

Feature—

Voice professor looks back on life in professional world

By **BETH MILLER**
Staff Writer

"The performer's life ... is not steady employment," said Stafford Wing, the chairman of the voice area in the music department. Wing, who made his living as a performer, said, "I never taught before I came to UNC."

Wing began planning his career in college. After spending two years in Germany with the ROTC program, he studied at Louisiana State University. There he worked with the opera coach, who did guest conducting jobs for regional opera companies. "He used me on a number of occasions for roles with regular opera companies," Wing said, "so not only did I perform as a graduate student, but I also began my first professional experience in the opera."

After graduate school, Wing went overseas. "I wanted to start my career," he said. "I went to Vienna and enrolled in the Academy of Music and studied voice. I immediately started singing professionally, so I was in school and singing as well. I did a recording with the Vienna symphony and some other orchestras, and I toured throughout Vienna, Austria, Switzerland ..."

Wing returned to the United States, to New York, after three years in Vienna. "I worked at Radio City Music Hall as my first job — seven days a week, four and five shows a day — that was slave labor," he said. "My career was varied: concerts, radio, TV, theater, some Broadway, lots of oratorio work. Between shows I would do other auditions because we got hired by the show. I broke away from Radio City Music Hall when I got hired by the NBC opera."

Wing also auditioned with other groups. "I did pick-up work with professional choruses, and for me it was better than selling insurance." He said that many performers find other jobs to support their careers in music or acting.

Wing has stories from experience which he can tell his students who aspire to make their living with their voice. He said, "I did a lot of auditioning — that was my job. I know what it's like to make my living as a singer." He claims that there is no such thing as "having made it" in the performing world. He said that a singer can be "employed one day and be up on stage ... and the next week you're not employed."

Wing continues performing while



Voice professor Stafford Wing in his Hill Hall office

DTH/Christie Blom

here at the University. "I have stayed quite active," he said. "Teaching is a big part of my life now, but the performance goes on." Wing performs locally and also travels occasionally to New York and Europe. "It's good for the students to see their teacher's active and still performing," he said.

Wing teaches a variety of students.

"Some of the students who come here have never studied voice lessons before and some have had very little voice. But if they have a voice and if they're musical, it doesn't matter too much really." Wing said that a voice is "either there or it's not;" however, those without a terrific voice at the start can develop one with practice. Wing said that it is

important for students to keep up good practice habits.

Wing prefers to practice in the morning before the daily chaos of phone calls, paperwork and lessons begins. He also continues studying under other voice instructors. He said, "I still study; I go back to New York and work with my teacher several times a year ... and I'm a teacher."

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