

## ENTERTAINMENT

# April play festival showcases talent in writing, directing

by Sonya Holley

ECSU's One-Act Play Festival took place April 16-17, showcasing the talents and directing skills of four students—Troy Lewter, Micheal Wellman, Cordell Garrett, and Clarence Jones, Jr.

Each year the festival focuses on plays written and or directed by students. The festival allows students the opportunity to gain valuable experience in theater—in acting, directing, technical support and playwriting, according to drama professor Shawn Smith.

"The one act play festival is a time of experiment and growth (for students), said Smith. "I think that's what we're all about, providing opportunities to students to experiment with this (one act plays)."

The festival included original plays by Lewter and Wellman.

Lewter's *Bench Warmer* is a comedy about an older man, Jebediah, portrayed by Shaunell McMillan who is going out on a date with a sweetheart named Gracie, Billicia Hines. His friend, Charlie, played by Damon Nollan, shows up just before the date and ruins every-

thing.

Wellman's *Bedwetter* deals with a dutiful daughter taking care of her bitter, bedridden mother. The play focused on the concepts of love and regret.

It wasn't easy for Wellman and Lewter to direct their own plays.

"The biggest challenge was getting everything together in the three week rehearsal schedule," said Wellman. "I think the short schedule made the actors and actresses maintain their energy."

Lewter said he had a difficult time "getting the ideas across to the actors."

Although they were not directing their own work, Garrett and Jones also faced challenges in making the transition from actor to director.

Garrett, who has appeared in *Fences*, *A Reason in the Sun*, and *The Crucible*, felt acting was a way to "escape" from the daily troubles of the world.

"In directing, however, it's completely different," said Garrett. "You're actually telling people what you think this play is actually doing."

He directed *Eating Out* which focuses on three women, Pat, Chriss, and Malaine, who worry about losing



Photo by Tonja Polston

**Damon Nollan (at left) attempts to short-circuit a budding romance between Billicia Hines and Shaunell McMillan in *Benchwarmer*. *Benchwarmers*, written by ECSU student Troy Lewter, was one of four one-act plays presented during the One-Act Play Festival.**

weight. One has a problem with bulimia, the other an anorexic, and one is normal. Veronica Goddard and Nikita Sutton two ECSU students performed with Bellicia Hines, a northeastern high school student.

To Garrett the most difficult task of directing was "making that transition from acting to directing." Added Garrett: "It's been a real challenge trying to put together an ensemble cast."

As an actor, Jones, whose acting credits include roles in *The Crucible*, *Fortinbras*, and *The Odd Couple*, had to focus primarily on how well he was

acting.

"Being a director, you have to focus on the entire play, said Jones, who cited "getting all the people there on time" as his most difficult task.

He directed *Spades*, which featured Tony Zachary and Aaron Swearingen as two young soldiers transporting casualties in Vietnam. According to Jones the climax of the play comes when the young men discover a "body" that is still alive.

The One-Act Play festival has been part of the university players for fourteen years.

## ECSU students turned OFF by Lyceum series

by Lolethia "DL" Underdue

Artists who appear at ECSU's Lyceums need strong egos, because they often perform to a nearly empty house.

ECSU students who have attended a Lyceum performance are scarce on campus. Although some students will show up for jazz and African dance programs, students say they are simply not interested in folk dance, ballet, classical music and opera—typical fare for Lyceum performances.

"We don't need them (Lyceum performances)," said Chipiri Hawkins, a junior. "They're very cultural but not very interesting. The Jazz Ensemble was good but I don't like most of the acts they bring in."

Sophomore Phillip Puryear thinks the Lyceum performances are "boring and a waste of time." Adds Puryear: "The Lyceum just doesn't relate to the cultural environment here on campus."

The Lyceum Series is designed to afford students and the community the

opportunity to attend cultural events outside of their normal scope, according to Dr. Floyd Robinson, Chairman of the Lyceum Committee. "It is the responsibility of the University to broaden the cultural horizons of the students," he added.

Robinson admits that most Lyceum performances are "not the type of programs students would have chosen. Many are not yet interested in symphonies, operas, or plays.

"Most of the students aren't used to programs like these so they resist going," he added. "A lot of our students are from rural areas and they don't have Kennedy Centers or Broadway theatres in their areas. Some may have never even seen live performances."

Robinson believes that the faculty and staff don't place enough emphasis on the importance of attending Lyceum programs to students.

"Lyceum attendance could be bolstered if instructors would find a way

of incorporating the Lyceum into some of their lessons."

Lyceum attendance varies from year to year, said Robinson.

"Last year, attendance was good," he said. "This year it has been up and down."

Robinson believes another part of the problem is financial. The committee operates on a low-budget and some of the popular acts are very expensive.

"The cost of quality entertainment has risen so much it's hard to get all of the performers we would like. In the 70's we had Patti LaBelle here and the cost was about \$3500," said Robinson. "At the time that seemed very expensive but to get Patti LaBelle here now would cost about \$125,000 which is about a 10-year Lyceum budget.

In order to cut costs, the Lyceum committee usually tries to sponsor programs supported by the National Endowment for the Arts.

Dr. Robinson hopes that once the Fine

Arts Center is completed on campus the new auditorium with its larger seating capacity will encourage greater attendance from the community which will help finance other Lyceum ventures.

Lyceum performances are chosen by the Lyceum committee, with members appointed by the chancellor. Each committee member has a special interest. For example, drama professor Shawn Smith is the authority on plays, Dr. Trina Talag, dance instructor and choreographer, is the authority on dance, and music professors Dr. Gary Callahan and Dr. Robinson specialize in music. The committee is composed of other faculty members, administrators and students, Ms. ECSU and the SGA president.

After all of the recommendations are submitted by the various committee members the committee reviews them and works out a Lyceum series that fits their current budget.