

Comet gazers ready

By HEATHER FREY
Staff Writer

After a 75-year absence, he's making another swipe by this planet. Chinese astronomers first recorded sighting Halley's Comet in 240 B.C., and he's made curtain calls ever since. This time, people can see the comet through a telescope or binoculars beginning in mid-November.

But peak viewing time won't begin until January. Another good viewing time will be March and April. The gap between viewing times occurs when the comet travels behind the sun.

The best time to see the comet should be after dusk in mid-April. It will appear on the western horizon, moving in a low arc to the southern horizon.

Halley's comet will be most visible between about 20 degrees and 40 degrees south latitude. That means, the farther south you are, the better the view. The ideal places to go in April are Australia, Madagascar, New Zealand, South Africa and parts of South America.

What? Not heading for Sydney or Johannesburg next spring? Well, favorable North American sights are South Florida, Hawaii and desert areas of the Southwest. If these locations still are too far away, there is the nearby golf course and a pair of binoculars.

According to Chris Adams, president of the UNC astronomy club and a physics major from Washington, D.C., Halley's Comet will be visible from Chapel Hill around mid-November with the aid of binoculars.

The tail will be visible, but you'll have to rise before dawn to see it. The earlier the better.

Still, the visibility won't be spectacular. In fact, Adams called it "pretty crummy orientation."

"The worst view in 2,000 years."

To the unaided eye, Halley's Comet will look about as long as the Big Dipper. Two tails and a gas cloud around the nucleus will look like a faint white smudge in the sky, like the Milky Way. You'll have to look carefully, because it will be dimmer than the moon.

In 1910, Halley passed so close to the Earth that it lit a third of the sky and seemed to threaten to contaminate the atmosphere with poisonous gases. Panic was widespread. This time the show won't be as fantastic or frightening, but it will be the last until 2060 A.D.

For viewing, astronomers recommend a pair of binoculars with 7x50 mm strength. The 50 mm lenses allow a better view than regular 35 mm's. At larger magnifications, the slightest breath will shake the image. Be prepared to pay \$150 to \$700 for a pair — or just borrow Dad's.

Telescopes only are worthy investments if you plan to keep gazing at the heavens. Otherwise, they are too powerful to aim at Halley's comet. The tail is expected to be 25 million to 50 million miles long, and the nucleus is 100 miles in diameter. Telescopes only will show bits and pieces of it, losing Halley's true dimensions.

In the meantime, start preparing for the return of Halley's Comet.

PRC performance offers comic relief

By SALLY PONT
Staff Writer

For a good honest laugh, there is no time like the 18th century. PlayMakers Repertory Company's performance of Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* in Paul Green Theatre created a hearty world of humor with perpetual motion. This comedy entertained with an unmitigated vigor that was a welcome retreat from modern subtlety, perversity and contradiction. There was no catch to this entertainment; it was offered by the cast with pride and good cheer, like a host offers coffee to contented guests after a good meal.

The comedy of *She Stoops to Conquer* is in its action. The daughter of a country gentleman attempts to win the heart of a terminally shy young man by acting the part of a barmaid. At the same time, the young man's best friend plots to run off with his true love, a beautiful heiress who is in the keep of the country gentleman. Both confounded and abetted by the gentleman's raw but good-natured son, the two young men stumble and stutter through a series of hilarious mishaps until the couples fall neatly together in a joyously saccharine ending.

Wanda Melocci, a third year graduate student from Pittsburgh, was perfectly charming as the endearing "conqueror." Kate Hardcastle, her petite barmaid, who was actually the gentleman's daughter, could have warmed the lap of a shyer man than Young Marlow, played by John Felch, a third year graduate student from Boston.

The show-stopping scene was their introduction as Kate Hardcastle and prospective suitor. Felch performed a stunning stutter and a painfully awkward pose so convincing that the

theatre

audience winced right along with him. The scene was the quintessence of the verbal chase. With every word Kate Hardcastle uttered, Felch executed a rapid retreat so that by the end both he and the audience were panting for respite.

Bill Goulet, a second year graduate student from Indiana, also evoked an energetic empathy from the audience as Tony Lumpkin, the gentleman's son. Whether standing on a table while swinging a mug and singing an old-fashioned drinking song, or sitting cross-legged on the floor while gnawing on a raw onion, he provided the coarsest, most straight-forward appeal to sheer humor. The guttural joy he derived from his schemes was infectious.

Michael Cumpsty, a third year graduate student from Capetown, South Africa, reigned over the comedy as Mr. Hardcastle, the good-natured host, enjoying the humor as well as creating it. As in all of his PRC performances, he created vibrancy by his sheer presence on the stage.

Vivid performances by Mimi Carr, a first year graduate student from Seattle, David Gottlieb, a third year graduate student from Chicago, and Shelly Williams, a third year graduate student from New Hampshire, completed the tight ensemble. All the performers worked together like a team of verbal acrobats, executing perfect gymnastics.

David Hammond, the new artistic director of PRC, was our host for this happy gathering and welcomed us into his first season with this comedy. May the good cheer continue.



Wanda Melocci and John Felch in PlayMakers production

UNC Lab Theatre opens season with murder spoof

By IAN WILLIAMS
Staff Writer

The UNC Lab Theatre will open its season this weekend with the student production of Tom Stoppard's comical murder-mystery *The Real Inspector Hound*. Steve Maler, a junior drama major from Brentwood, Tenn., directs the play, which will be performed Sunday and Monday at Graham Memorial Hall.

The plot of the work revolves around a play within a play; the audience witnesses both two critics and the play they are watching. Although the play is a "quasi-spoof" of the Agatha Christie genre, director Maler says that the play within the play "has a meaning outside itself."

"Certain production problems had to be overcome," said Maler. The most notable was the staging of the critics with respect to the real audience. Maler overcomes this hurdle by using a mirror effect which he describes as the reflection of the critics instead of the real

thing.

Maler says his cast is performing wonderfully despite limited rehearsal time. Lab veteran Mike Wilson and freshman Roderick Cameron play the roles of the critics, and Susanna Rinehart and Stella Backler provide the actresses for the mini-play. *Hound* also features Joe Shugart as Magnum.

Admission to *Hound*, as at all Lab productions, is free. The remainder of the Lab season will include *Altered Mates* and *The Idiot Box* on Oct. 13 and 14, *The Actor's Nightmare* on Oct. 27 and 28, *A Mother's Love* on Nov. 3 and 4, *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* on Nov. 10 and 11, and *Nora* on Nov. 17 and 18. Students interested in participating in Lab Theatre productions should inquire at Graham Memorial; no prerequisite is necessary.

The Real Inspector Hound will be performed by the UNC Lab Theatre Oct. 6 at 4 p.m. and Oct. 7 at 8 p.m. in 06 Graham Memorial Hall.

By PEGGIE PORTER
Staff Writer

What better way to spend a semester than drifting across the sea on a luxury ocean liner with 500 other college students? You even can earn 12 to 15 hours of credit for this 100-day cruise. Of course, you do have to take classes.

Semester At Sea is a non-profit program for students interested in "expanding their own education through comparative study," said Marty Greenham, marketing director for the program. The University of Pittsburgh's Institute for Shipboard Education runs the program.

Students take a required core course and three or four other courses from faculty members who come from universities across the country. The core course emphasizes the trip's itinerary, which includes stops at such ports as Spain, Egypt and Japan. According to the program catalog, this course explores "major contemporary economic, political, social, environmental and moral issues and possible solutions."

In addition, the three to seven-day stops at ports of call include lectures by "interport lecturers," said Max Brant, director of admissions. The lecturers are Americans living abroad and natives of the countries who are experts in the fields taught in the core

course.

"For example," Brant said, "between Hong Kong and Sri Lanka we would have a specialist about those countries."

Students who have participated in the program include liberal arts and business majors, Brant said.

"We want students who are curious about the global aspects of their education," he said. "Many of them go on to careers in international fields, such as the Peace Corps and business."

The advantage of spending a semester at sea, according to Greenham and Brant, is the high quality of student-professor interaction. Students both live and study with their professors, fostering a unity that a traditional faculty-student relationship may lack.

"This is not just a world globe-trotting trip," Greenham said. Students need at least a 2.5 GPA. Admissions officials recently added an essay question to the application so they could discern top-quality students, Greenham said.

While no UNC students now are aboard the S.S. Universe, which sails in January and September, UNC students and faculty have been aboard in the past, Brant said. Last spring, the program's director of student life was Frank Joseph, an administrator from UNC-Charlotte who since has left the university.

A spokeswoman for the International Center at UNC said she believed UNC students had participated in the program, but that no record showed when or how many had done so.

The Semester At Sea costs about \$8,845 for tuition, passage and a double room and board. Scholarships for as much as \$1,000 are available, and students who can establish need may apply for a work grant. The 25 students who get work grants receive a 50 percent waiver of tuition and passage.

For more information, write Semester at Sea/I.S.E., 2E Forbes Quadrangle, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA 15260; or Institute for Shipboard Education, P.O. Box 1527, Orange, CA 92668; or call (412) 624-6021, (800) 854-0195 or (714) 771-6590.

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