

Curtain Rises On Plans For New Theater

The curtain is going up on plans to recast the Carolina Playmakers and the entire dramatic arts program in modern attire.

One of the first drama groups in higher education in the United States, the Carolina Playmakers was founded in 1918 by the late Prof. Frederick H. Koch — father of American folk drama.

The late Mrs. William Meade Prince, wife of a Chapel Hill artist and author, left the University \$100,000 for construction of a new theatre. Her husband, author of the North Carolina best seller "The Southern Part of Heaven," once headed the UNC Art Department. During his lifetime, his art works appeared in

most of the leading museums in this country and in England, and he illustrated most of the leading magazines in the United States.

In addition to the Prince gift, funds for expansion of drama facilities will be sought from the 1967 Legislature.

Chancellor J. Carlyle Sitterson has labeled a dramatic arts building one of the top priority proposals in the capital improvements program to be submitted to the General Assembly for approval next year.

The projected building will include a main theatre with 500 to 600 seats and full stage facilities, plus teaching workshops, costume and scene shops, classrooms and facul-

ty offices.

University planners hope to locate the building in the Fine Arts area of the campus — in the vicinity of the Ackland Art Center, Music Department and the Radio, TV and Motion Pictures Building.

A prime source of entertainment for students, townsfolk and campus visitors, the Carolina Playmakers is a leading cultural asset to the Research Triangle area. Some 20,000 people attend Playmaker productions annually.

With adequate facilities, the University plans to expand all its dramatic activities, including the Institute for Outdoor Drama, the Bureau of Community Drama and the annual State Dramatic Festivals for high school, college and community theatre groups.

In addition, the Playmakers hope to expand their long tradition of taking plays on tour to the people. A program of classical drama presentations for state high schools is anticipated.

A major resource of drama teachers, writers and professional actors, the Playmakers boasts such early cast members as novelist Tom Wolfe, editor Jonathan Daniels, playwright Howard Richardson



BEST OF HALF A CENTURY. As the Carolina Playmakers launch their second fifty years of drama-theatre-playwriting, the top Playmakers of the past half century are saluted. The late Prof. Frederick H. Koch is

pictured in center. Going clockwise from top right: Thomas Wolfe, Paul Green, Andy Griffith, Jonathan Daniels, Sheppard Strudwick, Richard Adler, Betty Smith, Frances Gray Patton.

and news commentator George Denny. Outdoor drama writers Paul Green and Kermit Hunter were among earlier UNC dramatists.

Aging playbills bear the names of such professionals as band leader Kay Kyser, stage and screen actors George Grizzard, Sheppard Strudwick, Douglas Watson, Robert Armstrong and Andy Griffith, along with the author of "Pajama Game" and "Damn Yankees," Richard Adler.

Tar Heel authors such as Arnold Schulman, Betty Smith, Frances Gray Patton and Legette Blythe are on the roster, as well as Wall Street Journal editor Vermont Roster, New York Herald Tribune dance editor Walter Terry and Boston Herald drama critic Sam Hirsch.

The majority of North Carolina's high school and college drama teachers were once Playmakers at UNC. William Trotman, for example, estab-

lished the drama program at the School for the Performing Arts, with Marion Fitz-Simmons and Gerd Young as faculty members. Among UNC alumni serving as drama directors are Edgar Loessin at East Carolina College, Josefine Niggli of Western Carolina, Arthur McDonald of St. Andrews and Dan Linney of Campbell.

Recent establishment of a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in dramatic art and admittance of freshmen coeds in the program have led to a sharp rise in drama enrollment requests. This rise is expected to continue into the next decade, along with increasing demands for creation of programs leading to the Master of Fine Arts and doctoral degrees.

Enrollment requests from undergraduate non-majors are mounting too. Additional courses are being offered this fall as the department prepares to instruct over 1,000

students in drama during the year. Two new faculty members are being added to the present eight-member department.

At present, drama classrooms, offices and storage areas are scattered over the campus in the 116-year-old Playmakers Theatre, two office buildings, the basement of a classroom building and in a temporary World War II wooden barracks. Limited facilities have forced a curtain-

ment in undergraduate enrollment in drama courses and in the number of students accepted as majors.

"Future strengthening and enlargement of dramatic arts," says Drama Department chairman Harry Davis, "depends on establishment of modern facilities that will centralize in one area of the campus the academic aspects of the program and the closely related public performances of the Playmakers."

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