

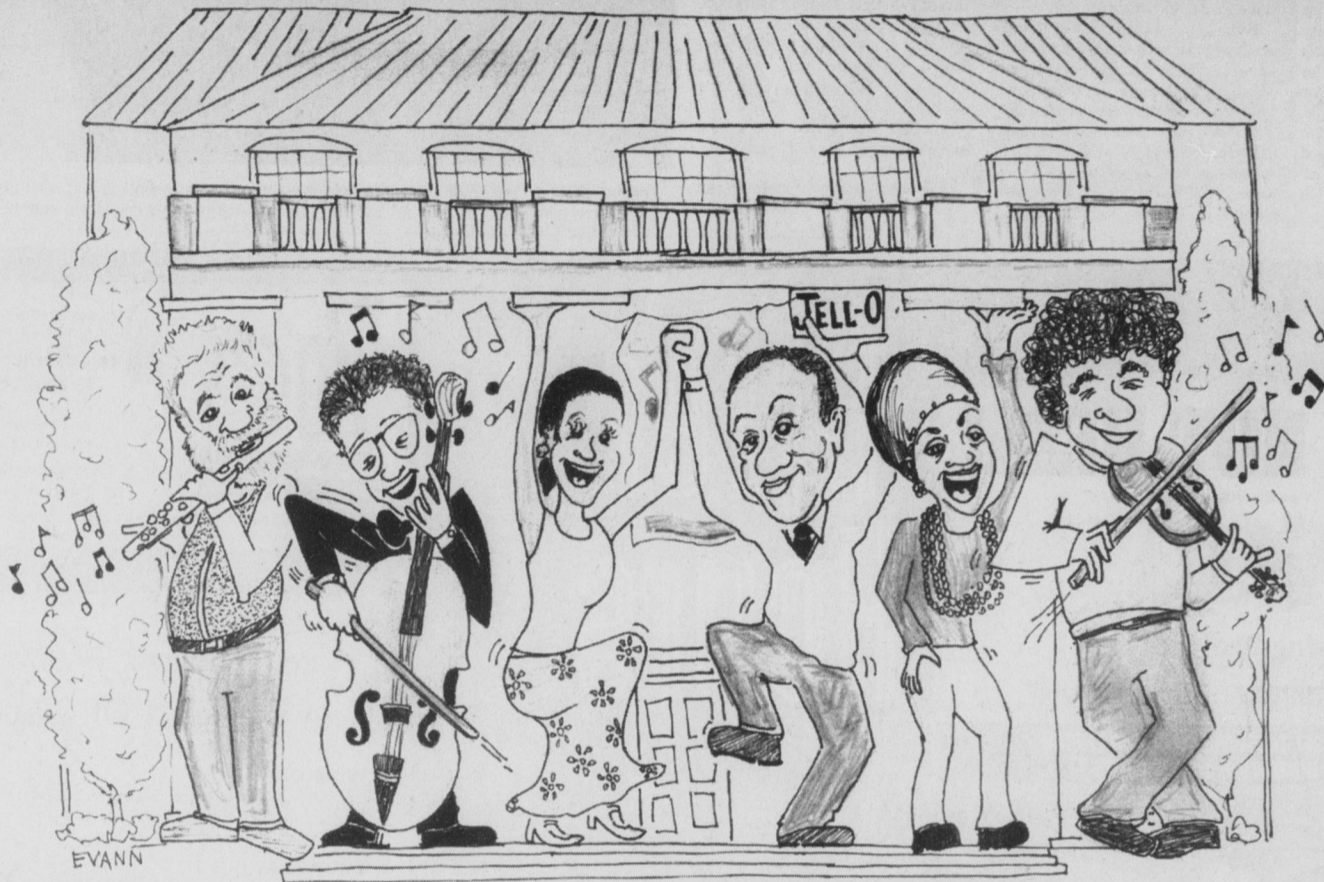
diversions

On a "Joy Ride" Putting a clever spin on the teen-slasher genre, the frightened teens and crazed truck drivers in "Joy Ride" stake a claim to the "Scream" pantheon of smart horror films.

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Concert Series Enters 6th Year of Entertaining, Fund Raising

A Virtuous Transformation

Bill Cosby's performance Sept. 21 was the first Virtuoso concert to have its funds go solely to Memorial Hall's renovation. Expected to begin in the spring, the 18-24 month project consists of the following:

- Air conditioning installation
- Twice the stage space
- Expanded lobby and backstage area
- New amplification system and sound shell
- 1,500 additional seats
- Increased number of restrooms
- New art gallery and reception room

SOURCE: MEMORIAL HALL TRANSFORMATION

By ASHLEY ATKINSON
Senior Writer

Carolina Union officials spent three years recruiting celebrity cellist Yo-Yo Ma to perform a Virtuoso Benefit Concert in Memorial Hall.

They put equal effort into snagging this year's Virtuoso, Bill Cosby, as well as past performers like violinist Itzhak Perlman and soprano Kathleen Battle.

"We were bringing world-class performers to a less-than-world-class venue and trying to show everyone that this university can support a higher level of entertainment than our facilities allow," Union Director Don Luse said.

The Virtuoso benefits began in 1996 with two goals: creating an endowment to provide a perpetual source of income for the Union's Performing Arts Series and raising awareness of the need to renovate Memorial Hall.

Proceeds usually go to the endowment, but this year's profits will go toward Memorial's

renovation, which begins this spring.

While Memorial Hall is closed, Virtuoso Benefit organizers are considering venues from the Smith Center to a temporary tent. The Performing Arts Series, which also uses Memorial, will be held in Hill Hall and University United Methodist Church.

In the future, profits from the benefit will return to the series — which must be subsidized because ticket sales alone don't support the arts, said Priscilla Bratcher, director of principal gifts. "You never break even," she said.

The Union's 2000-01 Performing Arts Series lost only \$700, the closest it's ever come. "And that's worth dancing in the street," Luse said, considering that the series incurred approximately \$341,000 in expenses.

The Performing Arts endowment is intended to provide money to cover that gap every year — a need that will exist indefinitely, Bratcher said. The Union currently subsidizes the series out of its own budget.

"The endowment is really important

because you have to have money to bring people to your brand-new, state-of-the-art performing arts facility," said Jennifer Smith, Union marketing director.

But even the Virtuoso benefits sometimes don't break even — performers of that caliber demand fees from \$60,000 to \$100,000.

"It's hard to make lots of money on any performance, and it's easy to lose lots of money on any performance," Luse said.

He estimated profits from last year's Yo-Yo Ma performance at \$10,000, and proceeds from the Cosby performance are expected to exceed that, he said, although Cosby was the most costly performer so far.

"Cosby was definitely a different choice, but it was a huge hit," Smith said. Cosby was the first Virtuoso artist to put on two performances, allowing double the ticket sales.

Even so, it will take time before the endowment fund contains enough money to significantly defray the cost of funding the Performing Arts Series, Luse said.

But the Virtuoso Benefit isn't intended solely to make money, he added. "We'd like it to, but we also love to bring the best performers there are and put them in front of our students," he said.

Attendance at Virtuoso performances averages 40 percent students, Luse said. Student ticket prices are kept low through sales of \$100-and-up donor tickets.

Luse said the Union would like to continue in the Cosby tradition, expanding the Virtuoso concerts beyond classical artists. But the Three Tenors are on top of the Union's wish list after Memorial Hall reopens.

And Luse hopes students will take chances on acts they aren't familiar with.

"College is a great time for students to discover life's passion," he said. "There are great things people ought to be experiencing besides what they can get out of a textbook."

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Cosby Brings Wit, Laughter to Memorial Hall

"When you love a woman, and you love to look at her, and you love to just think about her — you never expect that that woman who is so sweet and kind is capable of such evil."

By MICHAEL ABERNETHY
Assistant Arts & Entertainment Editor

Only two people can come to Chapel Hill, call women "evil," and get away with it. One is Gary Birdsong, the "Pit preacher." The other is Bill Cosby.

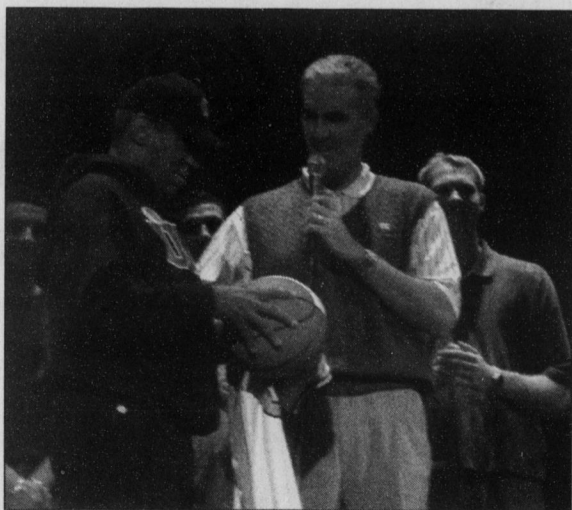
In two performances at Memorial Hall on Friday night, Cosby delivered a routine on the double standards of men and women in relationships, particularly marriage.

"When you love a woman, and you love to look at her, and you love to just think about her — you never expect that that woman who is so sweet and kind is capable of such evil," he said.

Any more of these rants, and he would be toeing the line on Sam Kinison territory. But Cosby understands that the trick is in the delivery.

At the conclusion of each risky diatribe, he alternately flashed his knowing grin or his giddily surprised "you-know-what-I-mean" expression, made famous in both his long-running TV staple, "The Cosby Show," and more recently in his prime-time stint, "Kids Say the Darndest Things."

The world of prime-time television can be a cold and cynical world, but veteran Cosby is anything but a product of his environment. If Friday night's shows proved anything, it's that Cosby



DTH/JON KIRBY

Coach Matt Doherty and the UNC men's basketball team made Cosby an honorary member at his first performance at 7:30 p.m. Sept. 21.

radiates warmth. No matter what comes out of his mouth, he retains his aura of kindness and approachability.

But Cosby's show of humanity

revealed that he is aging now, too. He is 64, as he readily admitted, and though he is still sharp as a tack, he has lost some of his vibrant appeal. For the

most part, he remained seated center-stage, only getting up to walk around or illustrate his arguments.

Those who have seen his classic stand-up performance, "Bill Cosby, As Himself," will know that Cosby's physicality adds immeasurably to his stage routine. Whether it be mocking his wife's Lamaze breathing or gleefully mimicking a child eating cake, the physical element of his routine has always heightened the comedy in his jokes.

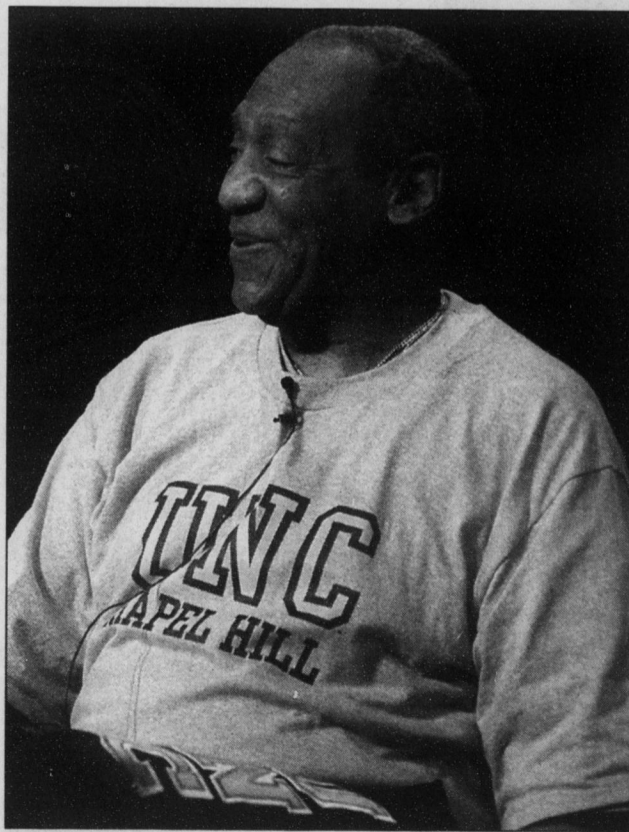
Friday's shows reacquainted audiences with a quieter, gentler Bill Cosby. That said, what power Cosby lost in his lack of outward exuberance was made up for by the insightfulness of his quips.

The applicable nature of his comedy is also its sterling trademark. Throughout his life, Cosby has remained an advocate for the value of education, and in turn has always geared his comedy towards its ability to teach.

Cosby, himself, is not averse to learning from his own routine. At one point, having submitted to the confounding nature of male-female relationships, he turned to the audience for answers.

"Is there a woman here who can help me?" Cosby said. "I just want to understand."

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DTH/JON KIRBY

Even at 61, legendary entertainer Bill Cosby kept two different Memorial Hall audiences laughing with his clever commentary on marriage and family.