

Davidson theatre department scores big in Charlotte

BY LORRAINE SHERBINE
College Relations

Members of the Davidson College theatre department have gotten rave reviews in recent months on the Charlotte stage. A major highlight of the spring theatre season was a Davidson director/stage designer collaboration in the Blumenthal Center's Booth Playhouse. Ann Marie Costa, associate professor of theatre, directed the Charlotte Repertory Theatre's premiere performance of "Sister Calling My Name," and Joe Gardner, department chair and professor of theatre and speech, designed the set.

Costa and Gardner have worked together on campus productions, but this is their first collaboration in professional theatre. Charlotte Observer reviewer Tony Brown called the play "a truly collaborative wonder," and heaped praise on director, actors, script, and staging alike.

Costa came to Davidson in 1994 and immediately established her directing niche with "The Heidi Chronicles," her first campus collaboration with Gardner. He commented, "I have always been impressed by Ann Marie's insight into dramatic work and by the energy she brings to the team effort. Working with her is a joy, partly because of her buoyant personality, but also because she nurtures and challenges her partners to bring their very best effort to the work. I see this affecting other student actors and other designers as much as it does me."

Costa is no novice to professional theatre. She has directed "Mrs. Klein" at Victory Gardens in Chicago, "A Coupla White Chicks" at the Theatre Projects Co. in St. Louis and "Make It Happen" in the Berkshire Theatre Festival Children's Theatre. She debuted at the Charlotte Rep directing "The One-Eyed Man is King" and "Shadow War" in the New Play Festival.

Costa said that having Gardner design for her is "a director's dream." She continued, "As we

work together with the scripts, the metaphors become visual. He's the most accommodating designer I've ever worked with. He brings out the best in me as a director."

Referring to her direction of "Sister Calling My Name," Gardner said, "It was a very delicate play, a journey backward through painful memories which leads to a vital discovery of self. Most

of the work toward a powerful, revelatory conclusion. All of Davidson should be proud of her work on this play."

Working together outside the Davidson College venue helps faculty members and students see each other in a new light. Being evaluated and judged first-rate by the standards of professional theatre is testimony to the integrity and the quality of the work they bring to the theatre department. Costa credits department chair Gardner with an attitude of mutual support which pervades every college production. She said, "Joe is all about empowering his colleagues, allowing each member ownership, the opportunity to grow in their own special areas. He has always fostered the idea

that everybody in the department has a voice. He is open to ideas and encourages staff to use their talents fully."

Gardner has a long-standing reputation as the premier set designer in the region, and has the portfolio to prove it. With more than 100 set designs to his credit, professionals like Steve Umberger, founder and artistic director of the Charlotte Repertory Theatre and lead actor in "Sister Calling My Name," agree, "Joe's the best there is."

Umberger said, "Each play has its own world, and Joe taps into that easily. He's also very much a servant to the project, and not everyone is.

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◆ Davidson theatre professors (l-r) Ann Marie Costa and Joe Gardner.

of the actions was confined in small spaces or happened in memory. The mood of the piece was relentlessly dark and serious. It took exceptional directing skills to guide actors through such a narrow and brooding landscape and hold the dramatic interest without being emotionally self-indulgent. Ann Marie managed to do just that — keeping her actors on a steady course and shaping

Gay judge addresses Davidson

BY AMBROSE TUSCANO
Staff Writer

On Wednesday night, a group of about 50 students and faculty gathered in the 900 Room to hear a talk given by North Carolina Superior Court Judge Ray Warren entitled "Straight Talk from a Gay Judge." As a young man, Warren met with early success in politics. At age 29, shortly after graduating from law school at the University of North Carolina, Warren became the majority leader of the state House of Representatives. His political career advanced again in 1995 when he was elected as a Superior Court judge. Warren, a native of Charlotte, is one of only two openly gay elected officials in North Carolina and holds the distinction of being the only openly gay republican.

Speaking confidently and in a straightforward manner, Warren related to the audience the series of events that led to his current position. He willingly discussed many personal situations, including the breakup of him and his wife less than a year ago following his announcement that he was gay.

Warren also spoke at length about the situation of homosexuals today, comparing the discrimination that they face with aspects of that imposed on the African-American community in the segregation era. "It is important," he said, "that gays show themselves as real flesh and blood

people." He argued that as long as a majority of gay persons hide their sexual preferences, there will continue to be a general invisibility of the gay community.

On the other hand, Warren stated firmly that each individual's decision to come out of the closet should be a personal one, occurring only when that individual is prepared for the change. Indeed, much of what he said pertained to the changes that he noticed in himself after his public announcement that he was gay. While he was quick to point out that becoming open about his homosexuality did not solve all of his problems, Warren says that he does not regret the decision.

The sort of discrimination and homophobia that he might have expected to suffer in the professional realm never materialized despite the fact that he now works primarily in the more conservative western part of the state. Warren attributes the lack of negative reaction to the announcement to the fact that he had been in the courtroom for four years prior to his coming out. Because his co-workers already had a favorable opinion of him, they were forced into the realization that his sexual orientation had not made him a different person. "The best lobbying strategy," Warren claims, "is for everyone to know a gay person firsthand." He thinks that this will help to dispel the feeling of "otherness" that is in large part responsible for homophobia.

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Domestic and international news briefs

BY DEREK POLITZER
Staff Writer

Saturday, March 20:

In an effort to curb gun-related violence, President Clinton demanded that his administrative officials study local initiatives, which have proven effective in fighting illegal firearm sales.

Western embassies evacuated their non-essential staff from Belgrade Saturday after the collapse of the Paris peace talks. Serb forces intensified their attacks on ethnic Albanians in the restive Kosovo region of Yugoslavia.

A war crimes tribunal in the Hague found the Croatian army guilty of "ethnic cleansing" of Serbs in a 1995 offensive.

Malaysian troops began their operation to kill 300,000 pigs over the next ten days to stop the spread of the deadly Japanese Encephalitis virus that has claimed 10 lives. Mosquitoes transmit the disease to humans.

Sunday, March 21:

As the longest Academy Awards show ever, this year's Oscars marked a significant drop in public interest. Its audience fell from a high of 87 million last year to 70 million this year. "Shakespeare in Love" won best picture and six other Oscars. Steven Spielberg was awarded best director for his epic film "Saving Private Ryan." This World War II drama picked up another four Oscars. Roberto Benigni, in the Italian film, "Life is Beautiful," set a record as the first actor in a foreign language film to win the Oscar for best actor. This film also won the Oscar for the best foreign film.

Bertrand Piccard and Brian Jones went down in history Saturday as the first people to circle the globe non-stop in a hot air balloon.

Although Israel refused to extradite an American Jewish teenager accused of killing and dismembering another youth, the Israeli Justice Ministry has assured the U.S. that he will be charged for his crimes in Israel.

Monday, March 22:

After a New York policeman fired on and killed an unarmed African immigrant there earlier this year, Attorney General Janet Reno promised to review police brutality cases.

An avalanche, which swept down Turnagain Pass in Alaska, killed two snowmobilers.

Jack Kevorkian defended himself against charges that his assisted suicides constitute murders on the opening day of his trial Monday.

U.S. envoy Richard Holbrooke made a last-minute trip to Belgrade in an effort to convince Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic of the inevitability of NATO airstrikes if the Serbian leader refused to sign the Paris peace accords. Meanwhile, the U.S. Senate debated committing U.S. military forces to any NATO-led attacks on Serbia Monday.

Tuesday, March 23:

According to a news report released by the Office of National Drug Control Policy, snorting heroine is becoming more popular in the United States, especially among women, the affluent, and suburbanites.

By a narrow majority, the U.S. Senate voted Tuesday to support President Clinton's decision to launch air strikes against Serbia.

Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov turned his plane around in mid-flight on a course back to Russia because of NATO's imminent strikes against Yugoslavia. Primakov had been scheduled to participate in talks with U.S. officials on the state of the Russian economy.

Wednesday, March 24:

NATO attacked Yugoslav military targets Wednesday in an attempt to prevent a humanitarian crisis. Clinton justified the allied response, declaring it a "moral imperative." He cited the geopolitical significance of Kosovo, which is situated on a potentially explosive fault line. Yugoslavia responded vehemently to the attacks, denouncing them as "naked aggression." The NATO attack marks the first of its kind against a sovereign nation in its 50-year history. Germany's participation in combat made history as the first since World War II.

Russia and China lashed out at the United States today for its operations against a sovereign country. Yeltsin asserted that it has the right to act militarily against the alliance and claimed that the U.S. has reverted to "barbarism." Russia ended all cooperation with NATO.

Reverend Jesse Jackson said Wednesday that he would not run for president in next year's presidential election.

Thursday, March 25:

NATO launched another "massive aerial assault" against Yugoslavia Thursday, as Milosevic refused to sign the Paris peace accords.

Anti-NATO protests rocked Skopje, Macedonia Thursday as rioters attacked the U.S., British, and German embassies with firebombs. Protesters outside the U.S. embassy in Moscow burned American flags and hurled ink bombs and beer bottles at the embassy compound.

Belgrade ended diplomatic relations with NATO members and ordered all foreign journalists out of the country. Meanwhile, Russia toned down its anti-Western rhetoric. The four New York City police officers who shot an unarmed African immigrant were indicted today on murder charges.

Flames and thick black smoke billowed into the sky Thursday after a massive explosion at a Chevron Corporation oil refinery in California. Local residents were urged to keep their windows closed.

Friday, March 26:

NATO launched a third attack against Serb targets Friday in broad daylight. Reports from witnesses in Kosovo indicated that the Serb army has begun "ethnic cleansing" of Kosovar Albanians, indiscriminately killing civilians and burning their villages.

Two Yugoslav MiGs were shot down over Bosnia today as they attempted to target NATO ground forces there.

A new scientific study indicated that the viruses that causes measles, AIDS, Ebola, and influenza may all be related.