

## Symphony fights for pay, benefit gains

The Associated Press

RALEIGH — Concerns over job security and a proposal for more concerts and travel time have stalled negotiations for North Carolina Symphony musicians as they enter their second week without a contract.

"The sheer number of changes of what we've had in the past is a stumbling block," said Patricia W. Banko, leader of the musicians' negotiating team. "I am not hopeful that we will reach an agreement by the end of the week, but it's not impossible."

Banko said the musicians had rejected proposals by the symphony's governing board because of benefits the board wanted to eliminate from the previous three-year contract, which expired Aug. 15.

Thomas H. McGuire, executive director of the symphony, said the board was trying to forge an agreement that "will serve in the long term ... in the best possible way."

"I don't see a stumbling block on any specific issues," he said. "Everything is open to negotiation."

Banko said the board wanted to eliminate an appeals committee that made decisions on firings, leaving decisions up to the conductor. She said other items proposed by the board and opposed by musicians include eliminating overtime pay, eliminating health insurance for dependents and increasing concerts and travel time without increasing pay.

The negotiations are the latest dispute in what has been a discordant decade for the North Carolina Symphony. In 1980, it took a one-week musicians' strike to spur a new contract. Last year, controversy swirled over the search for a new conductor until Gerhardt Zimmerman was chosen.

The lack of a contract led symphony officials to cancel the first scheduled concert, which was to be held Sept. 4 at Meredith College in Raleigh. The first formal concert is set for Sept. 15 in Raleigh.

## 3-play festival highlights season PRC packs year with top-rate plays

By DAVID SCHMIDT  
Assistant Arts Editor

The cast of Playmakers Repertory Company directors changed this summer as the roles of artistic director and producing director went to last year's PRC Associate Artistic Director Gregory Boyd and to Robert Tolan, former producing director with the Virginia Stage Company of Norfolk. Executive producer Milly Barranger said Boyd and Tolan will work closely to continue PRC's growing tradition of student involvement in and out of the classroom.

"The students at no time are separate from what is happening at the Rep," said Barranger, who also serves as chairman of the department of dramatic art. According to her, undergraduate and graduate involvement as PRC actors or members of the technical crew alone is as high as 90 percent of the total cast and crew.

Barranger's dual positions parallel each other and allow coordination that gives drama students the chance to learn their craft from visiting artists without necessarily performing in a PRC production. This rare symbiotic relationship between a professional resident theater company and a department of dramatic art has been very successful, she said.

Boyd's jobs provide another link. In addition to his new position at PRC, he is an associate professor and head of the professional theater training program in the department of dramatic art, where he teaches the popular Drama 15 course. He came to Chapel Hill in 1981 and has since directed *Pygmalion*, *The Greeks*, *A Moon for the Misbegotten*, *Angel Street* and *The Glass Menagerie* for PRC.

"Greg Boyd proved from our point of view to be the most outstanding candidate," Barranger said. "He is important for the national reputation of this theater program."

Following a national search in the spring, Boyd replaced the previous artistic director, David Rotenberg, who left to join his wife in New York. After returning today from the Great Lakes Shakespeare Festival in Cleveland — where he directed *Henry V* — Boyd will have artistic control of all PRC productions, Barranger said.

But part of the artistic input will come from Tolan. For him, replacing George Parides as managing director also meant replacing that title — the new producing director said he planned to add to his current duties as fiscal manager.

"Rather than building fences around people, we have primary and corollary concerns," Tolan said. "The reason we didn't go with that arrangement is that I expect my interests will embrace some artistic and programmatic aspects."

Increased student involvement from the other end of the theater falls under one of Tolan's marketing concerns — the Incredible Student Pass. It works like a ticket discount coupon, and in its inaugural season last year PRC sold 512 passes — 12 more than were originally printed. Tolan said approximately 1,000 passes will be available beginning today.

The Incredible Student Pass is "a great beginning ... a tool for developing the habit of playgoing," Tolan said, adding that he felt the real "playgoers" were full subscribers. These people are buying into the whole season, he explained, and buy PRC the freedom to present some exciting plays, even though they may not be blockbusters.

"There is a leap of faith involved," Tolan said. "I'm not buying stars, I'm not buying hit titles. We're in the business of marketing the theater in all its diversity and richness."

More than 2,000 subscriptions already have been renewed, and he said he hoped to sell another 2,000

before the season begins. About 3,400 playgoers bought full subscriptions last year. The total capacity for a series of performances in either Paul Green Theatre or Playmakers Theatre is a little more than 6,000.

"I'm really excited about the potential of this place," Tolan said, echoing the enthusiasm of his colleagues in Graham Memorial over the upcoming theater season. Special events like "The Elizabethan Project" in the fall and a possible adaptation of William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* this spring will co-star with single PRC productions introducing each semester, a department of dramatic art Christmas show and a three-play PRC Festival in March and April.

"There's a potential for non-stop production," Barranger said. "We've given ourselves more rehearsal time. We're not in the business of three hours' rehearsal time. We're in the business of training."

Drama students will work on "The Elizabethan Project" in the classroom, introducing it to the public when completed, much like a chemistry experiment which is published after the work is done, Barranger said.

Shakespeare's comedy *As You Like It*, starring Hope Alexander-Willis as Rosalind, will open the PRC season Oct. 6. The next production, *The Hostage* by Brendan Behan, will feature members of the professional training program in a theatrical exploration of Irish troubles in the 1950s and will begin its run Feb. 2.

*Pickwick! A Dickens Celebration of Christmas* will make its American debut in December. Based on *The Pickwick Papers*, this production will feature the talents of undergraduates and graduates in the department of dramatic art as well as PRC members.

The highlight of the season seems to be the PRC Festival, which opens with Tom Stoppard's *Travesties* March 8 and closes with Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* April 29.

In between, Joe Spano of NBC's *Hill Street Blues* visits Chapel Hill to star in *Dracula, a Musical Nightmare*. Written for Spano by Douglas Johnson at the University of California at Berkeley, where they both worked with Boyd, this strange vampire promises to be more of a theatrical dream.

"It is now, I think, in a form for New York producers to look at," Barranger said.



PRC Artistic Director Robert Tolan looking for increased student involvement



Milly Barranger, PRC executive producer, also serves as drama department chairman

Tolan expects it to be "The Carolina campus's version of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*," with a cult-like following. A dance called "The Bat" could reach "Time Warp" dimensions, he said, and the show's scheduled run starting March 22 will end with a midnight performance on Friday the 13th in April.

The festival format allows students to turn their entire attention to the plays as early as January, Barranger said. It not only saves money by contracting professional performers to two plays under one agreement, but also lets students see an actor tackle two major roles. Besides, Barranger said, it's conveniently scheduled for tourists on their way to the Spoleto Festival in Charleston, S.C.

One way into the theatre for students who can't afford ticket prices and wish to see these plays is to volunteer as an usher. A sign-up sheet is located at PRC offices in Graham Memorial.

And if all the world's a stage, then anyone can be an actor; auditions for *As You Like It* will be held Wednesday beginning at 6 p.m. in 103 Graham Memorial. All interested persons must sign up for a specific audition time in 203 Graham Memorial or by calling 962-1122 and should prepare a speech from the play not exceeding two minutes. Rehearsals begin Sept. 4.

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