

# Irene doesn't give the same old song and dance

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Features Editor

This fall's musical comedy, *Irene*, by Hugh Wheeler and Joseph Stein, sneaks up on you to split your sides. Professional sets, an impeccable pit band, Beth Leavel's fun choreography, and lively blocking add to some smashing voices and rock-solid acting to get the high-energy crowd-pleaser that is *Irene*.

The first act busies itself with rising action and developing the characters: Irene O'Dare is starting up her own piano-tuning business, and longs to leave her working-class ninth avenue background for fifth avenue high society. Her first job is for the wealthy Marshalls, where she learns how much one class has in common with another. Unfortunately, *Irene* has so much work to do early on that the first act becomes the ugly kid sister of the second act, where, *Seinfeld*-like, the laughs come hard and fast from burst pretensions

and switched personalities.

*Irene's* Irish accents come and go, but the affected accents of the second act are consistent and very funny. And lying under the piano like a garage mechanic may be a novel way to tune a Steinway, but Irene's ungainly position while at work makes the contrast between her and the stuffy Marshalls that much funnier.

Amanda Johnson performs the title role with gusto, managing to play to the back row while subtly building her character's rapport with the audience. Her costume, presence, and inflection are perfect for her plucky heroine. Even her gestures are in character, from the composed but compassionate way she shakes a grown man's tears off her hand to the down-to-business way she takes off her jacket. Johnson sings the comic songs sassy and the love songs sweet, but always with perfect diction. She masters the difficult intervals of "Sweet Little Alice Blue Gown" with-

out so much as a pained expression.

Community player Gary Williams deserves mention for his Madame Lucy. He's sharp and funny, but not too broad. The cast adores him, as well.

"He's awesome. He rocks," said Kathryn Allen, who makes her small part as the Marshall's maid surprisingly strong.

As the musical directors, Elizabeth Reep and Nancy Whalen Rice operate the talented cast's voices so well that their vibratos seem to beat together. The chorus's blend is superior; rarely did any voice stand out. Within the cast, Holly Hendricks, as Mrs. Marshall, has an excellent voice. She's a good actor and seems sorely underused. Lara Smith and Jennifer Parrott, as Helen and Jane, Irene's sidekicks, had such powerful voices that they sounded like more than just two singers. Their roles were substantial, but seemed too small.

Meredith's costuming class, under the guidance of Bill Rodgers, created the outfits that proved crucial to the play. Set in 1919, and featuring flashy dress designing as a major plot point, *Irene* depended on appropriate costuming to succeed, and succeeded.

Stage manager Kellie Harris pulled all these elements together to make *Irene* work. The set changes were breathtakingly speedy and the lighting tightly controlled.

"She runs the show," said Kim Debus, who plays Irene's mother, Geraldine O'Dare.

"The crew has been out of this world. We're really excited. We've got some new blood, some freshmen in the cast." Debus threw out her back throwing herself in her performance, but she knows the show must go on.

*Irene* does go on, from October 21-25 at 8:00pm and October 26 at 2:00pm.



Kimberly Debus as Geraldine O'Dare and Amanda Johnson as Irene O'Dare in the musical comedy *Irene*. Photo by Marilyn Worthington

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litically-aware. His political career began in Chapel Hill. After Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated, Lee found an outlet to express his "feelings of protest" by working on political campaigns. He then went on to become the mayor of Chapel Hill.

Lee ran for several other offices and though not always successful, he still ran to make his mark. He said, "It means to be, in some cases, to be the sacrificial person in order to make the way for others."

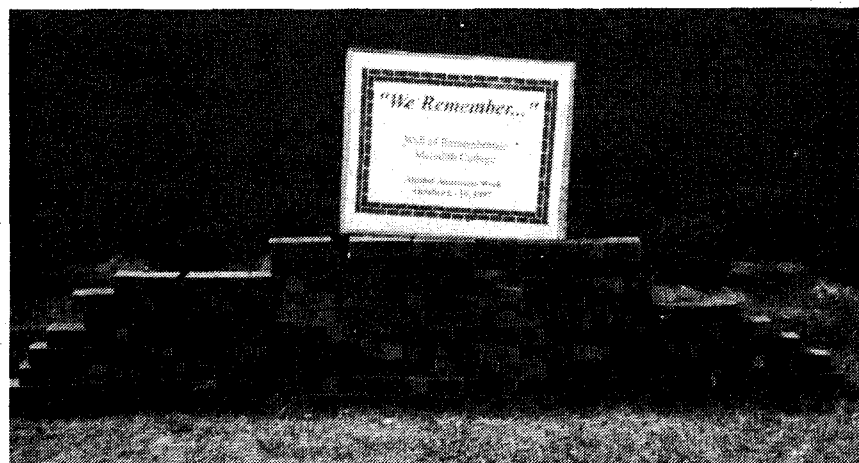
Both senators urged everyone to get involved in public events. Lee said, "One does not have to run for public office to serve the public." Serving on a citizen committee is an excellent way to get involved.

Lee also urged citizens to get to know those representing their districts. If people are uninformed, then it leads to political manipulations. Manipulation becomes easy because most of politics is a one-way conversation.

The senators both seemed pleased with their part in serving the state. In fact, Reeves announced his candidacy for the next term that very evening. They cited campaign fundraising as the least pleasant part of their jobs.

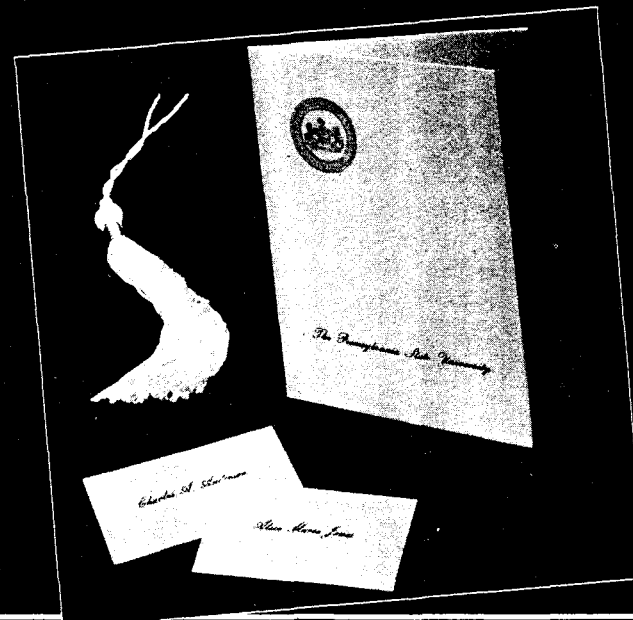
Voices of the Triangle was coordinated by junior Katherine Miller. About 30 students attended the meeting as well as faculty members from the History and Politics department.

## Alcohol Awareness Week educates students



Campus Activities Board and other campus groups sponsored many events throughout the week to raise awareness over the effects of alcohol. The "We Remember..." Wall of Remembrance asked to the Meredith community to remember those they've lost to alcohol. The Wall raised approximately \$40 which will be donated to MADD. Photo by Allison Carter

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