions. Pine also supports Yao emotionally, offering encouragement during the first difficult months and throughout the year. It is genuinely touching to watch how their relationship grows into one of mutual respect and understanding. Their relationship touches on a central theme of this of film, which is an emphasis on reaching out to connect with other cultures and people. Pine expresses this idea by quoting an old Chinese proverb, "If

you want to get to know the world, first get to know your neighbor."

In The Year of the Yao, we follow the highs and lows of Yao's American journey from his first disastrous NBA game to his first encounter with (former) Los Angeles Lakers superstar Shaquille O'Neal in a triumphant game that was broadcasted throughout China. During these experiences Pine was present as Yao's cultural guide, helping him to navigate the sometimes-dangerous shoals of each cross-cultural encounter. The directors use Pine's lengthy interviews as a voiceover through much of the film, which provides very effective insights into understanding the difficulties that Yao might have faced during his first season. After seven months, as Yao prepared to board his flight back to China for the off season, he leaves America knowing that he has succeeded beyond all his expectations, not only in the NBA, but also in helping to bring the people of China and the United States just a little closer together.

In The Year of the Yao we learn something about Chinese and American cultural norms of behavior and what happens when they collide. For example, early on Yao experiences some difficulty

in adapting to the more aggressive style of the NBA because he is accustomed to the more teamwork-oriented style of basketball in China. But gradually, as Yao manages to overcome this cultural difference, his game markedly improves. At first, Yao also has difficulty relating to his teammates, not only in terms of language but also because of the differences in their communication style, in which his teammates were more direct and confrontational. While Yao never becomes entirely comfortable with his teammates' locker room jokes and use of slang, as the film progresses it is interesting to see Yao warm up to their style of communicating to the point of telling a few jokes himself from time to time.

The Year of the Yao also gives us a glimpse of contemporary China. Halfway through the film the directors take us back to Shanghai where we see young basketball fans gather in front of a large TV screen at their favorite pub cheering their hero on in the NBA All-Star game. This is a real tribute to the internationalization of the sport; It is hard to imagine such a scene even ten years ago.

This warmhearted documentary should appeal to a wide audience, as there is something for everyone. Students of Chinese culture and US-China relations will be fascinated by the numerous and ever entertaining cross-cultural encounters that Yao experiences. Likewise, students of foreign language, socio-linguistics, and intercultural communication will also find the film of much of value as they observe how Pine works his craft. Of course, fans of basketball and essentially anyone interested in an honest and tender story of international friendship will enjoy this film. 🔶

·····

Steven Goldman currently works as the film and cultural programming coordinator for the Consulate General of Japan in San Francisco. He has lived, worked, and studied in Japan for over seven years. He has a masters degree in Modern Chinese and Japanese History.

The Year of the Yao is available from YesAsia. Price is \$6.99 for the DVD.

Rice Rhapsody

>> Directed by Kenneth Bi. 2004. 106 minutes.

R eleased in Asia in 2004, Kenneth Bi's directorial debut *Rice Rhapsody* was a longterm project that began in 1999 when the script received an Outstanding Screenplay Award from Taiwan's Government Information Office. Even though the film was not a blockbuster success, it secured a number of recognitions including two nominations at the Golden Horse Festival—one of East Asia's most distinguished film festivals—for Best Actress

(Sylvia Chang) and Best Original Film Score (Masahiro Kawasaki). At this juncture of globaliza-

tion and increasing transnational exchange in economic and cul-

tural spheres, a new trend in border-crossing collaboration has also evolved in the film industry. *Rice Rhapsody* is no doubt a product of this cultural reconfiguration in the East Asian industry. The Singaporean project, jointly produced by the Singapore Film Commission, Ground Glass Images, and the Hong Kong–based Kenbiroli Movies, is distributed by JCE Movies and the Australian company Arclight Films. The film's



ght Films. The film's transnational background is similarly reflected in its international cast. Bi himself straddles between his Singaporean and Taiwanese identities, while the actors include the renowned Sylvia Chang, a Taiwanese actress who now resides in Hong Kong, Chinese-American TV chef Martin Yan,

Director Kenneth Bi

French actress Melanie Laurent, Hong Kong model Maggie Q, and Singapore model Alvin Chiang, among others.

The film's plot is centered on Jen (Sylvia Chang), who was abandoned by her husband a decade earlier and left to raise three sons by running a Hainanese Chicken Rice restaurant. Jen wishes to see her sons assume the traditional responsibility of continuing the family lineage, so when she finds out that her two older sons Daniel (Alvin Chiang) and Harry (Craig Toh) are



Lepham Tan as Leo and Sylvia Chang as Jen, his mother.

their home, Jen hopes that Leo will discover

his heterosexual desires and be different from his older brothers. The plan succeeds in fostering a close bond between Leo and Sabine; however, it is not in the way that Jen had hoped.

gay, she diverts all of her

hope to her youngest

also be gay, Jen, with

the help of her friend

and business rival Kim

Chui (Martin Yan),

By hosting French

designs a plan to stop

Leo from going "astray."

exchange student Sabine

(Melanie Laurent) in

son Leo (LePham Tan).

Paranoid that Leo might

Although this homosexual theme runs throughout the film, *Rice Rhapsody* is not so much a story about being gay as it is about a mother's journey to embrace differences. Jen constantly struggles to see past the boundary of values such as filial piety and familial loyalty. Social expectations impair Jen's ability to love her sons for who they are and to recognize herself as someone who is also in need of love and companionship. Hence, when Leo experiences an emotional breakdown upon his best friend's

departure for Australia, Jen similarly suffers a spiritual breakdown because her failure to preserve the family lineage signifies the collapse of a support system based



on this set of traditional values.

At this point, the film takes on a philosophical twist and Jen learns a new perspective on life through the eyes of Sabine, who introduces Jen to an optimistic notion of life and existence circumscribed by one's intimate relationship with nature and the universe. Instead of defining herself based on a set of old-fashioned dictums, Jen learns to reconceptualize "difference" as a positive and productive category. After all, as a woman who is the head of the family, she is already different. One scene that shows this crucial point in Jen's transformation is when she shows up at her son Harry's birthday party. With encouragement from Sabine, Jen overcomes her homophobic sentiments in order to enjoy herself in the company of gay men, ultimately acknowledging that their difference in gender identity does not make them different from her as human beings.

The film's central conflicts revolve around food, but food also provides the unifying motivation that results in the melodrama's happy resolution. In the opening scene, Jen is seen preparing a sumptuous dinner for her family. This scene foreshadows Jen's fear of losing the tradition of family dinners as she realizes that her two older sons are not interested in maintaining the ritual. What is at stake for Jen is the breakdown of their patriarchal Chinese family, which in this case is ironically governed by a female authority. The fact that the two gay sons are caught up with obligations outside the family calls into question Jen's role as a good wife and mother within the structure. In order to reinforce the patriarchal structure, Jen not only sacrifices Daniel's happiness by forcing him to cancel his widely publicized gay wedding with his French partner for the sake of saving the family's "face," she also suppresses her feelings for her friend Kim Chui as a way to preserve a traditional gender role defined by fidelity. The film closes with a cooking competition between Jen and Leo, which highlights the peak of the tension between mother and son. The resolution comes not from Jen's triumph in the competition but from Leo's appeal for acceptance by tenderly feeding Jen his

> new dish called Hainanese Duck Rice. Figuratively, as food sustains life in *Rice Rhapsody*, it also serves as the motif for love and hope. A conventional

narrative film, *Rice Rhapsody* contains few surprises. The film is, however, laudable in its

The Tale of the Mandarin Ducks

>> Based on the book by Katherine Paterson. 1998. 14 minutes.

U sing Leo and Diane Dillon's beautiful illustrations from Katherine Paterson's children's book, *The Tale of the Mandarin Ducks* follows the story of a drake, who is captured by a Japanese feudal lord and kept in captivity until he is finally freed by a servant. The drake repays the servant's kindness by rescuing her and another servant from certain death. Based on an old Japanese folk-

tale, it is a story filled with lessons on integrity, perseverance, and kindness.

The story opens with a comparison between the handsome drake, a magnificent bird with vivid colors, and his mate, whose subtle wood-

toned colors allow her to blend in with their surroundings. One day, a proud and cruel lord happens upon the drake and insists on taking the drake back to the manor, even though his steward, Shozo, wisely cautions him otherwise. With haughty airs, the lord ignores Shozo's advice and puts the drake into a cage to be displayed and admired. Over time however, the lonely drake loses his luster and falls silent. Angry that the drake is no longer magnificent, the Lord orders his servants to remove the drake from his presence yet refuses to release the bird. Although Shozo dreams of freeing the drake, it is the kitchen maid, Yasuko, who steals the drake late one evening and releases him. Unable to deny his desire to release the bird, Shozo quietly takes the blame for the

Rice Rhapsody

continued from previous page

attempt to reevaluate stereotypical gender identities and celebrate multiculturalism. For example, Leo's characterization as a "boy-next-door" who could be found in any growing-up stories challenges the notion that all gay men are flamboyant, and Jen's character demonstrates that women are not all submissive wives and impersonal mothers. In addition, the film embodies multiculturalism through spatial representations such as Chinatown



act. As punishment, Shozo is sent to the kitchen to do the jobs of the lowest servant. There he learns the truth from Yasuko but swears her to secrecy. In time, they fall in love.

When the lord hears of this, he sentences them to death by drowning. As the procession heads to the pond where the two will meet their fate, the party encounters two masked strangers dressed in silk garments with colors that curiously resemble the colors of the drake and his mate. The strangers inform the lord's retainers that they are from the emperor, who has ordered that all prisoners must be handed over to them. As night falls in the woods, the retainers slowly disappear into the darkness, and Yasuko and Shozo find themselves being led by the two noble strangers into a small house in the middle of the woods, where hot food awaits. This is where Shozo and Yasuko end up spending the rest of their lives, knowing that

and Little India, but it incorporates these spaces as visual expressions of this multicultural festivity garnished by Singlish (Singaporean English), the linguistic hybrid, rather than as ethnic demarcations. If Jen and Leo cooked for love and acceptance, Kenneth Bi produced *Rice Rhapsody* as a tale of difference, one that accepts the difference of tradition. The value of the text as a teaching tool lies in its openness to incorporate and resituate the virtues of traditional Chinese values such as filial piety and kinship in a global and transnational Asian society. \blacklozenge "trouble can always be borne when it is shared."

While the entire DVD is recommended for ages 3 to 8, this 14-minute segment is actually the bonus story on a DVD that features three other Caldecott Award-winning tales-Strega Nona, Joseph had a Little Overcoat, and Stone Soup-that are more mainstreamed, familiar, and appropriate for children in the recommended age group. As a primary school teacher, I think The Tale of the Mandarin Ducks is more suitable for students in the third or fourth grade because the concepts and vocabulary are quite difficult and some of the symbolism may be missed by younger children. For first graders, I would use this video as the concluding activity for a unit on Japan, where terms such as "the land of the rising sun," tatami, bamboo cage/ slippers, brocade, emperor, and bean soup could be explained and discussed. This tale is also a wonderful tool for comparing Eastern and Western art and could be enjoyed by those who do not ordinarily read children's literature. 🔶

Additional resources on the Web: Educators Resource Study Guide

http://teacher.scholastic.com/products/ westonwoods/study_guides/the_tale_of_ the_mandarin_ducks.pdf

Lida Liu has been a primary school teacher for over ten years. She currently teaches first grade at Francis Scott Key Elementary School in San Francisco, California. As an advocate of crosscultural learning, she regularly includes world culture materials in her lesson plans.

The Tale of the Mandarin Ducks is available from various distributors. Price is \$49.95 (from Asia for Kids) for the VHs and \$14.95 (from Scholastic) for the DVD.

Editor's note: The film is available on both VHS and DVD. The VHS features only The Tale of the Mandarin Ducks. In the DVD version, the selection is a "Bonus Story" on a DVD entitled, "Strega Nona and Other Caldecott Award–Winning Stories."

E. K. Tan is a PhD candidate in the Program of Comparative and World Literature at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. His areas of interest include Diaspora Studies, Postcolonial Studies, Psychoanalysis, and Film Theory. He is presently working on his dissertation project on the works of Chinese diaspora writers.

Rice Rhapsody is available from various distributors. Price is \$11.99 for the DVD from YesAsia.

Tsunami: The Wave that Shook the World

>> Produced by NOVA. 2005. 56 minutes.

Tsunami: Wave of Destruction An ABC News Special, December 29, 2004

>> Produced by ABC News. 2005. 52 minutes.

he December 2004 South Asian tsunami was arguably one of the worst global tragedies in modern history. As the first year anniversary just passed, it is an excellent time to revisit what occurred. Despite the tsunami's global impact, there are surprisingly few programs devoted to the event. This review looks at two of the more accessible programs, NOVA's Tsunami: The Wave that Shook the World and the ABC News television special Tsunami: Wave of Destruction, and discusses their effectiveness for classroom instruction. As a high school chemistry and physics teacher, I was already familiar with scientific explanations of the event, but I was curious to see how the material would be presented in these 60-minute videos. Would I be bored since I had seen so much coverage already? Would I learn anything new? Would I find them useful for my students? These were the questions in my head as I watched these two very different programs.

The NOVA DVD

The NOVA DVD focuses heavily on the science behind the tsunami. It begins by explaining how an earthquake in the Indian Ocean created the

deadly December 26, 2004, tsunami. The program uses a timeline to show the sequence of events and the amount of time that elapsed during each stage of the disaster. There are explanations by scientists about the seismic activity that registered at the Pacific Tsunami Warning

may suggest that a tsunami has developed.

PHOTOS NOVA's computer animation segments, used to show how an earthquake in the ocean creates a

tsunami and how scientists detect a tsunami, are excellent. From there, the program explores the damage caused by the waves on the various islands in the Pacific and the

attempts by the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center to gather information and alert other West African countries of the pending danger. Approximately 37 minutes into the program, the focus shifts from the December 2004 South Asian Tsunami to current projects to improve warning systems for the future based on lessons learned from past tsunami events. The video concludes with dire predictions about "the next big one."

SUNAM

TSUNAMI

WAVE OF DESTRUCTION

The ABC Production

The ABC production, hosted by Charlie Gibson, was originally aired as a television special only days after the tsunami. It focuses on the human tragedy behind the disaster as well as how the world was unprepared for such a catastrophic event. With the amount of sophisticated technology available today, it is almost unfathomable that there was

NOVA did a better job with making the viewer realize how powerful the force of water can be. It is especially informative when it explores how the topography of the island shoreline protected some villages from the waves while others were devastated just miles away.

neighboring countries after dangerous waves hit the first shores. causing widespread damage. After giving an overall summary of the program in the introduction, Gibson provides lead-in commentaries to each segment. Subjects discussed

virtually no

warning to

include: the grief of the tsunami victims, heroic stories of survival, ongoing relief efforts, among others. There are also bonus features on the DVD which contain interviews with several world leaders as well as other news segments that were not included in the original broadcast. The program focuses primarily on areas where tsunami damage was most severe-popular resort areas in Thailand, the small coastal city of Banda Aceh,

Indonesia, which was very close to the earthquake epicenter, and finally, the devastated island country of Sri Lanka. The program follows the stories of a few survivors from each area, showing what they were doing right before the disaster occurred. As the program seems to contain only footage that was filmed in the first weeks following the disaster, however, the program is only able to estimate the extent of the damage and spec-

ulate about secondary diseases that might ultimately kill survivors.

How They Compare

The NOVA video would be most appropriate for high school and college students (i.e. 14 years old or older). Some of the footage may be too disturbing for junior high kids, especially the images of people drowning and dead bodies. This program could definitely be used in



geography and physics classes where topics of plate tectonics, earthquakes, and wave behavior/properties are discussed. The classroom activity, available on the NOVA website [see link below], allows instructors to teach students to calculate the wave speed and arrival time of a tsunami and to locate certain geographic locations, but the assignments may not be at a level of difficulty that is appropriate for students in more advanced science classes.

The ABC program also has some very useful discussions on some science topics, including segments on how the tsunami has reshaped the ocean floor topography and how animals receive early warnings in natural disasters. In terms of the human perspective of the 2004 South Asian Tsunami, there is an excellent segment that explores the religious aspect of these kinds of disasters. The program addresses the question, "How do Hindus, Muslims, and Christians deal with and explain disasters in terms of faith?" This is an interesting segment to watch after the more newsoriented first half of the program. Since the tsunami impacted so many Asian countries, cutting



across geographical, cultural, and religious boundaries, this part of the program would be relevant for world religions and social studies classes.

As a whole, because the ABC DVD is a collection of news footage from December 2004, it might be of only limited use in today's classrooms. However, the program is divided into segments so teachers have the option to pick and choose what to show in the classroom and select segments that are less outdated and more relevant. The NOVA production, on the other hand, is up-todate and could easily be shown in its entirety in a science class. Although it shows the human tragedy of the disaster, its focus is on the science behind the event, which has a direct application in a science classroom. While students learn about the science behind this natural disaster that claimed hundreds of thousands of lives, teachers can also seize this as

an opportunity to educate their classes about the human impact and the complexities of disaster relief, which is especially relevant in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. �

Additional resources available on the Web: *Teacher's Guide* http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/teachers/

activities/pdf/3208_tsunami.pdf

sensitivity, but feeling that all the pain was "worth it" in the end.

The story of the production is shaped around the story of the play, told with clips from the polished performance and flashbacks to issues in staging them. *A Dream in Hanoi* would enhance any college-level discussion of cross-cultural experiences and how culture and linguistics affects communication. It could also be used effectively in a high school or middle school humanities curriculum, exposing students to Vietnam and the Vietnamese while teaching them about the complexities of producing a Shakespeare play. ◆

Above: In between the wave crests of the several tsunamis that hit Sri Lanka's coast, the ocean receded about 500 feet from the shoreline, as seen above.

At left: PBS's NOVA website offers resources for learning more about tsunamis.

Dan Reid has been teaching Chemistry and Physics at Central High School in Champaign, Illinois since 1991.

Tsunami: The Wave that Shook the World is available from PBS Video. Price is \$19.99 for the DVD.

Special: Wave of Destruction (12/29/04) is available from Social Studies School Service. Price is \$14.98 for the DVD.

Laurel Kendall is curator of Asian Ethnographic Collections at the American Museum of Natural History in New York and adjunct professor of Anthropology at Columbia University. With Dr. Nguyen Van Huy, director of the Vietnam Museum of Ethnology, Hanoi, she curated "Vietnam: Journey of Body, Mind, and Spirit" (2003–2004), for which she was awarded a Friendship Medal by the Government of Vietnam.

A Dream in Hanoi is available in VHS or DVD from Bullfrog Films. Price is \$295 for purchase or \$95 for rental.

Hanoi

continued from page 2

and a magical performance takes place, followed by a successful tour.

At the conclusion of the film when the Portland troupe leaves Vietnam, there are tears on both sides, not because everything went smoothly, but because in working through their difficulties to achieve a successful production, they have learned to respect and care for each other. This is summed up by a tearful but still grinning Browning, sheepish that she had allowed her dramaturgical impulses to swamp her cultural

Asian Educational Media Service

Center for East Asian and Pacific Studies University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign 805 West Pennsylvania Avenue, MC-025 Urbana, Illinois 61801

www.aems.uiuc.edu

Non-Profit Organization U.S. Postage

PAID Permit No. 75 Champaign, IL

Guide to Distributors

>> A list of distributors mentioned in this issue of AEMS News and Reviews

Asia for Kids, 4480 Lake Forest Dr., #302, Cincinnati, OH 45242. Tel: 800-888-9681 or 800- 10012. Tel: 800-724-6527. Website: www.scholas-765-5885 or 513-563-3100. Fax: 513-563-3105. E-mail: sales@afk.com. Website: www.afk.com.

Bullfrog Films, P.O. Box 149, Oley, PA 19547. Tel: 800-543-3764 or 610-779-8226. Fax: 610-370-1978. E-mail: video@bullfrogfilms.com. Website: www.bullfrogfilms.com.

PBS (NOVA) Video, 1320 Braddock Place, Alexandria, VA 22314. Tel: 877-PBS-SHOP. E-mail: shop@pbs.org. Website: http://teacher. shop.pbs.org.

Scholastic, 557 Broadway, New York, NY tic.com.

Social Studies School Service, 10200

Jefferson Blvd., Box 802, Culver City, CA 90232. Tel: 800-421-4246. Fax: 310-839-2249. E-mail: access@socialstudies.com Website: www.socialstudies.com

YesAsia, Block A & B, 3/F, Wui Wah Building, 1035 Yee Kuk West Street, Lai Chi Kok, Kowloon, Hong Kong. Tel: 866-440-8388. Website: www. yesasia.com.