

# Ralph Dennis Plays Find A Home In Winston-Salem

The Little Theatre of Winston-Salem presents two One-Act Plays by Ralph Dennis, directed by Doris Pardington: *THE LOVE SONG OF MARCEL AND ROBERT* and *CUE FOR CREON*.

By JOHN CLAYTON

For the perpetrators of the fiction that Chapel Hill is a mecca for the arts, Winston-Salem's Community Art Center is something akin to a mortal blow. Not only does its building house the

performing arts in a manner that puts to shame anything the local community can muster, but its resident group of theatre buffs have had the temerity to produce the locally rejected work of one of our own aspiring playwrights. They have further staked the wound by presenting the play for a second season "by popular request."

*Cue for Creon*, originally titled *A Non Play* by author Ralph Dennis, never seeks to make a major point, but it is neatly filled with delightfully made minor ones decked out in an effervescent theatricalism that manages to sustain coherence despite its eclectic style.

To present his commentary, Mr. Dennis utilizes the play-within-a-play technique. His curtain goes up on an arena stage where two stagehands are making last minute arrangements. In short order there appear a beer-drinking Yahoo who has been driven with his wife to the inhospitable world of the theatre as a result of a short-circuit in the umbilical cord of his television set, a tuxedoed snob whose unwilling companion years to be seen at the Stork Club, three maiden teachers from "East Jesus" North Carolina, and assorted players in a version of *Medea* that Euripides might not have recognized. To complete the roster there is also a beatnik.

Not at all embarrassed with these stereotypes, Mr. Dennis proceeds with mixed success to put them through their verbal paces as commentators upon tragedy. His Narrator, ably played by William Herring, appears to be a kind of *raisonneur*

for the playwright, while the spectators take turns "acting" their concepts of the tragic. The most successfully realized of these attempts is that of the Yahoo as a lonely barfly doomed to disappointment by the commercial scruples of a young woman whose reputation can not suffer a cut-rate encounter. This vignette achieved something of a tour de force by having the Yahoo play himself, his wife play the bartender, and the snob's companion play the tart. The multiple overtones of this conglomeration were surprisingly effective, and the skills of the three actors — Lewis Hawley, Jackie Oerter, and Susan Fitzgerald—managed to bring to the scene not only the humor that was in it, but a tenuous quality of the pathetic that left an edge in the air long after the laughter had died.

The portraits of the snob and the school teachers offered much less in the way of fresh material, and, although they achieved their laughs, they failed to generate either in the writing or the performance more than casual rewards.

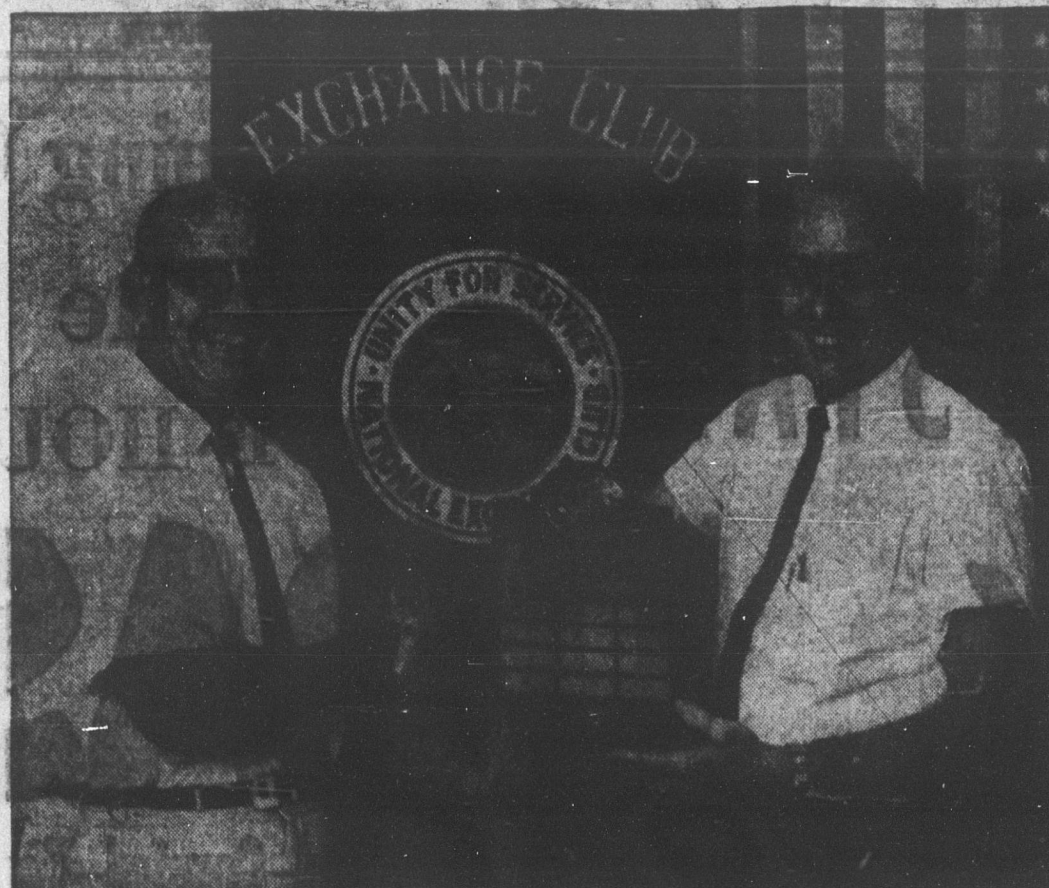
Against this background, Mr. Dennis chose to introduce a broader comedy in the form of a triad of nalds (red, blonde, and brunette) whose expressions of compassion for *Medea's* plight were a perfect counterpoint to their ballet. It was something like watching *Swan Lake* performed by Larry, Moe, and Curly while reciting the social maxims of Elsa Maxwell.

If all of this seems unduly confusing, it is due to the difficulty of attempting to briefly render what was, in essence, a series of experiences rather than a plot. The virtue of this sort of play is not unlike the weather in Chapel Hill — if you don't like it, wait a moment, for it is bound to change. As presented by Winston-Salem's Little Theatre, *Cue for Creon* may have confused its audience, but it seldom bored them. Director Doris Pardington directed the proceedings with a light hand where a heavy one would have killed the fun, yet demonstrated that when a broad stroke is called for she is more than prepared to go along with the gag.

The evening also saw a "curtain-raiser" by Mr. Dennis entitled *The Love Song of Marcel and Robert*. Here the production was less successful, due possibly to the fact that director Pardington chose to have her performers play the point of the piece rather than allow it to assert itself. As a simple exercise in communication, *Love Song* introduces two clowns who can only converse with one another by plucking scraps of conversation (written on bits of paper) from their clothing. Their response to one another, therefore, are almost always irrelevant, and so poverty stricken are they for topics of conversation that one is reduced to going back over the rubbish of discarded phrases in order to repeat what has already been said. This point, of course, is made by the action, but in choosing to have each line delivered in a grade-school recitation delivery the performers failed to give dimension to the sketch. While each of us can recognize ourselves in the two clowns, we nevertheless deliver our clichés with all the intensity and warmth that a devout dedication to the inane can muster. By duplicating on the surface Mr. Dennis' underlying point (small though it might be), *Love Song* left us nothing to discover, and knowing that the butler did it, the production became a bore.

Mr. Dennis and The Little Theatre deserve much credit for having discovered one another, and their company is more than worth the trip.

Looking for bargains? Always read the Weekly classified ads and save.



AWARD WINNER — The Chapel Hill Exchange Club received the M. L. Patrick Award at the State Exchange Club convention in Raleigh last week for the highest percentage of attendance in District 2. Seventeen members

of the Chapel Hill club had perfect attendance records for the quarter ending June 30. Above are George Spransy (left), local delegate to the State convention, and Doug Yates, president of the Chapel Hill club.



AT EASTER SEAL CAMP—Chapel Hill residents and UNC students are helping out this summer at the Easter Seal Camp for Handicapped Children at Umstead State Park. In the first row, from left, are Amelia Head, Renee Booth, Christine Parrish, Joe Planck, Beth Whitfield, Mary Foushee, Beth

Spivey, Charles Mann, and Suphronia Jones. Second row: Larry Foushee, Mrs. Ruth Booth, Randy Harris, Glenn Blackburn, Tony Szenasy, assistant camp director Dayton Estes and camp director Bob Pace. Not shown is the camp chaplain, Father Clarence Parker.

# BILLY ARTHUR

Take our advice and "See North Carolina First."

At the beaches the girls are wearing skimpy bathing suits and big fat mamas are wearing shorts and halters. In the mountains they're wearing too-tight fitting sweaters and little boy breeches. You pay your money and you take your choice.

Everywhere you encounter chronic complainers. Nothing suits them. The first night they can't sleep at all, and the next night they sleep too good.

The clam chowder tastes clammy, the soft-shell crabs are too soft, and the Spanish mackerel smells fishy.

One day they're afraid the ocean breezes will blow them away, and the next they swear there hasn't been a breeze all summer. They're the type that when they turn their car into their driveway at home, they complain of the curve in the road.

Our stay at the beach ended, we headed for the mountains. Destination: Cherokee Indian Village, not to see the Indians but to let them see us.

Armed with the latest information on the new bypass highways, we started out. First thing we learned was how smart the Highway Commission is. It detours you around the new highways to make you use more gasoline, the taxes on which pays for them.

The first night we spent at a motel and felt right at home, because the pretty blue wash cloths were decorated with the words: "Belk's, the Home of Better Values."

The next day we ran into some rain. A mountaineer told us something about a thunderhead, not knowing we were Easterners. He could have got through to us if he had said "squalls."

Our first Cherokee stop was the craft shop for souvenirs, Billy Jr. didn't want any old Indian head-dress or tom-tom. Not him. He knew we had lots of glass in

our home and lots of children in our neighborhood. Therefore, he wanted, first, a slingshot.

He didn't get it. So he moved to another section and picked up a compromise. "I want dis," he said.

"Dis" happened to be about as compromising a weapon as he could find—a real tomahawk.

He didn't get that. Once more trying to be agreeable, he selected a blowgun with darts. The Indians say it can't mortally wound at more than 75 feet.

He didn't get that either. Therefore, he was willing to accept instead a bow and arrow. To that the Missus and I were agreeable until he refused the arrows with suction cups and demanded metal tips instead.

As he sat in the middle of the floor giving us a piece of his mind, the other patrons of art stared in his direction to see if the Indians again had gone wild and were torturing some defenseless child.

All in all, we had a wonderful time, both at the beach and in the mountains. But I have a suggestion, and it comes from one who loves North Carolina and its people.

When the next tourist season rolls around, no cafe should be allowed to display beckoning signs "Genuine Southern Fried Chicken" till the cook has passed the taste test and been licensed. And no cook should be licensed under the grandfather clause.

We ate fried chicken in several of those "Home Cooking" places, and it was either fried to death in bear's grease or burnt to a crisp in vast oceans of sow's lard.

The Legislature should pass a law making it a felony for any cook to so disguise a sweet and succulent fryer so as to make it digestible as putty, tasteless as pure bark, and sure to shoot indigestion into a stomach at 1000 yards.

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**Services Are Held For C. C. Edwards**  
Carl C. Edwards, 72, of Rt. 1, Chapel Hill, died Sunday at N. C. Memorial Hospital.  
Surviving are his wife, Mrs. Mattie Williams Edwards; three daughters, Mrs. W. A. Lloyd and Mrs. W. T. Talbert of Rt. 1, Chapel Hill, and Mrs. John Hall of Graham; one son, Carl Edwards Jr. of Graham; 11 grandchildren, and six great-grandchildren.  
Funeral services were conducted at 2 p.m. Monday at Orange Chapel Methodist Church by Rev. Thomas Sigmon, Rev. Richard Park and Rev. William M. Loy. Interment was in the church cemetery.  
Pallbearers were Winfred Braxton, Tunney Edwards, J. C. Petty, Kearney Rogers, Coy Durham and Willie James Edwards.  
**UNC Short Course**  
Teaching at the UNC Medical School's two-week course for graduate physical therapists is Miss Margaret Knott, Co-ordinator of Patient Services at the Kaiser Foundation Rehabilitation Center in Vallejo, Calif.  
The course on "Techniques of Neuromuscular Facilitation" began Monday, and will end Friday, August 30. Twenty physical therapists from all over the Southeast are attending.

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