Summer 1991

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WKU Theatre & Dance

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Greetings!

I've called this a newsletter, but it is really a review of the events over the past years aimed at bringing you up to date concerning our department. Many of you have not visited with us since the Fall of 1987 when we became the Department of Theatre and Dance and moved into our new offices. We are now located in that sub-level area of the first floor of the Fine Arts Center adjacent to the scene shop. At one time this was the Speech Disorders Laboratory and has had several uses prior to becoming the nerve center for this department. We have settled into our new space very nicely creating a main office with an adjoining department head office, workroom, production office and student lounge. Administratively the separation from Communication and Broadcasting has more clearly identified our theatre and dance programs within and outside the university and has allowed us to have more direct representation to future and current students as well as the university administration; and now former students.

Bill Leonard

Homecoming 1990

October 5, 6, and 7, 1990, marked the dates of a very successful departmental homecoming. We counted 83 returning former students, many of whom brought guests with them. It was a memorable weekend of renewal of old friendships and making of new ones. I believe everyone enjoyed seeing the faculty trying to remember who went to school at the same time as whom? Faculty members would be talking to old friends only to realize they didn’t know one another or, on the other hand, might introduce someone to their former roommate. The years may blur but the memories remain sharply focused: Perhaps not accurate, but sharply focused. It was fun to relive many of the “olde tymes.”

Homecoming 1991

Although we do not have any specific plans for Homecoming 1991 don’t let that stop you from planning a visit this fall. Western has designated October 18, 19 and 20, 1991, as Homecoming and we would be delighted to see you. For the past few years the Homecoming Football Game has been scheduled in the evening now that we have lights for Smith Stadium. During the afternoon hours before the game tents are set up in the field across the street from the stadium and several faculty members are available from all departments just to sit around and chat with returning students. There is also food for
to do it again. We will plan events of special interest and hope to increase our attendance over 1990. We are especially interested in those who were in the program during the Russell H. Miller tenure. Our records are weak in locating people who attended Western prior to 1968 and need help from those who have kept in touch. However, regardless of your years at Western, plan for a visit for Homecoming 1995. Details will be sent to you as we develop our plans.

Homecoming 1995

It seems to be the consensus of those who planned and attended the 1990 get together that once every five years is enough for a big bash. Therefore mark your calendar for fall of 1995 when we plan
Homecoming Anytime

Of course you do not need an official invitation to drop in anytime. We are always pleased to see you and to find out what you have been up to since the last time we talked.

Theatre and Dance Schedule 1991–1992

Most of you remember February as the Musical/Opera Month, at which time we would compete with basketball and flu. There was usually one snow during that time which would close down the school allowing us to rehearse during the day. A few of you will remember that when the Musical/Opera series began, the musical Mame was presented in November as the season opener. In 1991 we are returning to the Season-Opening-Fall-Musical with The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas, October 10, 11, 12 and 13. At this writing we are negotiating with Becky Gelke Baker to be our guest artist and play the role of Miss Mona. Over the past years guest artists such as Irene Cory, Patrick Tucker, Leo Burmester and Warren Hammack have left their mark as exciting, beneficial additions to our program. We are looking forward to the possibility of having Becky back with us, although for far too short a visit.

The second presentation of the season will be The Boys Next Door by Tom Griffin. If you know the play, I am sure you are impressed with its tasteful humor and meaningful presentation of the central characters who are striving to cope with a “normal” society as they pass through their “half-way” life from the institution to the world outside. Jackson Kesler will be directing the play scheduled for November 19 through 24 in the Russell H. Miller Theatre.

It seems that we have had a run on Shakespeare recently. Last season WKU presented Love’s Labour’s Lost, while the Bowling Green community theatre, Fountain Square Players, presented A Midsummer Night’s Dream. This year we will again call upon the bard when Whit Combs directs The Taming of the Shrew for presentation in Russell H. Miller; February 18–23, 1992.

It seems that each year brings about an experiment or two, and 1991–92 will be no exception. On April 7–12, we will present Theatrical Short Stories in the Russell H. Miller Theatre which will be a series of ten minute or less dramatic incidents. “Shorts” at Actor’s Theatre of Louisville during the Humana Festival has been a very popular event and we plan to give that format a try. It will give more students mainstage experience in challenging roles and allow us to develop the presentation to fit the level of experience of all who try out.

The mainstage season will conclude with An Evening of Dance ’92. We used to designate the dance concerts with Roman numerals, but An Evening of Dance X did not convey the correct message and we shifted to the year designation. However, we do face a problem in eight years with An Evening of Dance ’00. The dance program continues to grow and is attracting quality dance students to the department. If you have not visited us since we have moved into the two dance studios located on the second floor of Gordon Wilson Hall you have a treat in store for you. After years of struggle we have excellent dance facilities.

The department continues to present the Children’s Series each fall in Gordon Wilson’s Theatre 100. In addition we mount a touring children’s show that performs at every elementary school in Warren County. Theatre 100 is filled in the spring with the studio series, which remains a very important aspect of the program.
Hilltopper Dinner Theatre

This summer marks the eighth season of the Hilltopper Dinner Theatre. For the first six seasons we filled our summers with the presentation of a farce and a light musical, which served us well. Last year we altered the season by presenting a revival of our "Hilltopper" opener Move Over Mrs. Markham and the comedy classic Mary Mary but added a third presentation, Pops at the 'Topper, this year featuring the music of the 1940's. The "Hilltopper" provides employment for faculty-staff, ten student actors and four student technicians. This season runs June 7 to August 3. After three successive opening weekends the plays run in repertory Wednesday through Sunday.

Gordon Wilson Hall Theatre 100

Over the past ten years we have slowly converted Theatre 100 from proscenium to arena. Over that period we have removed the stage, rearranged the seats to create sharply raked seating areas on three sides of the playing area. We can use the three audiences and hang a drape or build a facade to present a "thrust" stage or place a temporary fourth audience unit at the back wall for arena. Our student directors have some flexibility in designing the acting area as well as the setting for the children's series or studios. In addition, we have presented three faculty-directed productions in Theatre 100 over the past three seasons in an attempt to further utilize the facility and educate student actors and audiences alike to the possibilities of the arena.

New Equipment

As a part of the renovation of Theatre 100, the department, using outside and departmental funds, has purchased two CD-80 Dimmer Packs. These bring our inventory to three mobile dimmer units which will be used in Theatre 100 to bolster an ailing lighting system that was installed in 1968; supplement the system in Russell H. Miller and serve as the lighting system for the Hilltopper Dinner Theatre in the Garrett Conference Center Ballroom.

Those of you that were at the Homecoming production of Working know that we have recently replaced the stage draperies in Russell H. Miller. The old drapes were over fifteen years old and with the humidity that we experience in Kentucky, even with the best of care, they were starting to fall to the stage tearing away from the webbing by their own weight. Development funds which were made available to this department by the generous gifts from you, our alumnae, made the purchase of the stage curtains possible. We thank you for your help.

We have also purchased a Macintosh Classic in order to bring our design program into the computer world. Jim Brown and Tom Tutino are planning to move our instructional and production programs into computer-assisted design in all aspects of theatre tech/design. Our future goals will be the purchase of four such computers and to establish a student computer lab within this department.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP

Thanks to your contributions to the Department of Theatre and Dance through the University Development Fund, we were able to help purchase curtains for the Russell H. Miller Theatre and dimmer packs to replace and supplement our aging lighting systems. When you do contribute a cash gift
to Western Kentucky University, this department will benefit if you will designate us as the recipient of your gift.

In addition to the monies we receive by your gifts through the Development Fund, this department receives financial help through the seven student grants which we maintain within the College Heights Foundation. These grants are financed solely by private sources and used to give minor assistance to students within our program. I am sure you remember one or more awards banquet at the end of the academic year at which time these grant awards are announced. We began humbly with departmental and often individually purchased gifts to recognize outstanding students in the program. Then we founded our first financial grant, the Russell H. Miller Award. Since that time our grants have grown to seven. If you are interested in supporting these grants to the students you may give your gifts directly to the College Heights Foundation at Western Kentucky University, designating the fund of your choice (see box at right).

Beginning this year, Dance Educators of America is giving a grant for one dance student who enrolls in the WKU dance program. We continually seek to increase the financial aid that we can give to deserving students in order to allow them to continue their education in theatre and dance at Western and to attract gifted students to the program.

AWARDS CRITERIA

RUSSELL H. MILLER: Scholarship/production
O. V. CLARK: Performance
T. C. CHERRY*: Scholarship/production
COL. OSCAR PAYNE CLEAVER*: Lighting
DORIS OWENS: Dance
JOSEPH LEVINOFF: Dance
COSTUME: Costuming

*100% contribution from Col. Oscar Payne Cleaver

We continue to recognize:
Outstanding Western Player
MILDRED HOWARD AWARD: Highest GPA of graduating senior
Outstanding first year students
Meritorious Students

Former-Student Directory

At last! Here it is! The former-student directory! It has taken awhile and we know that there are still mistakes and missing information, but we cannot keep it from you any longer. Please continue to help us in giving us any changes of address, corrections and new information about our Western friends. We are interested in keeping in touch with all who were a part of the program, regardless of their academic major or graduation from Western. The list has been compiled from your responses, phone calls and casual comments. It seems that every time we get it in order someone comes by the office and easily spots changes and errors.

Please inform us of any errors on the list and by all means send us information of others who have been omitted. The “not located” list is not to imply that these names will complete the search. These are people we have tried to contact by others. Our mailings to them have been returned; phone contact failed; we have only partial addresses or only the name is available to us and we have not located them. We know that there are many more former Western Players and Dance Company members yet to be found.

We do have:
Bill Parsons
Dean of Fine Arts
Stephen F. Austin State University
Nacogdoches, Texas 75961

We are aware that Don Blasi whose name is on the list has, regrettably, passed on and we are saddened with the news of his death.

I hope that this list of Western Players and Dance Company members will come in handy and you will enjoy contacting old friends and be planning to visit us in the near future, you’re always welcome at Western.
Fun Info Gathered at Homecoming, October 1990

Shelly Barrett Page: “My 14-month-old daughter is my greatest accomplishment. Want to see pictures?”

Tim Millett: Faculty/University of Michigan—Musical Theatre program—Freelance director/choreographer. Wife, Jane—son, Luke (4) “I have pictures, too!”

Teresa Fields Neal: Just finishing master’s degree in Speech-Language Pathology, specializing in Neurological Communication, cognitive and swallowing deficits. “Different, huh?”

Jeffrey Beard: Shortest-running play in the history of Off-Broadway.

Cathy Creager: Consultant with Artisoft Management Services.

Scott Yarbrough: Production Manager at WMSN-TV (FOX) in Madison, Wisconsin and Puppet Master of Francois the Fox for WMSN Kid’s Club.

Tim Brownlee: Graduate Student, University of Kansas, Lawrence.

Marilyn Martin: Actor—Mother of Rachel, 9 and Megan, 7.

Melinda Palmore: Ex-General Manager—Current mother of Jacob, 5 months.

Elizabeth Solley Caine: Artist and mother of four.

Ann Street: “I’ve been working the regional theatre circuit—most recently, playing Molly Brown as in The Unsinkable and Sister Robert Anne in Nunsense. I’ve done quite a few industrial films, commercials and radio jingles, and am currently dividing my time between Nashville, West Palm Beach, Florida, and Wichita, Kansas. No husband, no desire, no time!!”

Don Pay: Still around—Radio/TV Commercials.

Mike Thomas: Director, Lexington Musical Theatre and others. Married (“don’t faint”) to Susan, singer, dancer, realtor.

Anne Gorman: “Finally met Becky Gelke. Brother, Steve, in rock band called ‘Black Crowes’—on David Letterman Tuesday!”

Roy Owseiy: Tourd Europe last year with Othello (Cassio). Do soap opera, appeared in Days and Nights of Molly Dodd, etc. Trying to form my own company. “This reunion is really great—thanks!”

Marci Woodruff: Producing Director and founder of the Public Theatre of Kentucky, professional, regional theatre company. Send resumes—preferential hiring for Western Theatre alum.

Julie Bunch: Executive Assistant to the producer (Marci Woodruff) for Public Theatre of Kentucky.

Greta Shipman: Actress in Los Angeles and just glad to see all her friends.

“This reunion is really great—thanks!”

Roy Owseiy

Will Long: In Wichita, Kansas doing full-time work with computers and part-time theatre.

Joe Caulk: “I live in LA and I love California. Everyone—come see me!”

Jonathan Sprouse: Parsons School of Design—MFA in Architectural Lighting Design. Six years at Kentucky Center for the Arts and Man.

Todd Graham: “Takes planes.”

Susan Morris: Manager of 13th Street Cafe (formerly Mr. C’s)—cleaned it up! Looking for improv comedy and one-acts. Directing Christmas show for Fountain Square Players, December, 1990.

Neva B. Gielow: Still a student at WKU. Completing an Ed.S, Dec. ’90. President of local community theatre, Fountain Square players for two years. Direct and act with local group. Having fun!

Jane Pearl: “HELP! They are holding me here—please help me!”

Tom Thielin: Director of Services for Florida Dance Association in Miami.


Ted Bowne: Currently working as a theatrical dance production financial fashion Interior Designer in Owensboro, Kentucky. [That’s the way he wrote it, folks.]


Mary (Stephens) and Jeff Prather: Living in Chicago. Have own children’s theatre company, Seagull Productions—tour to elementary schools. Mary has MFA in Acting—teaches part-time at Loyola University. Both Jeff and Mary have worked in non-equity theatre in Chicago.

Debra K. Stevens: MA from Arizona State University. Worked for several years with Childsplay, Inc. in Tempe, Arizona. Artist-in-education with Arizona Arts Commission. Worked as actress, director, teacher for last nine years.

Leslie Riley Searcy: Pursuing graduate degree in Exercise Physiology at Western Carolina University. Teaching exercise. Married with one baby, Chloe, eleven months old. Live in Cullowhee, North Carolina.

Nancy Hampton Schaeffer: Working at the Dallas Children’s
Theatre as a choreographer, teacher, actress. "Mostly a mom of two Ninja Turtles, ages six and two. Husband, Karl, famous actor and great guy (works with alumni, Dennis Vincent—Executive Producer at DCT)."

Tracy Lee Wilson: MFA graduate on Lighting Design at Tisch School of the Arts. Currently designing Off-Broadway, Assisting Professor of Designers on Broadway. [Has Tracy been talking to Ted Bowne?] Published show photographer in national journals including New York Times, Dance Magazine, Lighting Dimensions.

Susan Oswald: Living in Chicago. Finished two television movies ("darn small parts")—one commercial for Carson Pirie Scott, non-air demo for Gerber, industrials for McDonalds and Arthur Anderson. Various stage work with Wordworks, Body Politic, Chicago Shakespeare and various "stage-front" theatres. "I do temp work when I'm not acting, but have worked as a waitress, bartender, tele-fund-raiser and various other cruddy jobs in the past to help pay the rent."

Anne Moore Erwin: Adjunct Professor of Dance at Cincinnati Conservatory of Music.

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LET US KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING!

Name: ____________________________  Information: ____________________________
Address: ________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________
Phone: ____________________________
Years at WKU: ____________________________
Major: ________________________________________________________________

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Bowling Green, KY 42101

Department of Theatre and Dance NEWSLETTER