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Arts Alive, Vol. I, No. 4

Grand Valley State University

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ARTS

THEATRE
MUSIC
DANCE

ACTIVE

Volume I, Number 4

January, 1975

The Community Arts Center – Grand Valley State Colleges

'United Stage' Showcases "America"

Up till now you probably haven't heard of "The United Stage," but you may have known about it as the artists-in-residence at the Community Arts Center, with Robert Moyer as their director. And the United Stage has been and is seeking new vistas to explore.

On January 6 it set out for New Orleans, there to perform in elementary schools and to demonstrate the story-telling techniques its members have developed under Moyer's guidance.

The trip also was in the nature of an out-of-town tryout for the United Stage's original production titled "America."

"America" is a group effort and is a delightful melange of drama, poetry, humor, overheard conversations and familiar aspects of the American environment.

It includes a dramatization of John Steinbeck's immensely affecting short story "Johnny Bear," which reveals a great deal about the innate cruelties, but also the compassion, of many Americans.

Some of our most famed poets are well represented in the production – e. e. cummings by his "Spring Is a Like Perhaps Hand," Emily Dickinson by her "I'm Nobody, Who Are You?" and

Continued on page 2.



United Stage Company
members perform
for students in
Grand Rapids schools



United Stage Offers Original Extravaganza

Continued from page 1.

Walt Whitman by his "Song of Myself" (No. 8).

"America" captures glimpses and textures of the country and its people, including live representations — sometimes irreverent — of some of our most famous paintings, including the timely "Spirit of '76" and the signing of Gen. Lee's surrender at Appomattox.

The entire show, which was not only group developed but improvised, was presented in New Orleans for the Performing Arts High School, the Energy Theatre and Tulane University, in some instances followed by college theatre workshops.

Accompanying Moyer to New Orleans were the professional members of his troupe, Holly Sherman, Anne Wilford, Ellen Bush, Alan Sutterfield and Ray Vrazel, and also students John Rosochacki, Jill Cliffer and John Strobel. The tour concluded January 18.

"America" will open at Stage 3 on January 29 and run through February 8.

In the first ten weeks of the present academic year, United Stage has pre-

UNITED STAGE

United Stage logo designed by Phillip Bowman

sented in programs to more than 1500 pupils in Grand Rapids' public schools. The group has visited each selected classroom four times, and in the course of its visits has demonstrated how the youngsters may communicate through action and expression and how they may improvise theatre by using the story-telling techniques employed by the United Stage's members.

So popular has the group become among school children and teachers that it is unable to satisfy more than a small part of the demand for its services.

Bob Moyer and members of the United Stage will appear on Buck Matthews' program on WOTV, Channel 8, on February 19 in excerpts from "America," the group-developed improvisations presented in January and February at Stage 3.



United Stage company members perform for students in Grand Rapids schools

ARTS ALIVE

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Tryouts

Tryouts for Joel Clark's new full-length play, "Midwest Politics," will be held at Stage 3 on Monday and Tuesday, February 3 and 4, at 7:45 p.m.

The cast of principals calls for two women and one man, all in their mid to late 20s, and also four or five extras, male and female, in the same age range.

Rehearsals are scheduled to start February 17 and will be held two or three times a week for the first several weeks. The play will open April 16.

Nikolais: "The Art of Motion"

by Jill Cliffer

The Nikolais Dance Theatre visited the Grand Valley campus in November, offering well-attended concerts and workshops during their four-day stay.

The company performed two evenings of their stay at Union High School in Grand Rapids. A Friday concert was well-attended although the auditorium surprisingly was not filled. Saturday night's house was much greater.

Included in the performance was "Divertissement," a suite of four dances, three of which use masks or props of stretchy fabrics. The fourth was a duet with no props. The company performed excerpts from the full-evening piece, "Sanctum" (1964) which is also without props, based on movement themes which are introduced singly and finally interact with one another.

Alwin Nikolais speaks of dance as the "art of motion, not of emotion. Theatre is the art of emotion."

The most outstanding quality of the dancers was their ability to BE THERE with their bodies — sharply and quickly making shapes and lines and vibrations, then releasing them.

The "medium is the message" is a realization for Nikolais. His choreography is "about" something — not in the sense of a story line or moral — but it is about movement.

Some describe his work as "automaton" or "inhuman," and these are somewhat valid observations. But the company's dancers seem, on first impression, more like people of a relatively regular nature compared to some of the affected artists I have noticed taking leave of New York City for short sojourns into the provinces.

From Grand Rapids, the Nikolais dancers moved on to Minneapolis, leaving some of their motivation and a range of favorable impressions behind.

Dunlap's Train Bound for Glory

Betsy Dunlap's musical play "The Celestial Railroad" played to warmly enthusiastic audiences at Stage 3 on December 5, 6 and 7.

The production, sponsored by Thomas Jefferson College, might, I suppose, be called a musical travelogue to heaven. The highly talented and versatile Miss Dunlap, until this term a student at TJC, wrote the text and lyrics, composed the music, sang and even, on one occasion, sat in at the piano.

"The Celestial Railroad" is a wonderfully tuneful, humorous and imaginative work. As a composer Miss Dunlap is something of an eclectic — she writes in and draws from many styles, ranging from ragtime to chorales.

The cast was so large as to preclude mentioning all of those who should be recognized, but I was especially impressed by the work of Penny Bragg as the narrator, Miss Dunlap herself as the pilgrim, Steve Garwood as Mr. Smooth-it-away, Darius Greene as Mr. William Hide-Sin-in-the-Heart, Mary Abraham as Miss Piety and Andrea Williams as Miss Charity.

One of the most enlivening personalities on and off stage was Paul Ferris, who not only provided a scintillating

piano accompaniment — in company with bassist Elliott Cohen — but also contributed some telling off-stage acting, voice only, of course.

"The Celestial Railroad" is based on a short story of the same title by Nathaniel Hawthorne and was directed by Marianne Barker and John Strobel. The musical direction was by Miss Dunlap. Costumes and set design were the work of Carolyn Brennan. Lighting was designed and oper-

ated by Bill Sharrer. The choreography was by Cathy Beard.

Miss Dunlap has left Grand Valley, at least for the time being, to study musical composition in the East (the eastern United States, that is) and is eager to get to work on a second piece for musical theatre. That definitely is good news. She is a remarkably talented person with a real flair for writing musicals.

— G. A. E.



Cast of 'Celestial Railroad'

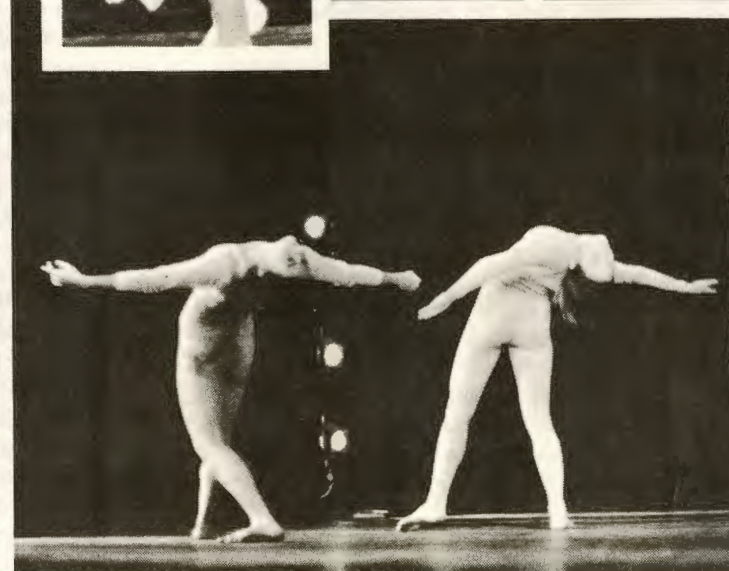


"To Dance..."

On with the dance! let joy be unconfin'd;
 No sleep till morn, when Youth and Pleasure meet
 To chase the glowing Hours with flying feet.
 BYRON, "Childe Harold, III"

Dancing is the loftiest, the most moving, the most
 beautiful of the arts, because it is no mere translation
 or abstraction from life; it is life itself.
 HAVELOCK ELLIS, *The Dance of Life*

Come and trip as ya go,
 On the light fantastic toe.
 MILTON, "L'Allegro"



The Premieres of Robert Shechtman

A new work composed by Robert Shechtman, tutor in Thomas Jefferson College, will receive its premiere performance in Potsdam, N.Y., in April, 1975.

Commissioned by the State University of New York-Potsdam, it will be performed by the Crane School of Music's Group for New Music and will be conducted by Donald Funes.

Titled "Major Anxiety-Captain Consciousness," it was written in collaboration with Shechtman's friend from boyhood, Joel Gold, a New York filmmaker who recently spent a week at Thomas Jefferson College, where he conducted a workshop in videotaping. Gold was the recipient of the first Guggenheim Fellowship in videotape and was a nominee for an Emmy award for his film "Nina."

Gold wrote the libretto, which is based on personal experiences — his-her anxiety and being in the world, and ultimately experiencing self-awareness-consciousness.

In March, Paul Price will conduct in New York City Shechtman's new cantata for chorus, solo piano and percussion. Titled "The Fire of Gehenna," it will be

performed by the Manhattan Ensemble and Manhattan School of Music Chorus.

Another work by Shechtman, "The Twentieth of Boedromion," will be given its premiere performance in February by the Brass Quintet of Spokane Symphony Orchestra, which will play it on a tour of the West Coast.

Dance Performance Concludes Term

The Thomas Jefferson College Dance Company's fall concert culminated a term of high energy for the dance students of assistant professor Christine Loizeaux.

Three students and Ms. Loizeaux performed solos. The students, Diane Chad-

well, Michael Quaintance and Robin Pettersen, all had soloed before.

Diane worked with TJC music student Howard Kalish, who played his original composition for violin.

Michael Quaintance's solo, entitled "The Last Scream," was choreographed last summer when he studied at Interlochen Arts Academy.

Robin Pettersen performed what she says will be her last Blues piece, one choreographed to the music of Charles Brown, B. B. King and Billie Holiday.

Our teacher, Ms. Loizeaux, prepared an autobiographical solo showing her stages of childhood, adolescence and adulthood.

The rest of the works we performed included one duet, one quintet and two large company pieces.

Janice Shapiro choreographed "Human Atomiks," based on Gertrude Stein's "Reflections on the Atomic Bomb." This was Janice's first choreographic endeavor, also. She was a delight to work with. The piece had some weaknesses in the execution of an elaborate idea, but was strong in movement.

"Box Piece" included 12 dancers and our respective cardboard boxes which we popped out of, hid behind, carried and twirled. Like other pieces of Ms. Loizeaux's which I've danced in, it was a lot of work and a battle with props, but in the end the piece was fun to do and watch.

Winter term, Ms. Loizeaux will be on leave from TJC. Muriel Cohan and Patrick Suzeau of New York City will teach in her place, as they did last winter. Muriel has taught at the Mary Anthony Studio in New York since 1967. She has studied with Mary Anthony, Don Farnsworth, Margaret Black, Martha Graham, Eric Hawkins and Jennifer Scanlan.

— Jill Cliffer

Chamber Group Takes Off On Bach, Haydn



Students improvise on Bach

The large and highly appreciative audience that attended the concert by Robert Shechtman's students in Lake Huron Hall Tuesday, December 10, was treated to a program that ranged from the distant past to an almost as distant future.

The program started rather sedately with the performance of a trio by C.P.E. Bach, one of THE Bach's several talented sons. The trio was followed by a sprightly sonata by Joseph Haydn.

With this bow to the past out of the way, the young musicians brought their audience to its collective feet with a series of improvisatory chamber works they had devised, revised and refined during the academic year's first term.

The *pièce de résistance* was a group improvisational work based on a conceptualization by the California composer David Simon. Titled "Night Sky in October," in which 23 students participated, it was literally keyed to a plastic wheel which provided the pitches for the work. Also participating were Thomas Jefferson College's two instructors in music, Denman Maroney, who played piano and sang, and Shechtman, who played stringed bass and trombone.

Although the program lasted two hours, the audience's attention never flagged — possibly, as one auditor observed, because there was something new virtually every minute.

Guillermo Fierens

Via Con Dios, Guillermo



Before leaving Thomas Jefferson College in mid-December, after having spent 10 weeks there as artist in residence, classic guitarist Guillermo Fierens taped two programs for WGVC-TV, Channel 35.

The first, one for the regular Sunday feature series Elliott's World, was aired January 5, 1975.

The second program is a special half-hour recital, the air date for which still is to be announced. Producer-director Jim Gaver has high hopes that this program will be as well received as was a special half-hour show Fierens taped in the spring of 1974. Not only was it aired several times over Channel 35, it was unanimously chosen by the Central Educational Network (which blankets the Midwest) for inclusion in its permanent library. When it was aired by WTTW, the Chicago public television station that rarely uses CEN material, it was plugged by the Chicago Tribune's television guide as one of the two top programs for the day in the Chicago area.

Mr. Fierens had expected to perform in an international guitar competition in Caracas, Venezuela, the week following his departure from TJC, but the contest was postponed. He spent his free time with relatives in Argentina and now is in Europe.

follow spot

By Jill Cliffer

Denny Maroney's 20th Century Music Theory class took a five-day field trip to New York City in October to attend a "Mini-Festival Around Ives" at Lincoln Center. The five-concert series, dedicated to American composer Charles Ives, was conducted by Pierre Boulez. The program included music by Ives, Carl Ruggles, Rhudyar Varese, Schoenberg, Webern, Ravel, Prokofiev, Stravinsky and Bartok.

Each week an exhibit of paintings, drawings and sculptures by students of Arthur Cadieux is shown in the TJC office, 165 Lake Huron Hall. The exhibits are changed weekly.

TJC art professor Arthur Cadieux and CAS' Beverly Berger have compiled funds for a visiting artist program scheduled for this spring. About \$5,700 have been raised to bring artists to campus experienced in art education, art history, ceramics, metalsmithing, painting, printmaking and sculpture. "We are a small faculty," Cadieux says. "The students have the opportunity to work with only one person in a particular area. If the student chooses one area as an emphasis and/or desires to pursue graduate school, this exposure is mandatory."

The program is the beginning of an annual spring arts festival.

Oscar Wilde's daring treatment of an old tale, the story of Salome and John the Baptist, will be presented by Stage 3 beginning March 12.

The play, of course, is "Salome," and it is being directed by Peter Maslan, the Community Arts Center's full-time designer. Casting has been completed and the play now is in rehearsal.

Ballet in Good Form At TJC

Mrs. Nancy Baum, Thomas Jefferson College's new ballet teacher, also runs her own school in Grand Haven. In the Old Parish Hall of St. John's Church, she teaches classes for children and adults, including a course for young boys.

Mrs. Baum has studied at the Alice Ellis DuBoulay School of Ballet in Chicago, the Interlochen Arts Academy and the London School of Contemporary Dance. Since TJC dance instructor Christine Loizeaux first arrived at Grand Valley, Mrs. Baum has taken classes intermittently here.

Mrs. Nancy Baum



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