

# Clinical approach tedious in ArtSchool's 'Wings'

Theatre at its best offers both entertainment and education. Unfortunately, the ArtSchool's current production of Arthur Kopit's play *Wings* offers at its best only a painful lesson about the effects of aphasia on an elderly stroke victim. What would make an excellent teaching tool for health care students is an unusually depressing, albeit enlightening, experience for the average theatre-goer.

*Wings*, which opened Thursday, is the story of Emily Stilson's experiences after she suffers a debilitating stroke. Like many stroke victims, Emily has aphasia, a hearing and speech disability caused by the destruction of brain cells that occurs during a stroke. A wingwalker in her youth, Emily uses her early memories to try to reassemble the broken fragments of her mind.

In Kopit's play, the audience sees life in the hospital, where Emily spends two years recovering, from Emily's point of view. She perceives her environment as remote and disorienting, and sees doctors and nurses as the enemy. She can find comfort only with her therapist and the members of her support group.

Kopit conveys Emily's confusion through a script of garbled language, written after extensive clinical observations. The script is a brilliant portrayal of the desperation and frustration Emily feels when she realizes that, after a dynamic life, she can no longer function without a great deal of help.

While the intricate language of the script provides the play's unique perspective, it also greatly overshadows every other element of the production.

## Virginia Smith

### Review

James Carnahan's set consists mainly of flats, covered with translucent black fabric, that are used to illustrate Emily's loose mental grip on the world as well as to hide the movement of the few props. Carnahan, also the director, often has the other actors appear behind these screens. This provides an eerie illustration of the vagueness of Emily's comprehension.

The general simplicity of the sets is a blessing to this production. Any further mental pressure beyond the script and the sound effects would make the play far too intense for most audiences.

Doug Crawford-Brown's sound design is one of the best features of the production. The range of sounds he uses to depict the actual experience of a stroke is frightening.

The acting, under Carnahan's direction, is never quite strong enough to indicate clearly exactly what is going on in the plot. Mary Lyn Field gives a sympathetic performance as Emily. Her experience as an assistant professor in the UNC School of Nursing surely enables her to be particularly sensitive to Emily's condition.

Because of the difficult script, however, Field is

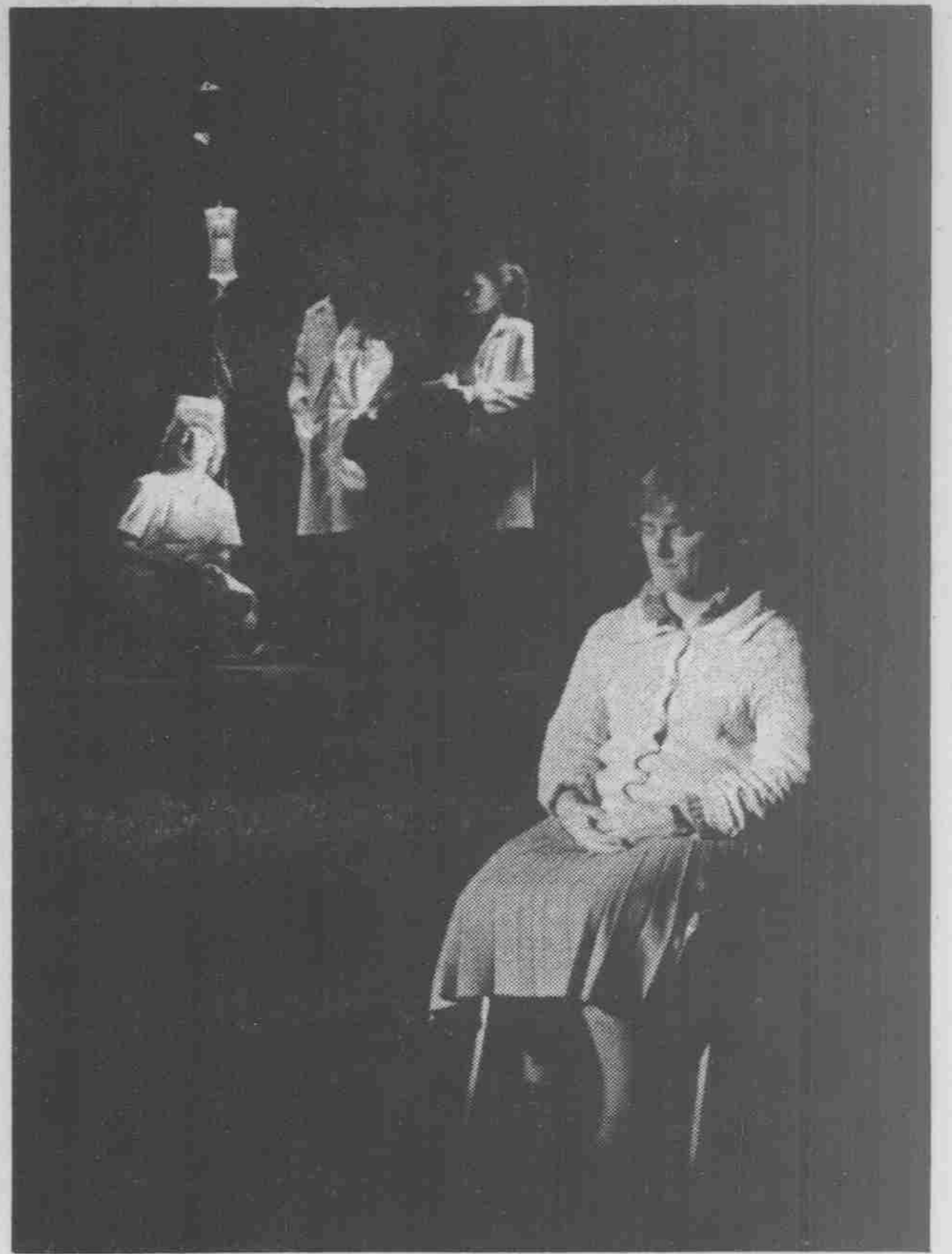
never quite able to convey consistently the progress of Emily's therapy. Her best scenes are Emily's sessions with the therapist, Amy (Leslie Jaffe). Amy's lines, in clear English, help the audience to understand what Field is trying to say in Emily's broken speech. Field, who has performed frequently with the Actors Co-Op of the ArtSchool, portrays Emily with the courage and compassion that otherwise would not be immediately evident from the script.

Among the supporting actors, Euan Bagshawe and Bob Lehnberg are particularly noteworthy. Both play members of Emily's support group with sensitivity and much-needed humor. As with all the afflicted characters, Carnahan directs them to play the brain damage realistically.

Leslie Jaffe gives a generally broad and benign performance as Amy. Strangely enough, when Jaffe is in profile to the audience, she is more believable. When she faces the audience, Jaffe's habit of closing her eyes to the audience is evident and becomes a serious distraction.

The ArtSchool's production of *Wings* is an admirable attempt to deal with a difficult play, but it is too much of a clinical study to be entertaining. The play provides valuable insight into the world of elderly stroke victims, but definitely needs more variation than the ArtSchool's monotonous production offers.

*Wings* will be performed at 8 p.m. through Saturday at the ArtSchool. Call 929-2896 for ticket information.



ArtSchool's 'Wings': A depressing but enlightening play

## WEEK'S FARE

### TODAY

24<sup>th</sup> will be shown at 7 and 9:30 p.m. in the Union auditorium.

*Wings* will be performed by the Actor's Co-Op at 8 p.m. through Saturday at the ArtSchool. Call 929-2896 for ticket information.

The Duke Symphony Orchestra will perform at 8:15 p.m. in Baldwin Auditorium on Duke University's East Campus.

Mixed-media drawings by Judy Baker will be displayed in the ArtSchool gallery through Feb. 24.

The Squalis will perform at Cat's Cradle. Call 967-9053 for more information.

The Spongstones will perform at Rhythm Alley. Call 929-8172 for more information.

### FRIDAY

25<sup>th</sup> Terms of Endearment will be shown at 7, 9:30 and midnight in the Union auditorium. Call 962-2285 for ticket information.

Jeffrey and Monica Rossman will give a harp-sichord and guitar recital at 8:15 p.m. in Duke Chapel.

The Flying Pigs and The Boomers will perform at Cat's Cradle. Call 967-9053 for more information.

Touchstone will perform at 9 p.m. at Rhythm Alley. Call 929-8172 for ticket information.

### SATURDAY

26<sup>th</sup> B-Movie Night, featuring screenings of *Invasion of the Bee Girls*, *The Little Shop of Horrors*, *They Saved Hitler's Brain* and *Detour*, will begin at 7 p.m. in the Union auditorium.

The Duke University Jazz Ensemble will perform at 8:15 p.m. in Baldwin Auditorium on Duke's East

Campus.

From the Collection of Sol Lewitt, an exhibit of conceptual and minimal works by 40 artists, will be displayed at the Ackland Art Museum through March 3.

Tommy Keene will perform at Cat's Cradle. Call 967-9053 for more information.

The Blazers will perform at Rhythm Alley. Call 929-8172 for more information.

### SUNDAY

27<sup>th</sup> That Obscure Object of Desire will be shown at 7 and 9:30 p.m. in the Union auditorium.

Commedia dell'ArtSchool will perform at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. at the ArtSchool. Call 942-2041 for ticket information.

The Society for Performance on Original Instruments will perform at 8 p.m. in Hill Hall Auditorium. Admission charged.

Joyce Peck will give a vocal recital at 3 p.m. in the Ernest W. Nelson Music Room on the East Campus of Duke University.

David Arcus will give an organ recital at 5 p.m. in Duke Chapel.

Nina Sundell, organizer of the exhibition "Rauschenberg Performance," will speak on artist Robert Rauschenberg's involvement with the performing arts at 3 p.m. at the N.C. Museum of Art in Raleigh.

Right Time will perform at Cat's Cradle through Monday. Call 967-9053 for more information.

Brother Yusuf Salim and Friends will perform as part of the Sunday Jazz Series at the ArtSchool at 7 p.m.

### TUESDAY

29<sup>th</sup> The Long Hot Summer will be shown at 8 p.m. at the N.C. Museum of Art in Raleigh.

Call 833-1935 for ticket information.

Kathy Rose will give a dance performance at 8 p.m. in Stewart Theatre at N.C. State University. Call 737-3104 for ticket information.

Paul Barrere and Catfish Hodge will perform at Cat's Cradle. Call 967-9053 for more information.

### WEDNESDAY

30<sup>th</sup> High School will be shown at 7 and 9:30 p.m. in the Union auditorium.

Bill T. Jones will give a dance lecture and demonstration at 8 p.m. in Stewart Theatre at N.C. State University. Call 737-3104 for ticket information.

Thomas Brylawski will give a gallery talk at 12:15 p.m. at the Ackland Art Museum.

Speidel, Goodrich and Goggin will perform at Cat's Cradle. Call 967-9053 for more information.

### MOVIES

Plaza I—*Micki & Maude* at 2:30, 4:45, 7 and 9:15.

Plaza II—*That's Dancing!* at 3:10, 5:10, 7:10 and 9:10.

Plaza III—*The Cotton Club* at 2:10, 4:40, 7:05 and 9:35.

Varsity I—*Amadeus* at 2 and 7. *The 4th Man* at 4:50 and 9:50.

Varsity II—*Stranger Than Paradise* at 3, 5, 7:30 and 9:30.

Varsity Lateshows—*The 4th Man* and *Stranger Than Paradise* at 11:45 Friday and Saturday.

Carolina Blue—*Beverly Hills Cop* at 3, 5, 7:15

and 9:30.

Carolina White—*Ninja III* at 3:15, 5:15, 7 and 9 ends today. *The Terminator* starts Friday; call 942-3061 for showtimes.

Carolina Lateshows—*The Big Chill* at 11:30 and *Body Double* at 11:45 Friday and Saturday.

Ram I—*The River* at 7 and 9:15 moves to Ram II Friday. *The Flamingo Kid* starts Friday at 7:05 and 9:15; weekend matinees at 2:05 and 4:15.

Ram II—*Starman* at 7:05 and 9:15 ends today. *The River* starts Friday at 7 and 9:15; weekend matinees at 2 and 4:15.

Ram III—*Torchlight* at 7 and 9; weekend matinees at 2 and 4.

Ram/WCHL Lateshows—*Meatballs* and *La Cage aux Folles* at 11:45 Friday and Saturday.

Carolina (Durham)—*Stranger Than Paradise* at 3:30, 5:15, 7 and 9.

Carolina (Durham) Lateshow—*Stranger Than Paradise* at 11 Friday and Saturday.

Carolina (Durham) Saturday Matinee—*Heidi* at 1 Saturday only.

Compiled by Jeff Grove, arts editor.

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