



DTH/David Minton

Leslie Hicks, Simon Brooking and Betsy Friday will appear in PlayMakers' "The Beggar's Opera"

'The Beggar's Opera'

PlayMakers production to feature guest artists

By **KELLY RHODES**
Arts Editor

PlayMakers Repertory Company's "The Beggar's Opera" will have the special boost of three guest artists to bring John Gay's political, romantic and satirical drama to life.

Leslie Hicks, Simon Brooking and Betsy Friday will join PRC for the play, which opens this Saturday and runs through May 1. Friday will be remembered by PRC followers as Laura in "Look Homeward, Angel" several years ago. "The Beggar's Opera" marks Hicks' and Brooking's first appearances here.

All three enjoy doing plays such as "Opera." "It makes the (historical) pieces much more accessible to the audience," Hicks stressed. "Doing classical theater brings forth better skills."

Brooking likes the play itself: "I've done the show once before. I like it a little more with the script that (director) David Hammond has developed; it's very demanding."

The characters in the 1728 "Opera" are strongly drawn, but almost stereotypical, Hicks added.

Her character, Polly Peachum, is a simple, trusting woman who is attracted to Brookings' Captain MacHeath, the villain hero. Also involved with MacHeath is Friday's character, the fierce and hardened Lucy Lockit.

"MacHeath is a hero of the epic kind," Brooking added. "It's great fun to play."

Friday added that the characters are not all that they seem. "The characters are extremely innocent in their zest for what they are," she said. "Lucy is innocent in her own way. I can't hold back playing what I feel about her."

The rest of PRC is also enjoying the play, Brooking said, and the three guest artists are enjoying the learning/teaching process. "It reminds me of the basics you always must come back to," he said. "I can never get away from school — I like the challenge."

Friday said Hammond has been a good influence. "I totally trust him. It gives you great confidence in his detail work. He's supportive and prepared." Brooking added, "It's a pleasure working with a scholar."

Hicks agreed. "There's attention to the details and learning experience."

All three have brought diverse acting backgrounds to this PRC production. Friday graduated from the N.C. School of the Arts, Brooking from the University of Washington, and Hicks from the American Conservatory Theatre (ACT) in San Francisco. All three also have definite feelings about their backgrounds and what starting actors should do.

"Being here puts UNC students one step ahead," Hicks said, adding that ending up in New York with little or no experience is frightening. "When I got to New York, I already had the experience (from ACT)."

Brooking echoed Hicks: "New York can really be frustrating — it's dog eat dog there."

Friday immediately agreed. "I know what it's like. I spent two years in New York starving. Don't take no for an answer. Don't let anyone tell you what to do. And there is no one path to success. It's only who you are to the best of your ability."

Forensics team continues a winning tradition at UNC

By **ELLEN THORNTON**
Staff Writer

It's a winning tradition. Ranked tops in the nation every year, they consistently qualify for the national tournament and have won two national championships.

But these teams are not about slam-dunks, treys and sweaty locker rooms — and you can't see them in the Smith Center. The teams that boast this excellent record hail from academia — and more specifically, from the Carolina Forensics Union.

Students participate in two areas of forensics: individual events and debate. There are 10 categories of individual events, including persuasive, impromptu and extemporaneous speaking, as well as dramatic interpretation.

Impromptu speaking is often the most grueling event, according to senior Monty Hagler, a speech communications major from Charlotte, who has participated in individual events since his freshman year. In this event, the judges give the student a quote, or perhaps a comic strip, to which he has seven minutes to respond.

"You are completely unprepared," Hagler said. "You just pick it up, think about it for a minute, and start talking."

Hagler also participates in rhetorical speaking events. He won five

tournaments and placed fourth in the national tournament this year with a speech about Jesse Helms' speech delivered on the Senate floor concerning AIDS.

Hagler and his colleague in individual events, senior Ron Grant, spent about 120 hours per speech this year. They also spent time practicing with their coaches, speech communications graduate students David Bickford and Johnny Gray. Additional time was spent traveling to weekend tournaments, held in such places as Alabama, Pennsylvania, Washington, D.C., Illinois and Arizona.

"Forensics is an incredible experience," Hagler said. "It turns you into an incredible speaker and you make so many friends at other universities. The main reason I'm still doing it is because I look forward to seeing my friends at tournaments."

Students may also participate on the debate team, which concentrates on intercollegiate competition among teams using a national debate topic. This year's topic concerned the United States' military commitments to NATO member states. Debaters must do extensive research on the topic to come up with arguments for all sides. They debate the same topic in tournaments from October to April.

This year's team of Charlotte sophomore Geoff Burgess and Lexington, Kentucky freshman Bryan Wells did well in competition, said William Balthrop, director of the forensics program. "They were much less experienced than all the others they competed against," he said. "That bodes extremely well for the future."

Burgess and Wells were ranked second in the southeast region and qualified for the national tournament. They averaged about 15 hours of preparatory work per week throughout the year and also spent time traveling to tournaments. Balthrop said the amount of work they put in is equal to that done on a doctoral dissertation.

The UNC forensics program is one of only 19 schools listed in all three surveys of the 50 top programs in the nation since 1973. "Forensics provides challenging competition that gives a good image about the intellectual environment on campus," Balthrop said. "It provides a good balance between academics and athletics."

Students should be aware that UNC excels in academic as well as athletic competition. Cheers to the individual events and debate team participants — even Dean Smith would be proud of their record.

from page 1

Relations

man of the Joint University-Town Committee that studied the University's controversial Land Use Plan, said a new chancellor will not have a significant impact on town-gown relations as they stand now.

"I think it is easy to overrate the importance of one new face, whether it is a new mayor or a new chancellor," he said. "The problems are not with one particular personality, and they cannot be solved just by bringing in new people."

Chapel Hill's growing population and increasing traffic congestion often cause strained relations between the town and University, Sanders said, as exemplified by the conflict caused by the University's Pittsboro Street extension proposal.

"A change in chancellor will not eliminate these basic problems," he said.

Both the town and the University have different needs and some compromises must be made, Sanders said. "There needs to be some accommodation as to how the town should respond to the University's needs for more buildings, streets and parking facilities," he said.

The existing relationship between Chapel Hill and UNC is essentially good when compared to the problems at Cambridge and Harvard universities, Sanders said. The Joint

University-Town Committee was an example of the spirit of cooperation that exists, he said.

UNC not the only game in town

Estelle Mabry, a longtime opponent of the Pittsboro Street extension, said the Town-University Committee, which was formed on a temporary basis, should have been made permanent.

"A town-gown committee made up of residents and University officials from all segments of the town is necessary to study the problems of University expansion," she said.

A new chancellor offers residents the opportunity to show the University that it is not a separate force, but a part of Chapel Hill, Mabry said.

One example of this "separateness" was the failure of the University to consult the affected neighborhoods when considering the Pittsboro Street Extension, Mabry said.

"It was just arrogance of the part of the University to ignore the concerns of the residents in our neighborhoods," she said.

"The University needs to finally realize that it is not the only game in town," she said. "It is a citizen of Chapel Hill just like everyone else."

Mabry said that she hopes the town-University relationship will improve with the selection of a new chancellor, but that increased dialogue is the key to better relations.

"Dialogue between the University and the intown neighborhoods is important to settle conflicts such as the Pittsboro Street extension," she said. "We are very hopeful that Dr. Hardin will come to know and value our neighborhoods as important resources to the University."

Mabry said she views the selection of a new chancellor as a positive step. "It is like starting out on a clean slate,"

she said.

"Not only are we gaining a new chancellor but with the additional loss of finance director (Farris) Womack and the provost, Hardin will have the opportunity to put in new people not still carrying their scars from earlier battles with the town."

Entertainment tax controversy

The proposed entertainment tax, which would add \$1 to the cost of tickets for events in the Smith Center and Kenan Stadium, is another area of concern between the University and the town.

Roland Giduz, a proponent of the tax, said the University should support the plan, which would add at least \$660,000 every year to the town coffers.

"Both the University and the town need to sit down together and cooperate to get this plan enacted," he said. "It is long overdue."

Giduz said he was optimistic about the new chancellor. "It will be great to start over again, especially with someone who has a background in local government. Hardin has experience both from a town perspective and from a University angle."

But Giduz said he will not alter his campaign for the new tax because of the change in chancellors.

"I intend to continue in any effective way I know how to work for this because I believe the tax will be enacted and the sooner it happens the better," he said.

The University should consider the entertainment tax as an opportunity for stewardship, Giduz said. "It is a fair, voluntary tax which would only benefit Chapel Hill."

"Selecting our new chancellor is a time for renewal," Giduz said. "It will be great to start over again."

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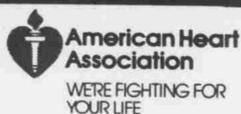


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