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Augustana's production of *Storm & Stress* (a.k.a. *Sturm und Drang*) is "an opportunity for local audiences to see a play that they will likely never see anywhere else," said Jeff Coussens, director of the college's Theatre Arts Program.

"We know that it's the first time that it's been done in the English language."

Augustana will present the world premiere of this 18th Century play, written by German playwright Frederich Maximillian Von Klinger, from Friday, February 4, through Sunday, February 13, at Potter Theatre in the Bergendoff Hall of Fine Arts.

Written in 1776, *Storm & Stress* was the product of a philosophical movement of the same name that started in Germany. Said Scott Magelssen, the play's director, "When Klinger was 17 or 18 he got to know Goethe, who was head of the movement, and became his disciple and friend. Later, Goethe invited Klinger to his family estate in Weimar, and Klinger wrote the play at that time. He was probably 24.

"There's an interesting story about how he came to write it," Megelssen said. "You can tell from letters that Goethe was getting really annoyed by this guy [Klinger]. He was always in his [Goethe's] business. I think Goethe thought that he had moved on to bigger and better things than this movement, and Klinger was … still very enthusiastic about it. Goethe started giving him the cold shoulder. Klinger … was heartbroken and filled with … negative energy and emotion. The best thing that Klinger thought he could do … was to … enlist for the British army in America and fight for the Revolution. … But Klinger couldn't get in the army, so he wrote this play … about this guy who … fights in the Revolution."

Betty Senk Waterhouse translated *Sturm und Drang*, and four other plays from the same movement, in 1986. Said Magelssen, "She had read them in German and couldn't find translations, so she took it upon herself to do that. The press that published the book had lost

track of her." However, Augustana's theatre staff tracked her down to get permission to perform the play. According to Magelssen, theatre department dramaturg Juana North was the one "who decided to go right to the source and ask Betty Senk Waterhouse more about it. That's when we found out that this particular play has never been performed in English, only in German."

In *Storm & Stress*, the plot is fairly simple. "The main character of the play, Wild, has just been traveling all over the world looking for places to fight in," said Magelssen. "He's sort of a mercenary. He brings along this gang of people, … blindfolds them, and takes them on ships from place to place." There is also a love interest named Jenny Caroline who is separated from Wild at one point, then reunited with him in a passionate love scene.

Although the setting of *Storm & Stress* is 18th Century America, Magelssen said, "The America of the play … is a fairytale America, invented by Klinger, who really didn't know very much about what it was … like. After Klinger wrote the play … he fought battles and got older. … Then he started writing these … stilted … conservative plays that aren't very important in theatre history. He lost his … big, bombastic emotionalism and his huge spectacles – people swooning with emotion, and language that's filled with big, active verbs. So *Storm & Stress* is a good example of the movement."

When asked how an 18th Century play about the American revolution is relevant for today's audience, Magelssen replied, "The idea for Klinger was that war is a place [for young people] to go to … get rid of their negative emotions, to glory in the potential and violence of war. The politics … don't ever really come through." It seems as if Klinger were writing about war as a way of taking out his aggressions; he was an angry young man, and the rebelliousness of revolution reflected his ire, so he embraced the idea in his play.

Storm & Stress also signifies rebellion against the Enlightenment and rational thinking. The *Sturm und Drang* writers "liked the idea of Jean Jacques Rousseau that the human being's natural condition is a poetic one," said Magelssen. "If we really wanted to live in a natural condition, we'd … not be bound by the rhetoric of law.

"The students [the cast and crew] … in this play are relating to it so much more fully than any of these big, major battleships of Western literature, like Ibsen," Magelssen continued. "It's written by a young guy, and all of the characters are 18-year-olds. There's … forbidden love and romance, and lots of drinking. There are people going crazy … and dealing with personal issues in an … extreme and bombastic way. … That's going to cross over to the college age. I think our season-ticket holders, and our Quad City community, are going to like it because it's something new and bold."

Visually, *Storm & Stress* will be different from anything Augustana has produced before. "We've bought a lot of new technology: search lights, … hydraulic lifts, and chairs that are like big machines that can raise up and down," said Magelssen. "It'll be a very loud, visually stunning show. So if you can't get into the story, you can always enjoy the spectacle."

Patty Koenigsaecker, the play's set and costume designer, said, "We're doing a real postmodern production, which means we're using our own time sensibility to reflect on who these characters are. … They're pretending to be 18th Century, but they're really right now. There's one character … who's just incredibly transparent. You can see everything she's thinking, and it's…all about her. Her costume's actually transparent, so you can see the 18th Century corsets and things underneath.

"The set is eclectic," Koenigsaecker added. "It's just random pieces. We started looking at artists contemporary with the playwright, and the one that really appealed to us was Piranesi. … Piranesi has these wonderful images of massive, prison-like structures. All through the scenery and costumes, there are dramaturgical notes about the play and why it's significant. The scenery was originally looked at as a place to imprison these actors, but also that this was something that they were bursting out of."

Koenigsaecker said they have taken a modern approach for set and costume design because the language of the play is inaccessible. "We felt from the very beginning that we needed to help the audience understand even if they weren't getting what the words were saying. I'd give them clear visual clues that they would understand in our cultural context. *Storm & Stress* is a Shakespeare play without the poetry, so the words take on less significance than the feeling because the movement was big on… emotion. … You shouldn't think; you should feel."

Storm & Stress *will be performed Thursday, Fridays, and Saturdays at 7:30 p.m. and Sundays at 1:30 p.m. February 4 through 14. Adult tickets are $10. For tickets, call (309)794-7306.*