

CAMPUS LIFE

Wesleyan Singers Group Trebles in Size

By Decree Staff

The Wesleyan Singers continues to expand, thanks to an anonymous \$500,000 donation that has made it possible for 16 students to receive scholarships.

Music Director Gene Heavner noted that the influx of talent has strengthened the choral group by providing a balance of male and female voices. "A larger group can do a wider variety of music," he said. "It can help take the pressure off individual members. When you're the only tenor, alto, soprano or bass, it can be quite challenging. And many choral works are suited to a large, rather than a small group."

At the same time, Heavner said, there are challenges associated with larger groups. "Rhythm and pitch accuracy can be more difficult to achieve with more singers involved," he said. "But overall, the rewards of

having a large group far outweigh and disadvantages."

Many of the new members arrived at Wesleyan with strong skills. "Most of the students are either from their high school or church choirs," he said. "In a few cases, the high school choir was fairly advanced, so these students have a stronger background in music reading and choral technique. This can allow the entire group to learn pieces of music more rapidly."

Heavner said that the \$500,000 donation came "at a fortuitous time" for the music program at Wesleyan, which faced elimination last year. "That fall it was uncertain that the college would have the financial capability to continue with a full-time music position," he related, "and the donation provided the impetus for renewed support of the program."

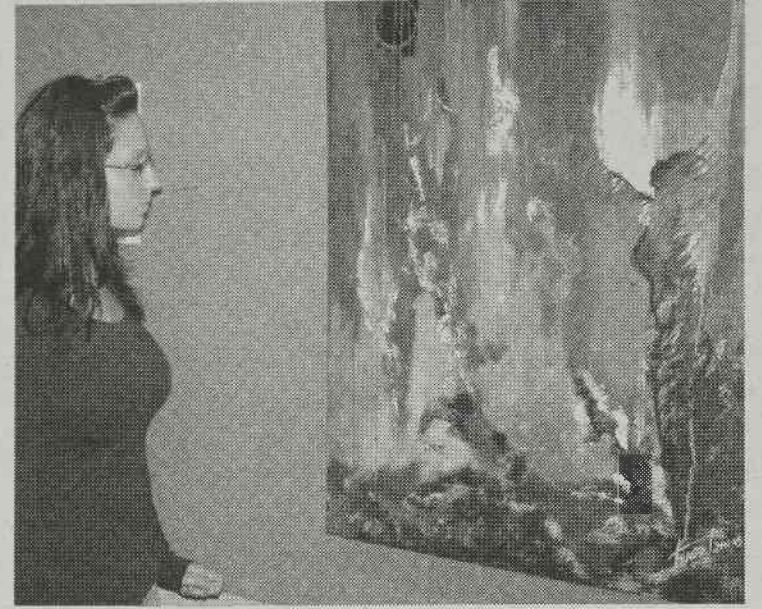
The money allows Wesleyan to

award as many as twenty \$4,000 scholarships each year to students who complete successful applications and auditions. So far, Heavner said, 16 students have earned scholarships, as membership in the Wesleyan Singers has grown from seven to 27.

One beneficiary is freshman Jamie McCleave, a soprano who has sung in Manteo area Baptist churches since she was five. She said she's enjoyed the opportunity to sing a range of music at Wesleyan, from old English to African songs. "The music connects us," she added. "It's a real close-knit group."

Besides the scholarship money, the donation funds operating expenses for the program that include music, music folders, uniforms and travel.

"We're hoping to grow even more in the 2009-2010 school year," Heavner said.



Cassandra Mangum looks at "Forces Within #3," part of an exhibit by artist Tunde Afolayan in the Mims Gallery of the Dunn Center.

Decree staff photo.

'North Star' Spotlights Talent of NCWC Actors

By Decree Staff

Overcoming a last-minute change in directors, Wesleyan students staged a well-received production of Gloria Bond Clunie's award-winning play "North Star" at the Dunn Center for the Performing Arts.

Winner of numerous prestigious awards in 1994, the play tells the story of Relia (played by Brittany Richardson), a young African American girl who tries to persuade her parents to let her participate in Civil Rights demonstrations that have come to her area of North Carolina. The play is set in 1960, the year of the Greensboro sit-in, when four black college students broke local laws by sitting at a whites-only Woolworth's lunch counter and asking for service.

Cast members said the play was timely, given the recent campaign and election of Barack Obama. Gregory Spence played the role of Manson Taylor, Relia's father. He observed that reminders of past discrimination as well as the use of the n-word made many in the audience uncomfortable.

"I feel as though the audience enjoyed but more importantly learned from 'North Star,'" he said. "Some people get tired of hearing about civil rights and that part of American history, but it's definitely a memory that should never be forgotten. In light of the whole presidential campaign it really added to the ambiance of America and this college campus. A lot of people responded by laughing to the strong language

but it was obviously out of nerves or discomfort. That's the whole point of the show, to make people get out of their comfort zones and wake-up."

Jamie Hummel (Miss Cooper) said that director Melvin Tunstall warned audience members of the tough language at the start of the two performances.

"It was a good play. It was a story that needed to be told," she said. "I was nervous about the language used in the script. I was nervous about the audience's reaction to that (the n-word), used by some of the other white

characters. Most of the audience was okay with it."

But Hummel and Michael Stengel (Mr. Connell) said that some audience members confused the students with the roles that they played.

"Everyone said they liked the play," Stengel said. "Some did have a few problems with the dialogue, because I had to use the N-word. Some were like: 'So I noticed you enjoyed using that word a lot.' If they're too ignorant to not know that it's acting, then they shouldn't go to the theater."

Tunstall was installed as director

Best-Selling Author Karen Bender Visits Wesleyan

By Jessica Autumnne Smith
Decree Senior Editor

Karen Bender, best selling author of "Like Normal People," visited NCWC October 27. Bender's visit came as part of The Visiting Writers' Series, headed by Dr. James Bowers, associate professor of English. The event was well attended by students and faculty, as well as a few members of the surrounding community.

Bender's work has appeared in anthologies such as "New Stories from the South," as well as The New Yorker and other literary journals. Currently, she teaches creative writing at UNC-Wilmington.

After a brief introduction from Dr. Bowers, where he praised Bender's work as remarkable, the guest of honor took the stage. She commented on the turnout, and thanked the audience for enjoying her work. "As an author, it is just so wonderful to be read; to have your work loved," she said.

Bender read her short story "Eternal Love," which was the basis for her novel "Like Normal People." She explained, before her reading, that she had worked tirelessly to produce a 600-page first draft of "Like Normal People" that was very carefully written and described by her friends as being "a good start." Bender realized then that perhaps she did not fully understand the novel genre; she had not written one before. But she had previously written short stories and discovered she could link them together to get the longer novel. So she began with "Eternal Love" and through the continuation and development of its ideas arrived at "Like Normal People."

"Eternal Love" was a very enjoyable story. It described the lives of Ella and her mentally challenged daughter Lena. Lena fell in love with Bob, whom she met at the Goodwill, her place of employment. They eventually decided to get married, and the story follows their courtship, engagement, trip to Vegas to be wed, and finally the honeymoon night. Ella is constantly watchful over her daughter and when she is shut out of Bob and Lena's hotel room the audience sympathizes with her loss, with her having to let go of her child who is no longer a child. The story is filled with humor and bright lively characters that become real through their details and dialogue.

After the reading, Bender took a few

questions, mostly concerning her inspiration and process as a writer. She explained that all good stories should start with a "kernel of reality." The characters of Ella and Lena were loosely based on some of Bender's relatives. "I really wanted to explore what it was like and the challenges of dealing with that situation," she said. "My writing has to deal with something important to me. I work out my issues through my fiction."

In her closing, Bender urged students to "find their own thing," a creative outlet that would allow them to become who they want to be. She also offered advice to students to be serious about what they want out of life and to not be afraid to have to work for it.

The event was enjoyed by many; a reception and book signing followed the reading.

The Visiting Writers' Series tries to bring a well-known author to campus at least once every semester. Starting this fall, the Series will be partially supported by the Eleanor Hoyt Smith Memorial Reading Fund, which will stage a reading every other year in honor of Eleanor Smith, mother of Emeritus Professor T. Leverett Smith who was director of the series between 1976 and 1992.

The fund has been in the works for some 21 years. Dr. Leverett Smith explained that after all that time, various faculty and family members' contributions have finally accumulated enough to start supporting the Visiting Writers' Series. The Series, begun in the 1960s, remains a fundamental part of the cultural life on campus and aids in Wesleyan's contribution to the culture of the surrounding community.

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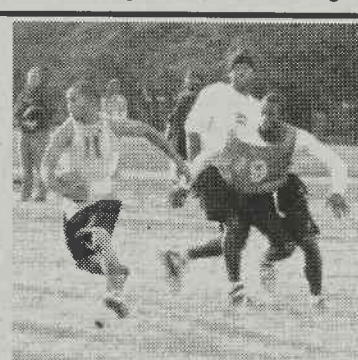
about a week before the production, replacing John Rogers Harris. Though there was a hectic last week of preparation, the actors said that Tunstall did a fine job of rallying a cast that had struggled in the early going.

Citing four- and five-hour rehearsals, Hummel commented, "I thought Melvin pulled it all together really well. He's really easy-going and fun."

Added Stengel: "We all had chemistry with Melvin because we've worked him before." Like Spence and Richardson, Stengel collaborated with Tunstall in last spring's musical, "Once Upon This Island." "He came at us as a teacher" and the cast responded well," Stengel said.

Spence said that the change in directors was tough at first. "I found it to be motivating but frustrating at the same time," he said. "From my experience with Mr. Tunstall, I know he is a phenomenal director, but his approach is different from our previous director. The different places they wanted my character to go were not in sync with each other. So for me I had to do a lot of re-evaluating at the last minute. Because of my passion and love for the theater, I was able to dig deeper and make the necessary changes to pull it off. Everyone did a wonderful job and I think they learned a lot about themselves throughout this experience."

What most impressed Stengel about the production were some of the individual performances. In particular, he pointed to Nicole Louisius (Relia's mother, Kate), as well as Richardson and Jamar Barnett Mishoe, who both played children. "Brittany and Jamar had to pretend they were 11 and 12 years old," he said. "It was astonishing that they could grasp the mentality of a kid and incorporate it into their acting."



Recent intramural football action.

Recent Intramural Champions

- Flag Football (Men's) - Mean Jean
- Flag Football (Co-Rec) - Noble Nites
- Ping Pong - Matt Daugherty
- Billiards - Jaine Lindo
- Halo 3 - OV3RPOW3R3D
- Co-Rec Volleyball - Ballers
- Dodgeball - P-Way
- Madden 09 - Carlos Railey (Gameboy)
- NCAA 09 - LeeRon Boykin
- NFL Pick Em - Justin Flemings
- 4-on-4 Basketball - Da Business

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Sigma Tau Delta, the English honors organization. A member of the honors program, Jones has distinguished himself in the classroom while earning a triple major in religious studies, English, and history.

"Brandon Jones has a quiet manner combined with an incisive analytical mind," Dr. Sarris commented. "In class, this combination can sometimes lull professors and students in a false sense of security, which is frequently snapped in two by one of Brandon's brilliant comments or, more commonly, by an outstanding paper. He has a free-ranging intellect which enables him to write intelligently about everything from the political uses of the Confederate flag to the cultural impact of the Hiroshima bombing. He is one of the few students for whom three majors is clearly not enough."

Landi, a senior, has been active in a range of activities, which include Wesleyan Singers, the music club, the Gay-Straight Alliance, Sigma Tau Delta, and the math honors society, Kappa Mu Epsilon. She has been an SI leader in math and a tutor in the writing center. A member of the honors program, she is completing a double major in math and English.

"I've had the pleasure of working with Amanda in two different classes as well as in the writing center," said Dr. Lisa Kirby, assistant professor of English. "In all instances, she proved to be a bright, engaged, and conscientious student. In both her writing and class participation, I could always count on Amanda to provide great insights about the literature we were discussing. And it's evident from her interaction with her peers that they value her opinions and see her as a leader in the classroom."

Richardson is on the college's cross country and tennis teams. A member of the honors program, she has tutored in justice studies and psychology and acted as a Dunn Center ambassador. She is the current vice president of the Student Government Association.

Strickland is an honors student who is majoring in justice studies. He has been an ambassador for the college's admissions office and the Dunn Center, and he's been involved in Wesleyan Singers and Refuge. He is the SGA president.

Dean of Students Robert Perkins lauded both Richardson and Strickland for the leadership they have provided within SGA.

"We often 'super-size' our leaders, thinking of them as larger than life, bold, and outspoken," Dr. Perkins said. "But there are strong leaders who go about their work quietly, conscientiously, and caringly. Juliana Richardson and Jacob Strickland exemplify this style of leadership with grace."

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Camper Van Beethoven, the Beastie Boys and Alejandro Escovedo.

His wife, Leslie Veach, is the new Director of Counseling and Disability Services at Wesleyan. The couple has a cat, named Zinzie, and a dog, Gillian.

Dr. Shearin is familiar to many members of the Wesleyan community. A long-time adjunct instructor in religious studies, Dr. Shearin will teach full-time in 2008-09 as a visiting professor of religious studies.

He teaches introduction to religion, religious worlds, Old Testament, New Testament, Christian ethics, and a seminar on religion and philosophy.

His hobbies include golf and choral directing. He and Jinny, his wife of 47 years, have three adult sons—Jess, Jim and William—and nine grandchildren.

The Scotland Neck resident graduated from Wake Forest University with a degree in philosophy. He holds an MA and PhD from the University of Virginia and a law degree from Wake Forest.

"I taught philosophy for nine years and went to law school at the age of 35, when my youngest son started attending kindergarten," Dr. Shearin recalled. "He came home from school one day and said to me: 'Dad, are you going to be a lawyer when you grow up?' I don't remember my answer. I did become a lawyer and retired at the age of 65. But I have not grown up, and I am not looking forward to doing so. That's why I'm teaching again."