

The Hilltop



Mars Hill, N. C. 28754

Vol. 1, No. 11, Friday, March 18, 1977



A myriad of emotions and expressions flood the stage during a recent dress rehearsal of a Greek drama soon to be performed in Owen, Euripides' "The Bacchae." (Photo by John Campbell)

Greek Drama Relates Modern Theme

by JOHN CAMPBELL

A fifth century Greek play, Euripides' "The Bacchae," will be Mars Hill College's first major dramatic production of the spring semester. Scheduled to open March 18, the play will run through the 20th, and then repeat the next weekend, March 25-27. All performances will be held in Owen Theatre and curtain time will be 8 pm for all performances except for those on Sundays, when the play will be presented at 2:30 pm.

Euripides was not the most popular playwright in Greece during his lifetime; however, following his death, his plays became increasingly popular in Greece and the surrounding countries, and this probably accounts for the fact that more of his plays survive today than those of his contemporaries.

Known as the psychologist among Greek playwrights, Euripides is the most modern and arresting in point of view. Born of aristocratic parents, he was, even as a child, aloof and introverted. He shocked his audiences with unconventional approaches to moral and sexual problems.

Women, idealized or ignored by other playwrights, filled his tragedies with their passions and problems. However, his searching and sometimes unflattering portrait of women was due to his characteristic urge to analyze personality, and not a sour attitude on women in general. In fact, he was interested in the time-honored myths of ancient Greece, not as holy legend, but rather as vehicles of character study and social comment.

"The Bacchae," one of the last plays he wrote, examines the hypnotic power an individual can have over a group. Dionysus, who was nurtured in the thigh of Zeus, returns to Thebes in the form of a man and establishes a cult. The conflict develops when Pentheus, ruler of Thebes, refuses to believe Dionysus is a deity and has him arrested.

Dionysus is both benevolent and destructive in "The Bacchae." Like nature, he releases the productive and joyous spirit of man, yet kills those who deny him. Pentheus' death is not to be regarded as justice as the Dionysian spirit had little to do with justice.

Director Jim Thomas, chairman of the department and associate professor of theatre arts, plans for this production to relate to contemporary events rather closely.

"We hope to identify the universal theme of the play and show that the hypnotic powers that Dionysus had over the Bacchae corresponds to the power, for example, that Charles Manson has over his 'family,'" states Mr. Thomas.

Thomas is also planning for some elaborate "special effects" in staging the play. With the assistance of Dr. Virgil Gray, professor of theatre arts, who designed the set, electronic music, black and strobe lights, and slides, are all being considered. To make Dionysus appear and disappear as befits a god, a trap door complete with elevator will be employed.

The two lead characters of Dionysus and Oenone will be played by sophomore Dwight Bradley and freshman David Edwards, respectively. Other characters include Cadmus, Pentheus' grandfather, who will be played by Bill Frazier; Martha Kimsey will play Agave, Pentheus' mother; Teiresias, the blind prophet will be played by Charlie Peterson; Jim Williams will portray the Herdsman; John Kelly will be the Messenger; the Guard will be played by Mitchel Beal; and the chorus will include Debbie Deaton, Jayne Jaudon, Ursula Kunisch, Vicki Smith, Charlotte Tiencken, and Wanda Friedrich.

So, for a production well worth your time, catch Euripides' "The Bacchae." The box office will open March 14. All seats will be reserved, and reservations can be made by calling 689-1239 from 1pm to 5pm daily.

SBI Investigates

Arson Suspected in Recent Treat Fire

by JONATHAN RIDDLE, REX BEST

Though the March 2 burning of Treat Dormitory seems old news by now, a fact symbolized by its scant remains near the center of campus, the probe into possible causes of the fire which destroyed it continues. When the HILLTOP went to press, college officials were still waiting for a report on the subject from the State Bureau of Investigation which could possibly confirm or deny the suspicion of arson. Though such suspicions have always been present, as in the case of most unexplained fires, early reports were rather doubtful that foul play was involved. However, recent revelations about the nature of the fire have convinced most authorities that that was the case. Apparently starting on a small porch in an alcove on the south side of the building, the fire quickly broke the glass out of an adjacent door. The fire then spread in two directions: a central stairway near the door acted as a chimney for the flames and an open window on the front of the building supplied a draft which helped spread the fire. The alcove in which the fire started was closed in on three sides, also providing a perfect setting for the fire to grow. While the general area of origin can be located, the specific source of the fire remains a mystery. Workmen who had been busy during the day refurbishing the building had collected all the garbage cans which ordinarily would be placed on the porch and put them inside. Furthermore, preliminary accurate investigation by the SBI revealed that there were no short circuits throughout the building.

The fire was first spotted at 2:30 am by nurse Jo Ann Ranke of the infirmary who, in turn, called the security officers over her two-way radio. Security Director Mike Fraires, overhearing their conversation, decided to ride by the building and later to call the fire department. By the time the fire department arrived on the scene at 2:45 am, the front porch was already consumed in flames.

The daylight hours after the fire were busy ones for many of those who had been

involved since 2:45 in the morning. Several members of the fire department stayed on to make sure that the flames did not flare up again and when they left Dean Gehring and the security officers took their place. Believing that if the fire was the result of arson, the person or persons responsible might strike again, the security officers took turns patrolling the campus that night. Also, Dean Gehring and his associates decided that the best next step would be to make up a list of persons suspected of possible arson to question the next day. Since January 1 there have been seven minor fires on campus, and Gehring concentrated on the names of those involved and all their associates in making up the list. At any rate, Mary Jo Byrd was sent at 3:00 am March 3 to look up places of residence. The list was ready at 4:30 and security men were sent out in all directions to notify those who had been suspected about the meetings with Dr.

Gehring. Other than finding out a few minor details, these meetings failed to produce the results hoped for. Thus Gehring and his associates trust that the SBI investigation will be much more fruitful.

There had been a rumor on campus, most likely a facetious one, that administrators set the fire in order to collect the insurance for the building. However, the total insurance for Treat was \$40,000, far below the amount of revenue received for students that might stay in the dormitory (approximately \$150,000). One thing is certain: the burning of Treat, constructed in 1906, will make the dorm room situation critical next fall. Either the college will have to set aside extra money to build added residence hall space, or make a survey of places in the community where students could stay. Obviously since the burning of Treat means major changes for the campus, the investigations into its causes is an important one.

Students To Take COMP

by JONATHAN RIDDLE

Speaking of his lack of success at standardized examinations, Winston Churchill said, "When I would have willingly displayed my knowledge, they sought to expose my ignorance." Most people would have to agree. Such a description however hardly fits COMP (College Outcome Measures Project), a test to be administered to 50-100 selected Mars Hill students April 13-14.

The test, formulated by the American College Testing Program, will have as its goal the assessment of general education knowledge and skills; consequently, students will be able to use the information they have learned in problem-solving activities related to the competencies that Mars Hill and other schools have adopted. In contrast to most standardized tests COMP includes many open-ended questions, those not necessarily with single right answers. Instead of the regular test booklet and answer sheet, this activity will use stimu-

lus materials — two films, music selections, art pieces, and game exercises. Furthermore, students will be asked to prepare a short verbal reaction to be video-taped for evaluation. The whole test will take nearly seven hours to be spread out in sessions on Wednesday, April 13 and Thursday, April 14.

The purposed of administering COMP at this particular time is mainly to see how well it works in evaluating the extent of student learning and the effectiveness of a college's academic program; individual results will be of importance only in the way they relate to the general picture. To put it concisely, the exercise on April 13-14 is to test a test.

Dr. Earl Leininger, chairman of Synoptics Competences, will be in charge of the testing. However, 50-100 students must first be recruited to participate. If anyone is interested in cooperating in this rather unusual evaluative experience, they are asked to contact Dr. Leininger the week before spring break, at the latest.