

PlayMakers welcomes new artistic director; plans at least 1 world premier this season

By DEANNA RUDDOCK
Staff Writer

Anything-new-and-innovative seems to be the theme as PlayMakers Repertory Company celebrates its 10th anniversary. With at least one world premiere on its '85-'86 schedule and a new artistic director, the celebration is sure to be full of the kind of energy and excitement that could make this season PRC's most successful ever.

David Hammond, the new artistic director for PRC, said that he wanted to produce a theatre that was vigorous, imaginative, challenging to the actors and stimulating to the audience. He intends to do so through productions of classics by Oliver Goldsmith and William Shakespeare and with a PlayFest that involves three contemporary American playwrights.

"An essential function of our work must be the living maintenance of our theatrical heritage through the production of major European and American classics, plays requiring fresh confrontation and interpretation by each generation of actors and theater-goers," Hammond said. "Equally essential is the presentation of the best of contemporary theatre and a whole-hearted commitment to the development of new works, because a theatre that is healthy must use a knowledge of the past in the present to generate a future."

The season opens Sept. 25 with *She Stoops to Conquer*, a comedy by Goldsmith that will run through Oct. 13. In contrast to that lighthearted work,

The Storm, a tragedy by Alexander Ostrovsky about parental tyranny and unfulfilled love, will run from Nov. 6 through Nov. 24. "It is an intense, little play that everyone will enjoy, but they won't walk away uplifted," said Sharon Herr, head of audience development for PRC.

Playfest '86, which will run from Jan. 31 through March 16, is the celebration of the last decade of great American theatre. A.R. Gurney Jr.'s *The Dining Room* will be performed during the Playfest, as will two other American plays not yet determined.

The season will end with *Much Ado About Nothing*, the Shakespeare comedy in which love conquers villainy and sharp-tongued wit. *Ado* will run from April 9 through April 27.

Jonathan Giles, the new managing director for PRC, said that the company had three goals in selecting the plays for the current season: the presentation of the well-known classics, the presentation of the best in contemporary theatre and the presentation of classics that have been neglected. He said that PRC had always performed classics, but that because of the change in artistic directors (former artistic director Greg Boyd left at the end of last season), the way in which the classics are presented this season will probably vary significantly from the manner in which they were treated over past seasons.

"The moment Greg Boyd left and David Hammond became artistic director, our theatrical product automatically changed," Giles said. "It can't help but

change."

The changes that will be seen in the presentations of the plays are not the only changes that will occur this year. PRC has also established new programs aimed at increasing student attendance at plays.

Super Tuesday is a new program set up to offer students a chance to see previews of the plays at a discounted price. Also, because no subscribers can purchase tickets for this night, students will be able to get the best seats available.

Another program established for this season is *Freshman Wednesday*. It will allow freshman to see a preview for a greatly reduced price. Giles said that a concerted effort needs to be made to inform freshman about the company because many do not realize that there is an established theatre on campus.

"Last year we found that our average student age was in the junior and senior area," Giles said. "*Freshman Wednesday* is our way to introduce the freshman to the company."

Herr said that students were also encouraged to participate in the open auditions for the '85-'86 season, which will be held Sept. 1 in the Paul Green Theatre.

Student tickets for the upcoming season are \$7.50 for weeknights and \$10 for weekends. Students can also purchase season passes — good for the six aforementioned productions — for \$30. Tickets and passes go on sale after Aug. 26 at the box office in Graham Memorial.

Carolina Classics back (no relation to Coke)

By FRANK BRUNI
Arts Editor

People tend not to appreciate what they have until they no longer have it, and the Carolina Classics film series provides — pardon the pun — a classic case in point.

For more than five years, the series, sponsored by the Carolina Theater on Franklin Street, brought the best of Hollywood to Chapel Hill and offered students an enjoyable, inexpensive alternative to afternoon studying. However, a decline in attendance last fall semester put the series on the shelf for the spring.

In its absence, the taken-for-granted series reached the height of its popularity. "People asked almost constantly about what had happened to the Carolina Classics, and we had lots and lots of requests to bring them back," said Carolina Theater manager Warren Stiles.

Stiles has obliged those requests by resurrecting the series for this fall semester. For 12 weeks beginning next Friday, the Carolina will once again offer daily afternoon showings of some of the most acclaimed, popular films in the history of the cinema. But if attendance at the showings is as low as it was a year ago, the series may disappear from the Carolina forever.

For his part, Stiles would like to see the classics remain. "It's a tradition, and as long as we break even, we'll keep it going," he said. "But last fall we only made money on three or four of the 12 films. We have to do better than that."

Among his efforts to entice students back into the theater and to ensure the future of the classics was careful selection of 12 films (each plays for one week only) with undisputed followings. "All 12 of them won the Academy Award for Best Picture in the year they came out," Stiles said. "We figured that was a good way to bring the series

back and make it work."

Those award-winning films are, in the order in which the Carolina will present them, *Gone with the Wind* (1939), *An American in Paris* (1951), *On the Waterfront* (1954), *Gigi* (1958), *The Apartment* (1960), *Hamlet* (1948), *The Sound of Music* (1969), *You Can't Take It With You* (1969), *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), *West Side Story* (1961), *Casablanca* (1942), and *Ben Hur* (1926).

Stiles admitted that some film buffs may find fault with the list, which doesn't include some of Hollywood's less exhaustively screened, rarer gems. He said he'd like to see such films on future lists. "But first we've got to get the people coming in," he said. "Then we can start playing films that aren't as well known again."

In any case, Stiles anticipates an especially warm reception for *West Side Story* and *Hamlet*, both of which he's received many requests for and long tried to book.

Gone with the Wind and *Casablanca* will also be shown by the Carolina Union Film Committee this semester, but Stiles doesn't think the doubling-up will hurt the business the films do on Franklin Street. He pointed out that a Union showing is on a smaller screen and doesn't offer refreshments. "People like to go out to a theater just to go to a theater, see a movie on the big screen, eat popcorn — all that stuff," he said.

As in past years, the Carolina will offer bargain matinee fares for the classics series. In addition, Stiles is making available for the first time ever a season ticket, on sale now at the theater, which will further discount the price a frequent filmgoer will pay for each classic. It's no remarkable innovation, Stiles acknowledged, but right now, every change represents one more chance for the Carolina Classics to remain a Chapel Hill tradition.

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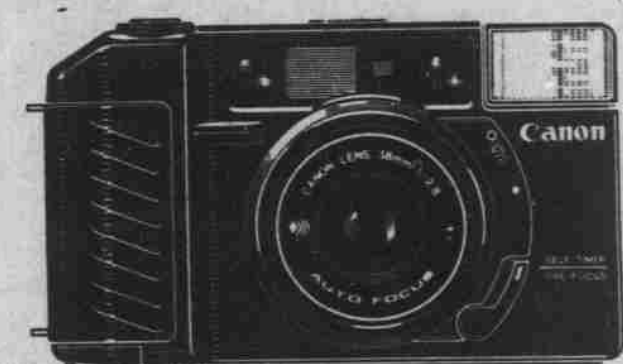
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