

# Shakespeare festival comes to N.C.

By KATHY HOPPER  
Special to The Tar Heel

Director Malcolm Morrison of the North Carolina Shakespeare Festival brings unconventional dramatic technique to the Carolina stage through inexpensive quality productions.

*The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, with an all-male cast, reviving the Elizabethan custom, is one of four plays presented by the Festival this summer. Morrison said his goal as director was to give the audience entertainment and something that goes deeper. "The two are not irreconcilable," he said. He also directed Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night*.

These two plays, along with *Of Mice and Men* and *Light Up the Sky*, will be playing at the High Point Theater through the end of August.

"You won't find anything better. It's better than many plays on Broadway and a hell of a lot cheaper," said Vianne Payne, director of public relations. "A ticket for one Broadway show is around \$35 while it costs \$27 to see all four of our shows. That's four for the price of one."

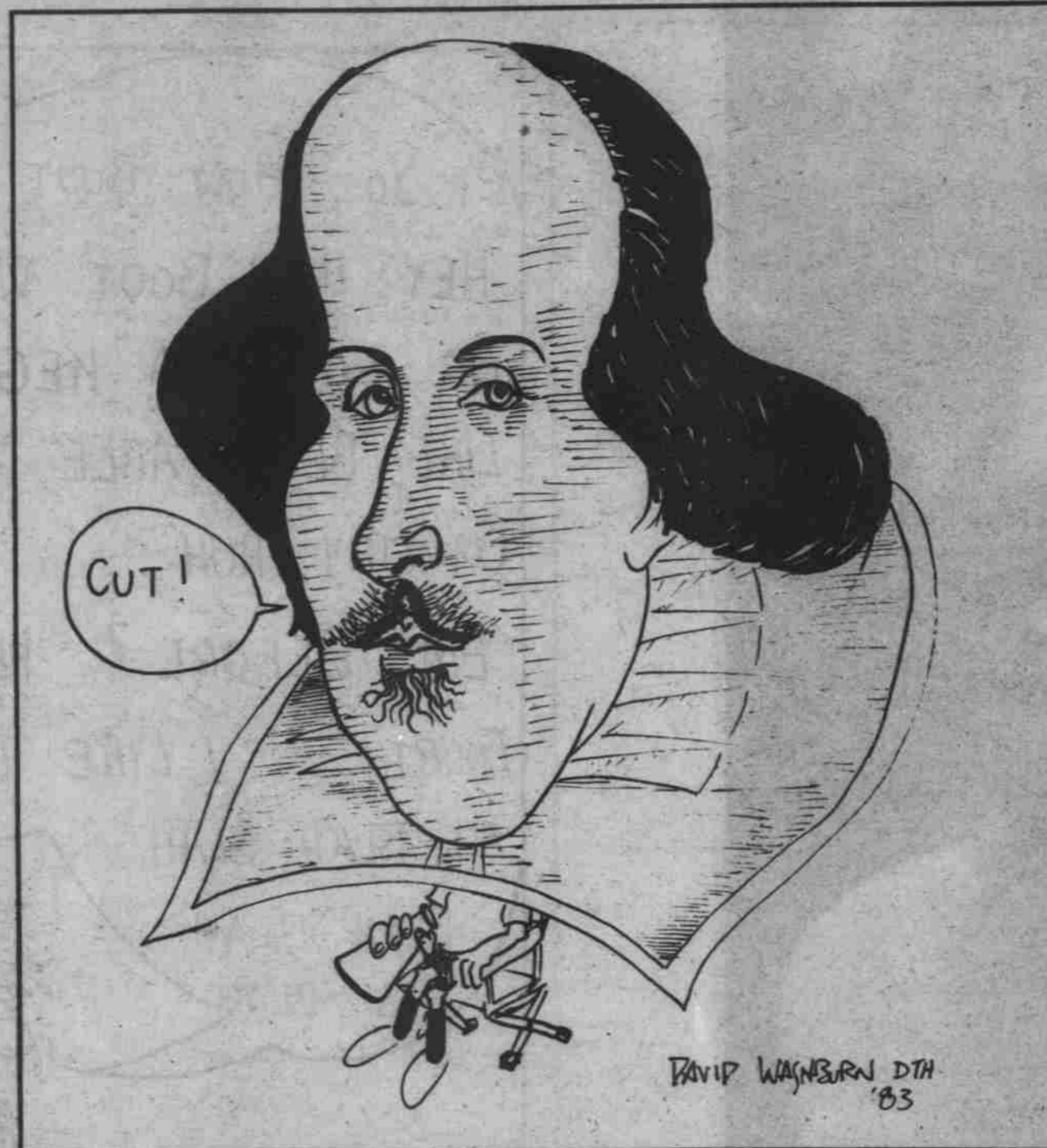
Many of the actors have performed on Broadway and in London. "We have auditions in New York every year and many of the same actors are asked back. Some have been with the festival since 1977, its initial year. We also go to the annual outdoor drama auditions in Chapel Hill. A day doesn't pass that we don't get a photo and a resume in the mail," Payne said.

This year the Festival is including American drama and is only doing one Shakespearean play this summer. "We decided it was time for a change and the time was right," Payne said.

Payne said America's spirit was improving with the economy and the Festival wanted to join in the celebration. Another reason for the shift is the company's fear of stagnation, she said. "You have to change or you die. People get tired of doing the same thing year after year."

Payne said expenses were the third reason for the change. Many Shakespeare plays require large casts and several sets. "It's hard to stage a believable battle scene with two or three actors."

This year the Festival is aiming at 50 percent earned income. "We're presently at 30 percent earned income," Payne said. "That is pretty good for a non-profit organization. We are between the proverbial rock and a hard place. We



donations but we hate having our hand out." can raise prices but we don't want to price ourselves out of our market. We could get more



Payne said it is very difficult to hold down production costs without lessening quality. "It's not that we're not good businessmen, but you can't do a play on an assembly line like you make a chair," she said.

This year the budget was cut by \$100,000 by designing a unit set with all four sets attached. The sets and costumes are not as elaborate as in past years, but Payne said they are still authentic and the quality of acting has improved. "We believe the heart of any theatre company is the acting. Audiences will most remember the lines they heard and the actors they saw," she said.

The summer season will end on Sept. 2 but the Festival will continue and will present *Othello* in September. Performances at Stevens Center, Winston-Salem on Sept. 7 and 8, Greensboro's Carolina Theatre on Sept. 10 and the High Point Theatre Sept. 15-17 have been scheduled. The Festival will then embark on a statewide tour including performances in Wilmington, Charlotte, Asheville and Boone. This is part of "Outreach 83" a touring program that will reach more than 5,000 Tar Heels.

Another Festival project is *This Wooden "O"* a production combining Shakespearean scenes, songs and sonnets that reached more than 80,000 high school students earlier this year.

Each year the Festival grows and touches more North Carolinians. This serves to validate its designation "the State Shakespeare Festival."

For more information about the Festival write to:

NCSF  
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High Point, N.C. 27262  
or call (919) 889-1544

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