

ARTS

Famous People Players puppet show proves enchanting for all ages



Diane Dupuy, Famous People Players artistic director, describes her group's goals

"One person can make a difference, but a team can make a miracle," said Diane Dupuy, artistic director for the Famous People Players, in her lecture Thursday afternoon.

The truth of that statement was seen in the Famous People Players spectacular "Colors in the Dark" Thursday night in Memorial Hall.

The company created a spectacle filled with neon-colored puppets and music ranging from opera to pop. The puppeteers, dressed in black, moved invisibly in the ultraviolet light which magically brought the fluorescent puppets to life.

The show was enchanting for all ages. Electric blue and red fish glided through the "ocean" while mermaids played across the stage. Alice wandered through Wonderland to the jazz tunes of Manhattan Transfer. Sultry Madonna serenaded Dick Tracy and told him how she always got her man.

The images seemed to move with ease, but an enormous amount of skill and cooperation was needed to make just one puppet perform. The coordination of the puppeteers could be seen when the lights came up to show exactly how Elvis Presley strummed the guitar and moved in his own distinct way. The fact that three separate people could work together to create one image was as impressive as the image itself.

But one of the most impressive things about the Famous People Players are

Melissa Mankowski

Performance

the people themselves. All but three members of the company are developmentally handicapped, and that fact makes their accomplishments that much more inspirational.

"We want to be recognized because of our work, not because we're retarded," Dupuy said. "When we first performed in Vegas with Liberate and got a standing ovation, we knew it was because we were good."

The company is good because Dupuy helped them to discover they were special for a number of reasons, not just because they were handicapped.

Dupuy started the Canadian Company in 1974 with a government grant. She came up with the idea of developing the creativity of the mentally handicapped after she put on a puppet show for a group of them at a school.

Dupuy said she at first was scared to perform at the school. "I was convinced these were crazy people who would attack me and destroy the puppets," she said. Dupuy finally agreed to perform. During her show, one of the children had an epileptic seizure. It reminded Dupuy of when a girl in her seventh-grade class had had an epileptic seizure. Dupuy said the other children had

laughed and made fun of the girl. "Here, no one laughed," Dupuy said. "They all got up to help. It made me say to myself, 'Who's retarded here?' It's us, the normal people."

Dupuy said she met a lot of resistance when she told people about her idea of starting a professional theater company with mentally handicapped performers. She said it was difficult finding people interested in the idea. "The people I recruited were misfits," Dupuy said. "A lot of them didn't know how to keep themselves clean. One was an alcoholic, one was a drug user, one left to become a prostitute."

Dupuy said she realized these people had the same problems as society, and the best way to help them and to make the company work was to treat them as normal people. "Rehearsing the scenes wasn't the answer," she said. "We had to rehearse confidence in ourselves."

"When I look back on it, we were crazy," Dupuy said. "I had no idea what I was getting myself into, and that's the secret of the success of the company today." She said the company worked to become better than the best in order to be accepted and respected.

The company first performed for Liberate when he was doing a charity show in Toronto. After seeing the show, Liberate invited the group to come and perform with him in Las Vegas. "He said, 'It's not because of who you are, it's because you are truly talented per-

formers,'" Dupuy said. "It was our first break."

Dupuy said the company's next goal after Las Vegas was to perform on Broadway. The Players had to raise \$1 million to finance their shows. The company sold buttons to raise money and received donations and promotions from famous celebrities such as Paul Newman and Phil Collins.

The company's Broadway premiere received rave reviews from critics and audiences. "The best thing about the reviews was the fact that they never mentioned we were handicapped," Dupuy said. "It was the highest point of our lives. The Famous People Players turned their handicaps into victories."

The company's next goal is to build their own theater in downtown Toronto which will be accessible to all handicapped people. "We're not going to put the wheelchairs in a little cramped space," Dupuy said. "In our theater, they'll have the front row." Dupuy said that raising enough money for the theater was difficult but that the group had faced challenges before and knew they would achieve whatever they set out to accomplish.

"We all must dare to dream, dare to hope, and above all, dare to take chances," Dupuy said. Dupuy's inspirational Famous People Players have turned those dreams into realities and have created new dreams for their audiences around the world.

Campus Calendar

MONDAY
3:15 p.m. Information on internships for academic credit for sophomores and juniors in the College of Arts and Sciences with a GPA of 2.5 or better will be given in 306 Hanes.
5 p.m. MLK Scholarship applications are due in 3 South Building.

5:15 p.m. The Organization of Study Abroad will meet in the basement of Caldwell.

7 p.m. Alpha Kappa Psi will sponsor a speech by Donald Mabe, former president of Perdue Farms, in 105 Gardner. Topic: Gaining financial independence. Business dress required.

A Writing Center workshop on application essays will be held in 222 Greenlaw.

7:30 p.m. UNC Ballroom Dance Club will teach the tango in 26 Woolen. Questions? Call 962-1814.

The local chapter of Amnesty International will meet in the Newman Center.

8:30 p.m. The Fellowship of Christian Athletes will meet at the left end of Kenan Field House. Speaker: Rob Rogers.

ITEMS OF INTEREST

Senior Portraits: The Yackety Yack will be taking senior cap and gown portraits until Friday in 213 Union. Call (800) 873-7591 or come by 213 Union to schedule an appointment.

Carolina Women in Business will sponsor "How to Network Yourself to a Successful Career" at 3 p.m. Tuesday in 100 Hamilton. Sign up in Carroll Hall's lobby.

Alpha Phi Omega sponsors a lost and found in the basement of the Union Monday-Friday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

MADD will meet at 7 p.m. Tuesday at the Chapel Hill Police Station.

Dinner Discussion will sponsor "Perspectives on South Africa" at 5:30 p.m. Tuesday in the Campus Y. J. B. Buxton, a UNC student, will discuss his experiences in South Africa.

The Carolina Union will present a laser light rock concert, "Saturn V", at 8 p.m. and 10 p.m. Tuesday. Tickets are available at the Union Box Office.

Carolina Union Social Committee will sponsor a performance by the Chicken Wire Gang at 8:30 p.m. Wednesday. Free barbecue will be provided.

UNC Loreleis will perform at 8 p.m. Friday in Memorial Hall. Tickets are \$4 and are available in the Union Box Office.

Tar Heel Voices will have a concert at 8 p.m. Saturday in the Old Playmakers Theatre. Tickets are \$3 and are available in the Pit.

Call 967-7209 for the answer to the GMAT.

Reserve a seat in our free PReview session, Tuesday, November 12, 5:00-6:00 p.m.

THE PRINCETON REVIEW

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'Ghost on Fire' shows trials of aging college friends

Sally Stryker

Theater

A darkened theater is filled with rock 'n' roll from the sixties. Enter Dan Rittman. Sitting amidst the clouds of smoke created by his lit cigarette, he turns to the audience and proclaims his philosophy on life.

So began the play "Ghost On Fire," presented by the department of dramatic art and directed by Susanna Rinehart. The play is one of two presented by the department each year and was presented at the Old Playmakers Theatre Thursday through Sunday.

"Ghost on Fire" is the first department performance that Rinehart has directed. She said she chose this Michael Weiler play because she wanted something the students would enjoy.

"When (the actors) read this play, they really sunk their teeth into it right away," Rinehart said.

"Ghost On Fire" is a powerfully presented play about the problems facing three old college friends who must deal with the trials of growing older. Dan Rittman, played by John Freshley,

is struggling to make his marriage work again after having an affair with one of his students. His wife Julia, played by Caroline Hall, wants her marriage to work, but also wants to bring purpose to her life by finding a job, an effort that is unsupported by Dan.

Added to these problems is the reappearance of an old friend from college, Neil Toomie, played by Patrick Emerson. Neil comes to get Dan's help with a cheap horror movie, as the last chance at realizing their youthful aspirations of making it big as movie makers. They originally lost their chances when Dan suffered a nervous breakdown and fled the friendship to seek safety in a teaching job.

Dan agrees to go away secretly for the weekend with Neil to talk with a

man offering money to finance the movie. But in order to get the money, they have to make a promotional spot for a corrupt politician. Dan refuses and immediately wants to return home.

Meanwhile, Neil's rather spacy wife Michelle Marie, played by Jen Davis, storms into Julia's home demanding to talk to Neil. Unbeknownst to him, Neil has an inoperable brain tumor. Dan calls Julia to tell her that he is coming home, finds out about the tumor, and he and Neil return home right away.

The rest of the play revolves around the three friends trying to deal with the imminent death of a member of their sacred group.

In a subconscious effort to make up their lost years together, Dan sets out on the road with Neil to make a movie documenting the lives of the people in America, similar to documentaries they made while in college.

Neil slowly begins to lose his ability to speak. While filming one of their subjects, he has a seizure that results in

the cancellation of the project and their return to New York, where he is hospitalized.

The actors and actresses played convincing roles of people dealing with a friend's death. Each was defined in the unique manner in which the main characters spoke directly to the audience at some point in the play, aside from the action of the play.

Despite the sad premise of the play, there were definite moments of comic relief. The character of Aden Paltz, portrayed by Chad Foushee, and his 'fascinating' view of people was extremely funny, in a rather subtle way.

The combination of humor and emotion in the play made it enjoyable as well as thought-provoking.

To watch this play was to become involved with the lives, the problems and the love between the characters.

Unless you weren't human, you came out of this play feeling as though you were filled with a dozen different emotions.

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