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Posted on Tue, Feb. 21, 2006

## 'Cowboy Versus Samurai' is a delightful ride

BY RENEE VALOIS  
Special to the Pioneer Press

There's only one gunshot in "Cowboy Versus Samurai," and you won't see swords slicing and dicing villains. But even action fans are likely to be seduced by Mu Performing Arts' delightful show

Although "Cyrano de Bergerac" inspired this show, it isn't merely a remake of that famous plot. Playwright Michael Golumco's original take on the old tale about a large-nosed poet is now set in present-day Breakneck, Wyo.

The only two Asian-Americans in the tiny town are smitten when a lovely young Korean-American teacher named Veronica Lee arrives. Unfortunately for them, she prefers to date white men.

Believing he has no chance with Veronica, Korean-American English teacher Travis agrees to write love letters to her for his white friend, a not very eloquent gym teacher. John Catron makes Del disarmingly charming but a "dumb" (he uses the adjective as a noun).

Kurt Kwan's earnest Travis plays the straight man to both Del and Chester — the other Asian-American man in town. Chester was adopted but never found out which country he came from. He could be Japanese or Chinese or Korean or ... anyway, he's confused. Although unsure of his nationality, he's determined to assert his Asian identity, worshipping Bruce Lee and founding an Asian society (consisting of him and Travis) to oppose "the man."

Sherwin F. Resurreccion is hilarious as Chester — whether he's trying to persuade Travis to join him in a sign-carrying protest or dressing up as a ninja with a flashlight.

Poor Jeany Park's Veronica seems pale by comparison to the colorful characters of Chester and Del. She's sharp but cool and doesn't project the joie de vivre that would make us believe all the other characters would fall madly in love with her. Of course, it's hard to fill the shoes of the perfect woman. (Who has ever made Helen of Troy believable?)

Still, "Cowboy Versus Samurai" has a smart script, with lots of laughs and plenty of poignancy. Besides the light romantic comedy, it also delves into questions of identity, prejudice and the complexity of love that will resonate with audiences of all backgrounds.

Director Raul Aranas sagely stages scenes that illustrate the tension of connection and opposition between characters, such as when Travis and Del toss a baseball back and forth across the stage during dialogue. He also makes deft use of the split stage, which features Veronica's house on the left, and Travis' classroom on the right.

Because of its mature language, the theater recommends "Cowboy Versus Samurai" for those 16 years old or older. I'd recommend it to anyone looking for an entertaining night out.

If you go

**What:** "Cowboy Versus Samurai"

**Where:** Mixed Blood Theater, 1501 S. Fourth St., Mpls.

**When:** Through March 5

**Tickets:** \$16

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**Online:** [www.muperformingarts.org](http://www.muperformingarts.org)

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