

Tryouts session proves trying

by Bruce Mann
Feature Editor

What really happens at a Carolina Playmakers tryout session?

Tryouts for the upcoming (July 5, 6, 7) Carolina Playmakers-Carolina Union production of Murray Schisgal's Broadway success "Luv" proved that tryouts are typically both an experience in trying and a trying experience.

Two weeks ago in the Graham Memorial Lounge, Director Pat Barnett (who just recently directed the Playmaker's spring production of "Slow Dance on the Killing Ground") choreographed the ten actors and actresses competing for "Luv's" three roles (Harry, Milt, Ellen), beginning with straight scene reading, advancing to a study in movement, and ending with more readings.

A typical reading for the play (called

"a wildly funny spoof of avante-garde drama which makes high comedy of the nagging indignities which the flesh is heir to") began with minimal explanation of the situation by the director.

"Remember, this is just—it's just a little too sincere to be true. The sincerity of the soap-opera. Now, let's pick up at the beginning of Act II, which is several months later. As you know from reading the play, she does wind up with Harry. Oh well, you know where the scene is."

And then a typical scene took place in the empty, partly echoing hall.

Milt: ...but I'm willing to bet you anything that that woman had me under the influence of drugs or ...narcotics.

Ellen: How could she have done that?

Milt: By intravenous injections. While I was sleeping. Look at this. (Rolls up sleeve.)

Ellen: Milt, you've had those freckles since I've known you.

Milt: Purple ones? Did I ever have purple freckles?

The director alternately took shorthand notes, followed lines, shook her head, chewed at a black Bic pen, and laughed at funny lines.

When the scene was over, it was usually replayed with new personnel combinations, an integral element of Miss Barnett's search for the appropriately talented trio.

After a tiring hour of such recitations (about ten scenes with different Milts, Harrys, and Ellens), it was time for the study in movement.

"I think it's easier if we start with Milt's speech which begins on the bottom of page 12. There's some movement in that. This is where Harry drops—you know, straight forward, stiff—and Milt catches him and actually swings him around like the hands of a clock, trying to get him up. This is one of the reasons we need a tall person for the Harry and a shorter one for the Milt."

Harry: It's gotten so bad that sometimes, sometimes, in the middle of the day or night, without a warning of any kind, my whole body becomes paralyzed, I can't move a muscle and...

body stiffens and topples forward.)

Milt: Harry! What is it? Harry, for God's sake... (He runs around in a complete circle, holding Harry whose stiff body revolves like the hand of a clock.) Help! Help!

After everyone had tried this movement segment, a new girl entered the room to read for Ellen, so all of the Ellen scenes were repeated. Then there were even more different scenes to be read, and the players who were not reading at the moment began to tire with the ceaseless repetition until finally Pat Barnett announced.

"Okay. I've got to go and mull over what I've got here and hopefully post cast tonight or at least by early tomorrow morning. As you probably realize, we've had very good readers tonight in all sorts of combinations, so even if you don't get cast it doesn't mean I wasn't delighted with your reading. And I do thank you for coming. But it's a three character show. Okay, thank you and good night."

For most of the evening's actors and actresses, the trying experience was over. For Kim Coburn (Ellen), John G. Hutton (Milt), and Tom Smith (Harry), the experience of "Luv" had just begun.

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