

News of Northwest Drama Conference

Dramatists See 5 Demonstrations In Sat. Meeting

Speakers Discuss the Theater's Role As a College or University Activity

By Larry Hobart

Student delegates and teachers of many Northwest high schools watched five demonstrations on various aspects of the theater in their Saturday morning divisional meeting. The demonstrations included two plays, inexpensive ways of lighting a stage, costumes that have been used in the University theater and make-up application. "My Next Girl" was the title of a radio play presented by the Radio Workshop players under the



JOAN DELAP

direction of Glenn Starlin, assistant professor of speech. The play, presented under simulated studio conditions, received enthusiastic comments from the delegates. A costume demonstration was presented by Joan Clair Delap, senior in speech and costume director of the University theater.

The role of the theater in the college and university was analyzed and discussed by seven speakers Saturday in an all-day session of the Northwest Drama conference.

Joseph C. Fitch of Montana State college, Bozeman, Mont., opened the morning program. Fitch called for separation of college and university drama from the "partially related" departments of speech and English.

The Montana drama instructor said that a recent survey showed that in 43 per cent of the nation's colleges and universities offering drama, the course was affiliated with the speech department of the school. English departments control about 25 per cent of drama activities, he said, while about 12 per cent of the schools indicated that they had a separate drama department.

Drama "Cultural Sideshow"

Declaring that drama has been too long a "cultural sideshow" at institutions of higher learning, Fitch said, "Drama is a fine art and should occupy the same place of honor and distinction as art and literature."

Fitch said that a solution to the problem can be found only at the local level. He said a general trend for separate departments is now apparent, but is developing slowly. University and college drama has failed to turn out material for the professional theater and to provide well-trained teachers and directors, Fitch asserted. He called for a program grounded in the basic theater arts including training in the liberal arts field and outside instruction by persons in the professional theater.

Fitch said that the best way to sell a school administration on the idea of a separate drama department is to present a successful and artistic drama program.

Asked if he thought college students should be encouraged to major in drama when last year the average income of an Equity actor was \$780, Fitch replied that students should be given the opportunity despite the poor market for their talents.

Ashland Actors Earn More

Angus Bowmer, director of the Ashland Shakespearean festival presented each summer at Ashland, said that seven actors made more than \$780 at last year's festival and stated that the theater needs an aggressive program.

Charles Gaupp, Reed college, told drama delegates that the primary concern of drama should be the audience.

Gaupp suggested that it is the responsibility of a school drama department to present a broad, general and historical selection of plays of the "going theater" over a four year period, giving all students an opportunity to see the best in each type of drama.

Plays Today Two Extremes

Plays presented today are of two extremes—the play "that is never done or the most recent Broadway success," Gaupp said. He said that the play for the middleman has been neglected.

Gaupp declared that student response to campus theater is poor, and more effort should be made to attract students to university and college drama. At Reed college only 12 per cent of the student body attended student productions three years ago, he said. A re-vital-

ized theater program now draws about 53 per cent, he reported.

Butler Speaks on Credits

Donald E. Butler of Yuba college, Marysville, Calif., speaking on academic credit for participation in theater production, told his audience that credits should be awarded non-drama majors who participate in theater productions.

Academic credits for students with a professional interest in the theater are now a fact at most schools, Butler said, but credits for amateurs are lacking. Such credits would provide incentive by recognition of the knowledge gained in theater and aid in removing the title of "extra-curricular" from student drama productions.

Yuba Gives Credits

At Yuba drama is part of a fine arts program including art, English, music and philosophy which each student must participate in. Butler stated. Grading in drama "laboratories" is based on a merit record, he said.

Several delegates contested Butler's remarks, pointing out that with credits grades must be used and arguing the difficulty of grading any subject not of a technical nature on an objective basis.

Norman Philbrick, Stanford university, presented a brief outline of the history of graduate work in drama in universities and colleges

throughout the United States.

Correlation Needed

Philbrick emphasized the need for correlation between the scholarly and technical aspects of theater and suggested a broad background study of philosophy, history and culture for graduate work.

He outlined a program involving four major fields of study—research, analysis of play structure, voice and delivery and construction and technical—plus seminars on the philosophical concepts of theater. He urged that a foreign language requirement be introduced into the graduate program.

Bowmer Speaks on Selection

Angus Bowmer of Southern Oregon college of Education and director of Ashland's Shakespearean festival, presented a paper on play selection for the university theater, describing the basic differences in the idea of "good" between the public and the theater in terms of the philosophy of John Locke.

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Speakers Point Out Various Aspects Of Community Theater Activities

By Lorna Davis

The community theater, as a force that enriches the life of the town, provides a living for professional actors, and gives a chance for different forms, was discussed by three speakers at the civic and community theater section of the Northwest Drama conference.

Mildred Butler, graduate student and formerly with the Portland Civic theater, discussed the "Historical Development of Community Theater."

"The Professional Actor and the Community Theater" was the subject of the speech given by Richard Graham, former Broadway actor and now a member of the Vining Repertory Theater in Ashland.

Horn speaks on Play Reading. Robert Horn, professor of English and member of the Eugene Very Little Theater, explained the Laughton Method of Play Reading.

Marvin Krenk, member of Eugene Very Little Theater and chairman for the meeting, Mrs. Mary Krenk and Mrs. Daisy Hamann demonstrated the Laughton method, named for actor Charles Laughton, by enacting "Phoenix on Frequent," a one act satirical play by Christopher Fry.

No Stage Set Use

The play was done without stage setting, and the actors sat on kitchen stools. Each one read from the book of the play. The two women wore costumes which suggested their roles, but Krenk did not.

Miss Butler cited the reasons for the development of the community theater, and traced it from its crude beginning in amateur dramatics to the modern civic theater.

Acting clubs, with membership and tickets by invitation only were begun in the early nineteenth century, she said.

Guild Beginning Told

"From the settlement houses of Jane Addams and Henry Street, the neighborhood playhouse was started that produced festivals and rollicks besides plays," Miss Butler stated. "The first real community theater was begun in 1915 in the back of the Greenwich Village book-shop and emerged later as the Theater Guild," she said.

"The community theater filled a need in these early years and was a success. Many people are faced with no theater at all today and the need for community theaters will increase," she said.

Actors May Starve

Richard Graham told the audience that the professional actor faces the possibility of starving. He cited statistics from Actors Equity, a magazine for actors, which showed that the average earning for actors last year was \$790. This average can be bettered in community theater, he said.

"The community gets the benefit of mature entertainment designed to reflect its tastes, besides the business of the theater itself. The money from the theater ends up in the hands of the entire community," he said.

Actors Eyed Askance

"It is hard for the professional actor to get the support of the community because they think he is a charlatan," Graham said. "The professional actor must organize in a group and show the people that he is operating as a medieval guild and he will get the support of the community," he declared.

"Strip tease" drama was explained by Robert Horn in his talk on the Laughton method. This method utilizes the power of the voice to hold the audience.

"The stage is too much taken over with electricians. The power of the actor can move the audience," he said.

Horn pointed out the different uses and the advantages of using this method in small groups to exploit high-brow drama. It takes a minimum of time and effort to produce superior programs, he suggested.

One Man's Valentine is Another Man's Swan-Song

OR

what really happened on February 14th



Once there was a freshman who had a Problem. He couldn't get to first base with the Opposite Sex. Oh, they'd go out with him and wade briskly through a steak. But when it came time to say Good-night, just as he figured to collect a modest return on his investment, he'd wind up with a face full of Splinters. Discouraging.

In desperation, he calculated himself a new angle. He ignored February 13th completely. Didn't send out a single Billet-doux. But on the morning of February 14th, he strode down to the Western Union office and sent Telegrams to a carefully selected list of fifty Females. Very touching messages, on the "Be mine" theme. Then he went back to his room and shaved expectantly.

The first starry-eyed Girl drove up an hour later. The procession kept up all day. Talk about a Mouse-Trap! Now he's very happy. So are all his Wives. They just love Mecca.

There's a factual point to this frivolous case-history: No message is as pleasing and convincing as a telegram; none gets a more positive reaction. Nothing makes a gal or guy feel more special than receiving one whether it's congratulations to Dad or love to Mother or filching a Date with Destiny. Want proof? Just call Western Union.

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