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newsletter

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE GEORGIA THEATRE CONFERENCE - SEPT. 1976



Convention Critique

BY JIM SLIGH

At the Convention critique on Sunday, March 28, a number of suggestions and comments were offered by the small number of members attending. Make-up sessions were suggested for Saturday, and Bob West volunteered to contact Bob Kelly. A session on costumes was suggested, but it was pointed out that we had Costume workshops scheduled but the participants cancelled out the day before the conference opened, too late to get replacements in that area.

It was agreed that auditions would be held at the next convention, and Dick Johnson has volunteered to take over that project. A suggestion was made that 3 hour blocks of concentration in acting, directing, etc. be scheduled.

Again, someone made the comment that too many things were scheduled at one time, but it was generally agreed that overscheduling was better than under-scheduling. Repeats of some of the more popular offerings was suggested, but there is difficulty getting most participants to stick around and to offer repeats.

More advance technical sessions were suggested for some, and that suggestion is being seriously considered. The question as to whether or not a TV session, similar to the one offered at the 1975 SETC convention in Birmingham, should be offered. No conclusion was reached but this is still under consideration. Incidentally, we plan to put out a questionnaire about November, soliciting your suggestions as to what should be included in the 1977 convention in Savannah.

Favorable comments were made on the mime, puppetry, theatre tour, improv, stage violence, directing, and most especially the Wits End Players, among many other commendations.

WHAT CAN WE DO TO ATTRACT MORE PEOPLE FROM ALL OVER THE STATE???

The suggestion was made that we have more plays at the convention, and that we have evening sessions scheduled for those who do not wish to attend theatre in the evening. Also, we might have another divisional meeting, perhaps at lunch.

Perhaps we are wasting one of our best days, namely Sunday, one of the two free days most people have. We might schedule meetings, perhaps the final big

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STAY IN TOUCH WITH YOUR
..... NEWSLETTER



OR WE'LL HUNT YOU DOWN!



(912) 355-7959

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Convention Critique

(Continued)



GTC's BEAUTIFUL PRESIDENT AND ASSISTANTS. Jim Sligh (he's the gorgeous one in the center) has a few duties other than heading up GTC. One is posing with pretty girls. Another is posing. In addition to these arduous tasks he is also director of the Georgia State Players. The nicer parts of this picture are his assistants from The Importance of Being Ernest, Kay Doxsey, left, and Louetta Nowlin. Kay is now assistant director of the Players.

banquet, on Saturday evening and have sessions until at least the middle of Sunday afternoon. Also, meetings should be scheduled on play nights, so that those who do not wish to attend plays outside the convention site, can have sessions to attend. It was suggested that late night sessions be scheduled, since it was felt that some of the members might be staying up late anyway. (I don't know who that might be). A session (or sessions) on Playwriting was suggested.

We will attempt to make up a list of members and convention participants, and get it out to the membership as soon as possible. (Right, Walt?)

A suggestion was made that perhaps the title of the Newsletter might be changed, at least for one or two issues, so that publications in the Newsletter (under its other name) might be acceptable for those who need to "publish". It also might make interesting reading, too.

On September 12 and 13, SETC will hold Board meetings in Atlanta. Your president will be present, and any member is welcome to attend.

My sincere thanks to all those who have worked so diligently; I look forward to a great year, and with your help we can make it the best ever.

SET AND COSTUME DESIGN WINNERS ANNOUNCED



COMPETITION PROCLAIMED SUCCESS

By BOB WEST

The first annual scene and costume design competition for undergraduate students in Georgia was held recently at the annual convention of the G.T.C. in Atlanta.

The winner of the scene design competition was Elaine Williams, who submitted a rendering of Shakespeare's *King Lear*. Miss Williams is presently a Junior, majoring in Theatre and Art, at Agnes Scott College. Her permanent home is Pocky Ford, Georgia. She is a member of Alpha Psi Omega, a national honorary dramatics fraternity, and is President of the Blackfriars Theatre group on campus. Her recent accomplishment was the designing and supervision of the set construction for Agnes Scott College's production of Anouilh's *The Orchestra*.

The winner of the costume design competition was Miss Pamela Kaye McKoon. Miss McKoon will receive her B.F.A. in Theatre from the University of Georgia in June of this year. She was grad-

uated from Young Harris Jr. College in 1974, and is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. James & Frances McKoon, whose present residence is Atlanta, Georgia.

Mr. Luis Maza served as judge of the competition. Mr. Maza is a well-known designer around Atlanta. He was a seven year resident designer with the Pocket Theatre and has designed sets for the New Cosmos Cultural Theatre, Atlanta Ballet, Opera Atlanta, Emory Players, Clark College Players, Southern Regional Opera, Spellman College, Ruth Mitchell Dance Company, the Alliance Theatre and the Opera Workshop, among others.

A cash award was not offered this year due to fiscal restrictions; however, each winner was awarded a letter of commendation from the President of the Georgia Theatre Conference.

The design contest was a success and provided a showcase for the works of many talented young college men and women throughout the State of Georgia. We are anticipating even a larger and more competitive contest for 1976-77.



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playing around



A report on Theatre activities around the state.

Jim Sligh used a unique casting technique for The Importance of Being Ernest at GEORGIA STATE. Jim had come into possession of some terrific costumes so at tryouts he had his auditions try them on. Casting was done according to who fit which costume. Jim reports it worked as well as any other method he has used. Ernest played May 12-15 & 19-22.

TOWN & GOWN, Athens, has announced its 1976-77 season. Hello, Dolly opened in Athens Aug. 3 and then inaugurated the new Madison, Ga. civic center in mid-August. The rest of the season is Butterflies Are Free in Oct., Under the Yum Yum Tree in Dec., The Prisoner of 2nd Ave. in Feb., A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum, dinner theatre in March, and in May, God's Favorite.

We accidentally skipped GEORGIA STATE PLAYERS 76-77 season which is: How to Succeed etc. in Nov., The Lady's Not For Burning in May, and in March two one-acts by students.

The ROME LITTLE THEATRE is doing 6 Rms, Rv Vu in Nov. Rome bade a sad farewell to Linda Hyde. Linda went to Missouri to work with Carla Wall.

COLUMBUS COLLEGE's line-up is Hot'l Baltimore in Nov., Oliver in late Feb., End Game & Act Without Words in May, Chaplin & His Times (touring group, one performance only) Feb 5.

THE LITTLE THEATRE OF SAVANNAH opens with Life With Father in Oct., Veronica's Room in Dec., Shenandoah in Feb., School for Wives in Apr., and Cat on a Hot Tin Roof in May. The Savannah LT just closed Cabaret which was their initiation into dinner theatre. The production was staged in a cabaret at Savannah Beach.

CALLANWOLDE THEATRE ENSEMBLE's August production was Shawly, You Jest, three one-act plays by GBSHaw.

Georgia Southern MASQUERS will do a November production of either A Hatful of Rain or an original play. Stop the World in Feb., and in May, a dinner theatre production to be announced. A children's theatre show is scheduled for April.

THE AUGUSTA PLAYERS staged Little Mary Sunshine in August and will follow with George Washington Slept Here in Oct., A Doll's House in Dec., Where's Charley in Feb., and Twiggs in April.

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ANCHORAGE PRESS TO MOVE

Sara Spencer, editor of Anchorage Press, Inc. has announced that the Press will be transferred to New Orleans, and to its new editor and owner, Orlin Corey. The move will take place in February, 1977. The new address will be: Anchorage Press, Inc., 4621 St. Charles Ave., New Orleans, La. 70115. Sara Spencer will remain on the staff as editorial consultant.

(Reprinted from the Savannah Morning News,
Saturday August 28)

Lucas Theater May Become Home For Theater Group

By RICK GREEN
Staff Writer

The old Lucas Theater, which has been threatened with demolition, may become the home base for a touring group of graduate drama students from the University of Georgia, according to Historic Savannah Foundation President John E. Cay III.

The Lucas, which was built in the 1920s and served as Savannah's most luxurious moviehouse, was closed and has been slated for demolition by the owners, ABC Southeastern Theaters, because of declining attendance.

Historic Savannah Foundation has launched a drive to save the Lucas, which is located on Reynolds Square, and to name the theater after Savannah's Academy Award-winning composer, Johnny Mercer.

Cay said that Dr. August Staub, chairman of the Department of Drama and Theater at the University of Georgia in Athens, and Lawrence L. Graham, a professor of design at the university, have said they would like to establish a touring group at the Lucas.

Summer Stock

Staub also proposed that a summer stock group from the university be based at the Lucas, Cay said.

Graham, a scenic lighting and costume design expert at the university, has done an in-depth report on the feasibility of renovating the Lucas as a center for the performing arts. Cay said that Graham concluded that a large number of uses for a theater like the Lucas are possible.

"Technically the theater needs some renovation, but the space and seating are excellent," Graham said.

Cay said Graham said that the backstage area is sufficient for live drama, but that additional dressing rooms would have to be constructed. He also suggested that the filled-in orchestra pit could be opened up and put back into service.

Many people, Cay said, have offered small amounts of money and have offered to work as volunteers in order to save the Lucas, which has 1,200 seats.

Staub and Graham, according to Cay, were full of praise for the Lucas and foresaw a multiple-use facility developing, occupied by film, symphony, chorale and ballet groups as well as children's theater and traveling attractions.

'Perfect Size'

Staub said, "The theater is a perfect size for all of these and is in excellent condition requiring relatively little restoration before it is usable.

"A great deal more, of course, is necessary to restore the building to its former glamour, but this can be an on-going project," he added.

New lighting and electrical wiring would be needed if the Lucas were to be used for live drama, Cay said.

Cay also announced that the owners of the Lucas have delayed demolition until Nov. 1 to allow preservation groups time to raise money to purchase the building. ABC Southeastern Theaters is asking \$255,000 for the property.

The Savannah Little Theatre, which surveyed the building prior to the announcement that it would be sold or demolished, has stated that the Lucas would not be suitable for its purposes.

Considerable publicity has been given to the attempts to save the old theatre, almost always alluding to the Little Theatre's use of it. However, no one bothered checking with the Little Theatre to see if they wanted it. Typical.

The reasons given for its unsuitability are as follows: The 1200 seat house is larger than the LT wants. It prefers the intimacy of a 300 seat house. Storage space for the LT's present inventory is lacking. There is no room for the drama school. Alterations to overcome these problems would render the facility useless for other groups.

In addition, the Theatre which has operated as an arena theatre successfully for 26 years, does not wish to change over to proscenium with its resulting higher operating costs.

Another problem would be in sharing the facility with other arts groups as has been proposed. Since the Little Theatre and its active drama school are working nearly every day, there would be no room for rehearsals and other activities while other groups are performing.

Even though the Little Theatre itself does not wish to re-locate in the Lucas, it supports the efforts of Historic Savannah to save the building for a performing arts center.

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ARTS BUSINESS, a publication of the Business Committee for the Arts, is the source of the following items.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA: The American College Theatre Festival which is a joint presentation of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and the American Theatre Association is sponsoring a new playwriting award in memory of the distinguished writer, Miss Lorraine Hansberry. It has been made possible by a grant from McDonald's Corporation. An award of \$2,000 will be presented to the student author of the best play on the black experience in America. In addition, a grant of \$500 will be made to the theatre department of the college or university producing the play.

NEW MEXICO: Albuquerque National Bank makes its billboard available to non-profit organizations. Interested arts groups may reserve use of the board for one month by contacting the bank's marketing department. Markham Advertising paints the signs free of charge.

Incidentally, private business has contributed far more money to the arts than has the National Endowment. The BCA has a publication titled *1776 and More Examples of How BCA Companies Supported the Arts in '75 and '76*. This book lists the BCA companies that have contributed to the arts and to whom the contribution was made.

For a copy, send \$1.00 to: Business Committee for the Arts, 1700 Broadway, NYC 10019.

1977 CONVENTION SET FOR SAVANNAH INN & COUNTRY CLUB

WED., MAR. 23	- EARLY BIRDS
THUR., MAR. 24	} MAIN CONVENTION DATES
FRI., MAR. 25	
SAT., MAR. 26	
SUN., MAR. 27	- CRITIQUE & AUDITIONS

The 1977 Convention of the Georgia Theatre Conference has been confirmed for the Savannah Inn and Country Club. If you saw GATOR with Burt Reynolds, you got a glimpse of the Inn. It was, the plush hotel Burt stayed at after depositing the government agent in the slums.

The Savannah Inn is located on Wilmington Island and fronts on the Wilmington River. If you get bored with the convention (bored with the convention!!!!????!!!) there's an 18 hole golf course, boat rides, a swimming pool (in March?), and all sorts of goodies that no self-respecting Inn and Country Club would be without.

While room rates may be a little high, the planning committee is attempting to hold other costs down so that the total package price will be well within reason.

Future issues of the Newsletter will bring you more details on the Convention. Stay tuned.

PLOP, PLOP, FIZZ, FIZZ.....

bob west's encounter with dinner theatre and how it solved a problem instead of being one.



I had just managed one good night's rest from the March Convention of GTC in Atlanta when the evening of open auditions/try-outs for the Masquers' of Georgia-Southern College Spring production of A Thousand Clowns was upon me.

Having enjoyed a somewhat hectic but highly rewarding conference in Atlanta, I was in high spirits and filled with great expectations concerning try-outs (I'm sure all directors feel optimistic on the first night of auditions). In fact, I said to myself, "When I walk into McCroan Auditorium I know that numerous individuals will be present and clamoring for roles. Males? Why worry about males! I'll probably have enough males to double-cast the show."

When I finally stepped into the theatre, I was confronted with three males and one female. My optimistic spirit managed to stay afloat, and following a very brief, but talk-tale try-out session with those present, I said to myself, "Tomorrow night will be better; maybe the students just didn't receive the word."

The following night sank my optimism. I picked up one more male, which still left me far short of the required cast and no competition for the roles.

Somewhat discouraged, I walked out of the auditorium and onto the fire-escape, which faces one of our campus cafeterias, and attempted to buoy my optimism. I thought to myself, "Perhaps my presence under the stars may provide me with some sort of spiritual guidance or assistance. What am I going to do? Wait another evening, and hope I have enough people (bodies) to fill out the cast? Double up roles?" Another thought entered my mind, "Maybe I should have stayed in the Navy."

The sound of clanking dishes and moving tables drifted across the campus and pounded my ear drums. My searching gaze for miraculous assistance fell upon the lights emanating from the cafeteria. It was 7:30 P.M. and the cafeteria personnel were doing their evening cleaning. Mass eating had ended for another day.

The word, eating, bounced around in my mind like one of those little white balls in a bingo machine. I didn't see bingo cards in my mind, but I did see the sights and sounds of the dinner theatres I had visited while in Atlanta. Visions of the Barn Dinner Theatre and the Harlequin came to the fore. In an instant, multiple questions started to pour into my stream of consciousness, "Why not dinner theatre here at G.S.C.? Maybe a small cast show? What would be a good vehicle for a 'first' dinner theatre? What would the audience (town and gown) like to see?" My immediate response to question one was "Yes." My next thought fell upon a playwright, and who else but...Neil Simon. It was 1976, so I thought, "Why not Star Spangled Girl!" My course of action was set.

The following day approval was provided for dinner theatre and that evening I selected the cast for the show. My scenic designer (who had already completed preliminary sets for A Thousand Clowns) was about ready for the designer's proverbial straight jacket, but he gave the experiment his blessing and we both moved

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WHAT? NO AFTER DINNER MINTS? (Continued).

forward. Thanks to a young and adventuresome Director of Food Services, Mr. Ben Dixon, and an understanding and patient Facilities and Service Coordinator, Mrs. Luree Harley, our new venture into dinner theatre was officially launched.

The first priority following the scheduling of the facilities was to arrive at a cost per meal and the type of menu to be served. The show was scheduled to run for four performances: Wednesday through Saturday. Ben Dixon and I originally planned to serve alternating menus, but we soon discovered that this was an impossibility. The people of the community and academy were not making firm reservations due to their lack of understanding of the dinner theatre concept. In order to effectively serve an alternating menu, Ben needed to know at least 48 hours in advance the size of the house. Most of our theatre-goers were making reservations and not paying for them, and others were conditioned to simply purchasing their tickets at the door on the night of the performance.

Mr. Bill May, in charge of food preparation, came up with a standard buffet menu. His menu was adaptable, and could serve anywhere from 50 to 300 people in one evening. Thanks to Bill, the food was, according to many, "a few steps from a gourmet's delight." It consisted of the following: Seafood Neuberg, Roast Beef in Mushroom Sauce, Hawaiian Ham, Squash Casserole, Seasoned Green Beans, Relish Tray, Tossed Salad, Cheese Cake, Tea, Coffee, Water.

After determining the menu, a price had to be considered. This menu usually cost most groups approximately \$3.50 to \$4.00 served buffet style. The final determined price came to \$2.50, with the understanding that all servers and kitchen help would come from the Masquers, a student dramatic organization.

The Williams Center Cafeteria has a dining area of approximately 52' X 100'. We placed a temporary thrust stage in the middle of the dining area and against the outside wall. The stage measured approximately 32' wide, with a depth of 26', and a height of 2 feet. The stage provided us with ample room for a show such as Star Spangled Girl.

The seating and table arrangement fanned out from the stage like the spokes of a wheel. By arranging the tables in this fashion, we came up with a potential dinner theatre house of 200, with a student seating capacity of approximately 100. Because we are financed by student activity funds, all students were admitted free; however, they were not entitled to sit at the tables and/or participate in the meal unless they paid the special student rate of \$2.50. This rate merely paid for the meal and our organization made no operating profit from the charge.

The general admission ticket cost was \$5.00 a ticket. Tickets for faculty were available at a discount price of \$4.00. Our normal ticket prices for regular theatre performances are: Students free with identification card, faculty \$1.50, and general admission \$2.00. The overall attendance to Star Spangled Girl was lower than regular productions, but the paying public was much higher. Financially, we equaled our best effort for regular productions, and almost equaled the box office receipts from our major musical, Man of La Mancha produced in McCroan Auditorium with a seating capacity of 800.

Rehearsal periods in the cafeteria were tight. The first three weeks of rehearsal were held in McCroan Auditorium and the last two weeks in the cafeteria. Once into the cafeteria, our rehearsals could not commence until 7:30 P.M. following the dining area clean-up. Some of our final rehearsals were held at 6:30 P.M., and a few students were still finishing their supper. Noise and student presence during the last days of rehearsal were, at times, distracting for my actors; how-

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GET INVOLVED IN THE CONVENTION!! HELP WITH THE PLANNING...FILL OUT THIS FORM & MAIL TO: Robert W. West, Speech & Drama Dept., Georgia Southern College, Statesboro, Ga. 30458.

Program Title: _____
Program Content: _____

Program Format: (Panel, Speaker, Performance, etc.) _____

Desired length of program: _____ Minimum acceptable length: _____

Suggested Chairman: _____ Suggested Participants: _____

Size Room: _____ Desired day and date: _____ 2nd choice _____

Desired time of day or night: _____ 2nd choice: _____

Idea suggested by: _____

Office address: _____

Home address: _____

Telephone (Home) _____ (Office) _____

Additional Comments:

Any expenses to be met by GTC? _____ For what? _____

Estimated amount: _____

Convention Dates: March, 1977

Wednesday, 23 Early Bird Activities and Executive Board Meeting
Thursday, 24
Friday, 25
Saturday, 26
Sunday, 27 Convention Critique and Auditions

Place: Savannah Inn and Country Club
Savannah, Ga.

DEPT. OF OWN HORN BLOWING

The May, 1976 Issue of ATA's *Theatre News* took note of the GTC NEWSLETTER. The following is reproduced from the ACTA NEWS column.



The Georgia Theatre Conference has an interesting feature in its newsletter devoted to spotlighting a theatre group or some outstanding individual working in theatre. Requirements for the feature include "no hard and fast" editorial rules "beyond semi-literacy." Perhaps other state theatre associations could incorporate such a feature in their newsletters—it seems like a terrific way to get acquainted with one another.



LEWIS, STAUB, MACPHERSON NAMED TO ATA OFFICE

The recent ATA elections have resulted in naming the following GTC members to national office.

SETC President, Linda Burson Lewis, who attended our last Convention in Atlanta, has been elected Secretary of ATA. August W. Staub, new head of the Dept. of Drama and Theatre at the U. of Ga. was named Divisional Representative of UCTA on the Board of Nominations, and Fla. Thea-

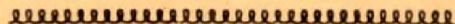
tre Conference President, Angus MacPherson, is Vice-President for Membership of ACTA.



MORE PLAYING AROUND (FROM PAGE 5)

THE VAGABOND MARIONETTES '76-'77 productions will be Sleeping Beauty, Oct. 8 - Dec. 11; Jack And The Beanstalk, Jan. 7 - Mar. 5; and Jungle Book, Mar. 25 - May 21. Touring Shows are: Rumpelstiltskin, Sept. thru June; and Hansel and Gretel, Feb. - June. For more information or for bookings call Vince at (404) 524-2095.

We couldn't get a complete season from the Fort Mudge Playhouse. They did say they hoped to open their '73 - '74 season this year with a special Women's Lib production of Oh Mom, Poor Mom....



THE FALL REGIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE GEORGIA ALLIANCE FOR ARTS EDUCATION

WILL BE HELD IN STATESBORO AT GEORGIA SOUTHERN COLLEGE OCTOBER 8 AND 9. CONTACT BOB WEST AT GSC FOR DETAILS.

THE SAGA OF BOB WEST (Continued)

ever, in the long run, the presence of the students provided us with an audience as well as potential publicity agents.

The major problem encountered in this new theatrical venture was convincing the students that the food served for dinner theatre was of a better quality than that which they received through the line. It stands to reason that quality and a touch of the gourmet improves when one prepares food for only 200 and not 5,000. I strongly feel that this problem will be overcome in the years ahead.

Before-show entertainment was provided by various talented students and groups from Georgia Southern College. Each act was allowed 15 minutes of performance time, and each performance was announced in the program as being available for booking.

The dinner commenced at 7:30 P.M. and the show at 8:30. Interestingly enough, I saw members of the community and faculty attending our production that I had not seen in the theatre since coming to Georgia Southern in 1971.

The experiment was a tremendous success and, needless to say, will be repeated in the Spring of 1977.

If anyone is interested in further information, please call me at (912) 681-5138.