

In 1976, over 50,000 persons attended over 250 performances, films, lectures, meetings, rehearsals, and concerts at the Dorothy Dickson Darte Center for the Performing Arts. More than 200 students from the College were involved in producing these events. The Center is a cultural facility which hosts more than 50 campus and community organizations. It is a gift dedicated twelve years ago to man's vision, hopes, and imagination. In the words of the late Annette Evans, the trustee instrumental in its construction, the Center for the Performing Arts is "a place to turn what man ~~seems~~ dreams into an expression of what he will become."

Standing in the lighting control booth above the back of the auditorium, we watch students in performance before a capacity audience. Darkened glass separates the control booth from the auditorium and the stage below. Through the glass are transmitted the changing colors, the heightened intensities, the moods, and the emotions taking place below. The actors on stage create an illusion and transform the illusion into belief for the audience. As we watch the play, transmitted through the glass, we can also perceive the face of the student director reflected in the transmitted hues of the control booth glass. The excitement of performance is now a double exposure as we see the action on the stage and the ^{ca}exhilaration in the face of the student director.

This show is going well. The audience is responding to the characters portrayed on the stage. This performance

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is a class project conceived by students. Some are English majors, some study biology, some business, history, or music, but all have succeeded together in engaging an audience with a conception born in their imagination and portrayed with a measure of truth on the stage.

It is with this process of transferring an idea from one imagination to the imaginations of the audience that performance in a liberal arts college should concern itself. The collection of ideas represented in the liberal arts combines to form the poet's vision expressed upon the stage. This well-spring overcomes the superficiality of the manners and techniques which limit our ability to communicate.

^{over} 2500 years ago in Greece, music, mime, speech, and dance combined in a spectacle of performance which transmitted and enduring vision. The spectacle, the fortune, the power, and the religion of Greece are gone, but the poetic vision of Aeschylus remains.

The Center for the Performing Arts is "a gift outright,"-- a gift from a community to the college which serves it. It is a gift to encourage and stimulate the arts. It offers to students the hope ^{expressed by playwright} of Maxwell Anderson, when he said, "3... if you now hesitate on the threshold of your maturity, wondering ^{what} ~~perhaps whether there are any~~ rewards you should seek, wondering perhaps whether there are any rewards beyond the opportunity to feed and sleep and breed, turn to the art which has moved you most readily, take what part in it you can, as participant, spectator, secret practitioner or hanger-on and waiter at the door. Make your living any way you can, but neglect no sacrifice at your chosen altar."

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This commitment is the power which moves the student-artist to performance. In rooms beneath the stage students are in a rigorous dance class. They are giving discipline to body as well as mind in a effort of expression. In the scenery and costume shops ~~of the Center~~ other students translate plans into a ^{stage environment} ~~background~~ for the actors who are rehearsing the next performance. ^{In the Green Room} A class is studying the rebirth of theater in the Italian Renaissance, tracing the root of modern stage design from Serlio and Inigo Jones to Robert Edmond Jones and Boris Aronson.

The activity of the Center Encompasses the community as well. The faculty designer, Klaus Holm, lends his talent to a community playhouse production. He and his students paint a backdrop for a high school musical. Students from the College take a puppet show to local elementary schools and direct a play competition for high school students. The director of the theater, Alfred S. Groh, holds a seminar for teachers from the community. The avenue of expression is carried out even to a local correctional institution where inmates are ^{rehearsing in a play} ~~playing~~ roles in an attempt to find a new role in society.

The community comes to the Center for the Performing Arts. ^{Students} They hear music from Mozart to Ives, watch the work of playwrights from Aristophanes to Ionesco, listen to lectures and concerts by Isaac Asimov, Count Basie, F. Lee Bailey, ~~Harold Wilson~~ ^{other} and students and faculty. Alumni return to ~~watch~~ where they once performed to watch the new generation, in some cases, the second generation of

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~~of~~ Wilkes students in performance.

The solitary student, seated in the reading room of the Center, his feet up, reading Ibsen, Theater Crafts, Kennedy's Children, or The Life of Garbo, is moved by the performing spirit. He is seeking the reward to which Maxwell Anderson alluded when he said, "It may break your heart, it may drive you half mad, it may betray you into unrealizable ambitions or blind you to mercantile opportunities with its wandering fires. But it will fill your heart before it breaks it; it will make you a person in your own right; it will open the temple doors to you and enable you to walk with those who have come nearest among men to what men may sometime be."

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