Notes & News: Celebrating Theatre in Mississippi

Delta Center Stage, continued from page 1

"Theatre is what gets me out of bed in the morning. To be given the opportunity to share my love for theatre at a prestigious convention like SETC is such an honor. It's unbelievable how over those few short days my eyes were opened to numerous new theatrical aspects."

Did You Know?

When governments reduce their support for the arts, they are not cutting frills. Rather, they are undercutting an industry that is a cornerstone of tourism, economic development and the revitalization of many downtowns. When governments increase their support for the arts, they are generating tax revenues, jobs and a creativity-based economy.

Data collected from 40,000 attendees at a range of arts events reveal an average spending of $22.87 per person, not including the price of admission. This spending generates an estimated $80.8 billion on valuable revenue annually for local merchants and their communities.

For more information go to Americans for the Arts at http://www.americansForTheArts.org

President, continued from page 1

As a part of my presidency, I want to focus on education and how we, as MTA, service our communities with educational opportunities in all the divisions. We continue to do great things in children’s theatre, our high school division continues to expand, and (to quote a past adjudicator) our community theatres “set the bar.”

While we already offered some educational opportunities with workshops outside of the festival for educators and community theaters, there is still room to grow. MTA must continue to offer more learning opportunities for our members as well as for others across the state. MTA needs to focus on the underserved in our schools and communities and insure that the many facets of theatre are represented. MTA needs to establish long-term goals in order to grow strengthening the organization. As we continue to grow, we need to expand our vision and our mission.

I am proud of the membership of this organization. I am proud of our continued success. I am proud of our desire to move forward. And I am especially proud to be in the company of people who value the arts, theatre, and theatre and the role they play in keeping theatre alive and strong in our state. — MJ Etua

Delta Center Stage, Oak Grove Represent MS at SETC

"It’s a great honor for us and for Mississippi to be the south’s representative at the national festival. It is most exciting to be a part of a new, unpublished script from Katherine Snodgrass," said Tim Bixler, director of Delta Center Stage’s production.

Bixler adds, "The real trick to preparation for level after level of these festivals is NOT to over rehearse...the lines are all memorized; the actors know their place within the story, and everyone is already familiar with making the play happen. Theatre is about immediacy and honesty of emotion and contact with the audience. Too much rehearsal after the lines are memorized can make the play flat."

’re very proud of Delta Center Stage’s production, cast and crew. Their production shined at the state festival and again at the regional festival. I am sure they will do well, at the national festival as well” said Stephen Cunetto, Executive Director, Mississippi Theatre Association.

Also attending the festival was Oak Grove High School who performed their production of Crow and Weasel at SETC in the Secondary School festival and represented Mississippi very well. According to Suzanne Allmon, Oak Grove High School director, “We won three All Star Casts (Marcus Cooper, Chase Anderson, Kaitylin Curtis), Best Overall Production Crew and Creativity and Imagination in Directing.” Allmon noted that the adjudicators were so impressed with our technical crew that they created an award for them as best crew! This was indeed an honor."

When asked about the SETC experience, All Star Cast member from Oak Grove Kaitylin Curtis replied, “See Delta Center Stage, page 6

Robert Chairs KC-ACTF Region IV

Shannon Robert, William Carey College, has been named as the Chair of Region IV for the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival (KC-ACTF). Robert who has been associated with KC/ACTF since 1996 has served as vice chair for Region IV for two years and served as design chair for 2000-2003 and the state festival coordinator for Mississippi since 1996. She served on the board of the Mississippi Theatre Association as the College/University Division Chair from 1996 – 2005 and served as the SETC State Representative from 1999 – 2005.

As a part of her new responsibilities as the Chair for Region IV she will be working with the colleges and universities in Region IV to encourage, recognize, and celebrate the work produced in university and college theatre.
Renew Your MTA Membership!

If you did not attend the MTA Festival in January not only did you miss an excellent festival hosted by Meridian Community College but you also missed your opportunity to renew your membership to the Mississippi Theatre Association.

As you know, MTA is supported in part by a grant from the Mississippi Arts Commission and from your membership. Please consider renewing your individual and your theatre’s membership. The dues are very reasonable and go to an excellent cause—supporting your statewide theatre association.

To renew your membership, visit the MTA website today: http://www.mta-online.org

Robert, continued from page 1

programs and provide opportunities at the regional festival for participants to develop their theatre skills. She will serve as a central contact for theatres participating in the American College Theatre Festival in the region and assist in planning the Region IV annual festival.

Having worked with her through the Mississippi Theatre Association for a number of years, Stephen Cunetto, Executive Director, said, “It is certainly MTA’s loss in that she will no longer serve on the MTA Board, but it is KC-ACTF Region IV’s gain. We are very proud of Shannon, and I know that she will do an excellent job for Region IV.”

Cunetto added, “Mississippi has well-represented regionally through the leadership she will be providing to the region. MTA is very proud that two of its own, Shannon as Chair of Region IV for KC-ACTF and Denise Halbach, President, Southeastern Theatre Conference, are leading two of the largest theatre organizations.”

Quave receives Kennedy Center Honor

Obra Quave, retired chair, director and professor of theatre at William Carey College, has received the John F. Kennedy Center Gold Medal of Excellence. The award was presented at the Region IV Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival (KC-ACTF) held recently in West Palm Beach, Florida. The Gold Medal is a prestigious honor bestowed by the Kennedy Center on rare occasions to a recipient who shows excellence in teaching theatre.

Quave, who retired in 2002 after a 43-year career at Carey, served as director for the Fall 2004 WCC production of The Ballad of the Duke women which was a KC-ACTF participating production. Most recently he directed the docu-drama In His Shoes, an original play about the life of William Carey written by WCC theatre faculty member Shannon Robert, for Carey’s Homecoming.

“The person we are awarding is a selfless, tireless individual. He has contributed to our art and his love, the theatre, for almost fifty years,” said Dan Laroque of Auburn University, presenter of the award. “If you ask him what in his career or life has made the most positive impact, he would say, without hesitation, his students. Most of his former students would respond to the question with his name, Obra Quave.” Since Carey began participating in KC-ACTF in 1995, eight productions have either been selected to perform at the regional festival or received strong recommendations to perform. "And David Ducar in 2001 was selected to perform at the regional festival and the national festival in Washington D.C. All of these performances were directed by Quave."

Mark Charney of Clemson University in South Carolina and former chair of Region IV KC-ACTF, said, “Obra Quave must be one of the most gifted directors in our region. He allows the script to breathe through his actors, and he obviously trains them well.”

All Star Cast
- Bobby Bodenhamer
- Joseph Amacker
- Tim Burkhead
- Melissa Whitfield

All Star Cast of
- Jackie Merlau, Ocean Springs High School
- Dusty Ballard, Oak Grove High School
- Jeffry Ross, Laurel High School
- David Siccone, Ocean Springs High School
- Keagan Mitchell, Laurel High School
- David Danced, Laurel High School
- Matt Canno, Hancock High School
- Joseph Amacker, Oak Grove High School
- Lucious Daughtry, Lawrence County High School
- Chase Hairston, Olive Branch High School
- Kyle Bellinger, Ocean Springs High School
- Matt Canno, Hancock High School
- Jessica Boyd, Laurel High School
- Kyle Bellinger, Ocean Springs High School
- Lucious Daughtry, Lawrence County High School
- Elaine Walker, Brandon High School
- Cast of The Complete Works of William Shakespeare, Ridgeland High School
Winner of the Warren McDaniel Award for Best Production
Delta Center Stage, Greenville

Runner-Up Best Production:
Just Over the Rainbow Theatre, Hattiesburg

Best Supporting Actress
Deanna Harper, Delta Center Stage

Best Supporting Actor
Otis Tims, Tupelo Community Theatre

Best Actress
Sonya Bixler, Delta Center Stage

Best Actor
Gabe Smith, Starkville Community Theatre

Best Director
Tim Bixler, Delta Center Stage, Greenville

Best Costume Design
Just Over the Rainbow Theatre, Hattiesburg

Best Scenic Design
Delta Center Stage, Greenville

Overall Technical Excellence
Delta Center Stage, Greenville

All Star Cast Members:
Jaymee Vowell, Black Rose
JC Patterson, Black Rose
Lisa Ganaway, Tupelo Community Theatre
Susan Tims, Tupelo Community Theatre
Dianne Brown, Center Players
Laura Kutcher, Center Players
Penny Byler, Delta Center Stage, Greenville
Deanna Dye, Starkville Community Theatre
Rachelle Fortenberry, JOTR

Community Theatre Summer Workshop

Mississippi Theatre Association's Community Theatre Division invites any and all community theatre individuals to our Summer Workshop. This year it will be held at Starkville Community Theatre, host of the 2006 MTA Festival, on Saturday, July 9, 2005 from 8:00 am - 4:00 pm.

While at the summer workshop, attendees will have sessions on why and how to become a member of MTA and SETC, rules of competition, writing / cutting scripts for theatre, makeup / technical effects, how to increase ticket sales, theatre legal issues (eg. copywrite laws, script changing, etc.), and we will also take a "field trip" to the site of the 2006 MTA Festival.

The goal of this workshop is to network with fellow thespians, learn the tricks of the trade, and to get an idea of the theatre facilities for the 2006 competition. If you are just starting up a community theatre group, or if you have been in the business for ages, we would love to have you!

As we grow and learn from one another, our groups become stronger, and as our groups become stronger, so does our competition, on both the state and the national level.

Also, if you have any stories of your community theatre that you would like to share, please e-mail them to me. We are always looking for stories for the MTA newsletter!

Thanks for all of your help, and if you have any questions, please let me know.

Stacy Howell stacy@apt101.com
Chairman, MTA Community Theatre Division
MTA members elect new officers, chairs to lead the organization in 2005

2005 Officers and Board of Directors

President
MJ Etua, Louisville High School, mjmetua@yahoo.com

Past President
Tonya Hays, Gulfport
thsays777@aol.com

Vice President
Tom Booth, Tupelo
1tb@bellsouth.net

Treasurer
Chris Wooten, Laurel
cwooten@sandersonfarms.com

Secretary
Ronnie Miller, Meridian
rmiller@mcc.cc.ms.us

Executive Director
Stephen Cunetto, Starkville
scunetto@bellsouth.net

Division chairs and vice chairs
Children’s Festival
Ben Allmon, Hattiesburg
ben@megagate.com

Children’s Vice Chair
Parker McMullan, Purvis
parker@purvisdrama.com

College/University/SETC State Rep
Charles Bosworth, MGCCC-Perk, cbos124@yahoo.com

College/University Vice Chair
Peppy Biddy, MUW
wbiddy@muw.edu

Community Theatre Chair
Stacy Howell, Ridgeland
stacy@apt101.com

Community Vice Chair
Lynn Nelson, Tupelo
lnelson@nmhs.net

High School Chair
Suz Allmon, Hattiesburg
suz@megagate.com

High School Vice Chair
John Davenport, Oxford
johnpaul@dixie-net.com

Professional Chair
David Hawkins, Jackson
davidh@meta3.net

Professional Vice Chair
Patrick Benton, Newstage

10-Minute Play Festival
Melanie Harris, Starkville
mlharris2@aol.com

10-Minute Festival Vice Chair
Shonda Davis, Picayune
counselordavis@mail.com

State Auditions Coordinator
Denise Halbach, Jackson
deniseh@netdoor.com

SETC Representative
Sam Sparks, Jackson
production@newstagetheatre.com

Notes & News: Celebrating Theatre in Mississippi

I want to take a few moments to update you on Mississippi’s participation at the Regional Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival. Many of our students participated at the regional festival, and some deserve special recognition.

Kristin Miller of William Carey College received an Honorable Mention for Scenic Design from Barbizon and Wesley Guthrie, also from William Carey College, received an Honorable Mention in Alcone National Festival Fellow Mehron/MUC Make-up Design. First Place in the KC ACTF Sound Design Award went to William Carey College’s Armin Abidhodzi and B.G. Johnson from the Mississippi University for Women won the award for Crafts and Technology.

Many of our state’s faculty were recognized at the festival. Most notable was Obra Quave, Professor Emeritus at William Carey College, recipient of the Kennedy Center Gold Medallion for Excellence for directing. Faculty members receiving Certificates of Merit for directing included Robin Aronson of University of Southern Mississippi, Charles Bosworth of Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College, Dr. Nancy Clark of Delta State University, and Jo Durst of Mississippi State University.

Wayne Durst, also from Mississippi State University, received a Certificate of Merit for Scenic Design. Faculty participation at the regional festival varied. Robin Aronson, Peppy Biddy of Mississippi University for Women, Charles Bosworth, and Scot Mann of University of Southern Mississippi, served as Irene Ryan Preliminary Round Judges or Respondents.

The Director’s Project was spearheaded by Obra Quave with Robin Aronson serving as a mentor and Stephen Judd of University of Southern Mississippi served as the Faculty Mentor for Design Storm. Additionally, Scot Mann presented a series of stage combat workshops.

Congratulations to all Mississippi college and university students who were nominated to go to the regional festival as well as those receiving regional recognition. In addition, I would like to extend a big ‘thank you’ to those faculty who mentor and coach students, affording them the opportunity for their work to be seen.

Charles Bosworth, Chair
College/University Division
Mississippi Theatre Association

Dates set for Mississippi’s 2005 KC ACTF Festival

Plans are underway for Mississippi’s 2005 Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival. Mississippi University for Women will host the festival November 2 - November 6, 2005. For more information contact Charles Bosworth.
Quave receives Kennedy Center Honor

Obra Quave, retired chair, director and professor of theatre at William Carey College, has received the John F. Kennedy Center Gold Medal of Excellence. The award was presented at the Region IV Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival (KCACTF) held recently in West Palm Beach, Florida. The Gold Medalion is a prestigious honor bestowed by the Kennedy Center on rare occasions to a recipient who shows excellence in teaching theatre.

Quave, who retired in 2002 after a 43-year career at Carey, served as director for the Fall 2004 WCC production of The Ballad Women which was a KCACTF participating production. Most recently he directed the docudrama In His Shoes, an original play about the life of William Carey written by WCC theatre faculty member Shannon Robert, for Carey’s Homecoming.

“There the person we are awarding is a selfless, tireless individual. He has contributed to our art and his love, the theatre, for almost fifty years,” said Dan LaRocque of Auburn University, presenter of the award. “If you ask him what is in his career or life that has made the most positive impact, he would say, without hesitation, his students. Most of his former students would respond to the same question with his name, Obra Quave.” Since Carey began participating in KCACTF in 1995, eight productions have either been selected to perform at the regional festival or received strong recommendations to perform. And David Danced in 2001 was selected to perform at the regional festival and the national festival in Washington D.C. All of these performances were directed by Quave.

Mark Charney of Clemson University in South Carolina and former chair of Region IV KCACTF, said, “Obra Quave must be one of the most gifted directors who shows excellence in teaching theatre. Quave, who retired in 2002 after a 43-year career at Carey, served as director for the Fall 2004 WCC production of The Ballad Women which was a KCACTF participating production. Most recently he directed the docudrama In His Shoes, an original play about the life of William Carey written by WCC theatre faculty member Shannon Robert, for Carey’s Homecoming.

“There the person we are awarding is a selfless, tireless individual. He has contributed to our art and his love, the theatre, for almost fifty years,” said Dan LaRocque of Auburn University, presenter of the award. “If you ask him what is in his career or life that has made the most positive impact, he would say, without hesitation, his students. Most of his former students would respond to the same question with his name, Obra Quave.” Since Carey began participating in KCACTF in 1995, eight productions have either been selected to perform at the regional festival or received strong recommendations to perform. And David Danced in 2001 was selected to perform at the regional festival and the national festival in Washington D.C. All of these performances were directed by Quave.

Mark Charney of Clemson University in South Carolina and former chair of Region IV KCACTF, said, “Obra Quave must be one of the most gifted directors who shows excellence in teaching theatre. Quave, who retired in 2002 after a 43-year career at Carey, served as director for the Fall 2004 WCC production of The Ballad Women which was a KCACTF participating production. Most recently he directed the docudrama In His Shoes, an original play about the life of William Carey written by WCC theatre faculty member Shannon Robert, for Carey’s Homecoming.

“There the person we are awarding is a selfless, tireless individual. He has contributed to our art and his love, the theatre, for almost fifty years,” said Dan LaRocque of Auburn University, presenter of the award. “If you ask him what is in his career or life that has made the most positive impact, he would say, without hesitation, his students. Most of his former students would respond to the same question with his name, Obra Quave.” Since Carey began participating in KCACTF in 1995, eight productions have either been selected to perform at the regional festival or received strong recommendations to perform. And David Danced in 2001 was selected to perform at the regional festival and the national festival in Washington D.C. All of these performances were directed by Quave.

Mark Charney of Clemson University in South Carolina and former chair of Region IV KCACTF, said, “Obra Quave must be one of the most gifted directors who shows excellence in teaching theatre. Quave, who retired in 2002 after a 43-year career at Carey, served as director for the Fall 2004 WCC production of The Ballad Women which was a KCACTF participating production. Most recently he directed the docudrama In His Shoes, an original play about the life of William Carey written by WCC theatre faculty member Shannon Robert, for Carey’s Homecoming.

“There the person we are awarding is a selfless, tireless individual. He has contributed to our art and his love, the theatre, for almost fifty years,” said Dan LaRocque of Auburn University, presenter of the award. “If you ask him what is in his career or life that has made the most positive impact, he would say, without hesitation, his students. Most of his former students would respond to the same question with his name, Obra Quave.” Since Carey began participating in KCACTF in 1995, eight productions have either been selected to perform at the regional festival or received strong recommendations to perform. And David Danced in 2001 was selected to perform at the regional festival and the national festival in Washington D.C. All of these performances were directed by Quave.

Mark Charney of Clemson University in South Carolina and former chair of Region IV KCACTF, said, “Obra Quave must be one of the most gifted directors who shows excellence in teaching theatre. Quave, who retired in 2002 after a 43-year career at Carey, served as director for the Fall 2004 WCC production of The Ballad Women which was a KCACTF participating production. Most recently he directed the docudrama In His Shoes, an original play about the life of William Carey written by WCC theatre faculty member Shannon Robert, for Carey’s Homecoming.

“There the person we are awarding is a selfless, tireless individual. He has contributed to our art and his love, the theatre, for almost fifty years,” said Dan LaRocque of Auburn University, presenter of the award. “If you ask him what is in his career or life that has made the most positive impact, he would say, without hesitation, his students. Most of his former students would respond to the same question with his name, Obra Quave.” Since Carey began participating in KCACTF in 1995, eight productions have either been selected to perform at the regional festival or received strong recommendations to perform. And David Danced in 2001 was selected to perform at the regional festival and the national festival in Washington D.C. All of these performances were directed by Quave.

Mark Charney of Clemson University in South Carolina and former chair of Region IV KCACTF, said, “Obra Quave must be one of the most gifted directors who shows excellence in teaching theatre. Quave, who retired in 2002 after a 43-year career at Carey, served as director for the Fall 2004 WCC production of The Ballad Women which was a KCACTF participating production. Most recently he directed the docudrama In His Shoes, an original play about the life of William Carey written by WCC theatre faculty member Shannon Robert, for Carey’s Homecoming.

“There the person we are awarding is a selfless, tireless individual. He has contributed to our art and his love, the theatre, for almost fifty years,” said Dan LaRocque of Auburn University, presenter of the award. “If you ask him what is in his career or life that has made the most positive impact, he would say, without hesitation, his students. Most of his former students would respond to the same question with his name, Obra Quave.” Since Carey began participating in KCACTF in 1995, eight productions have either been selected to perform at the regional festival or received strong recommendations to perform. And David Danced in 2001 was selected to perform at the regional festival and the national festival in Washington D.C. All of these performances were directed by Quave.
From the President

Delta Center Stage’s production of The Glider, written by Katherine Snodgrass and directed by Tim Bixler, was selected as “Best Production” during the Southeastern Theatre Conference’s (SETC) regional festival held in Greensboro, North Carolina, March 2–6, 2005. The Greenville, MS, community theatre represented Mississippi at the regional festival after being selected as the winner of the Mississippi Theatre Association’s annual festival in January. As the winner of the SETC festival the group will compete at the national level in June in Kalamazoo, Michigan, at the American Association of Community Theatres’ (AACT) Annual Festival.

Delta Center Stage also took home the Best Set Design and Best Technical Crew; Sonya Bixler was selected as SETC’s Best Actress; and Deanna Harper was selected as an All Star Cast Member.

"It’s a great honor for us and for Mississippi to be the south’s representative at the national festival. It is most exciting to be a part of a new, unpublished script from Katherine Snodgrass," said Tim Bixler, director of Delta Center Stage’s production. Bixler adds, "The real trick to preparation for level after level of these festivals is NOT to over rehearse...the lines are all memorized; the actors know their place within the story, and everyone is already familiar with making the play happen. Theatre is about immediacy and honesty of emotion and contact with the audience. Too much rehearsal after the lines are memorized can make the play stale." "We are very proud of Delta Center Stage’s production, cast and crew. Their production shined at the state festival and again at the regional festival. I am sure they will do well at the national festival as well" said Stephen Cunetto, Executive Director, Mississippi Theatre Association.

Also attending the festival was Oak Grove High School who performed their production of Crow and Weasel at SETC in the Secondary School festival and represented Mississippi very well. According to Suzanne Allmon, Oak Grove High School director, “We won three All Star Casts (Marcus Cooper, Chase Anderson, Kailyn Curtis), Best Overall Production Crew and Creativity and Imagination in Directing.” Allmon noted that the adjudicators were so impressed with our technical crew that they created an award for them as Best Crew! This was indeed an honor.”

When asked about the SETC experience, All Star Cast member from Oak Grove Kailyn Curtis replied, “We are very proud of Delta Center Stage’s production, cast and crew. Their production shined at the state festival and again at the regional festival. I am sure they will do well at the national festival as well” said Stephen Cunetto, Executive Director, Mississippi Theatre Association.

As a part of my presidency, I want to focus on education and how we, as MTA, service our communities with educational opportunities in all the divisions. We continue to do great things in children’s theatre; our high school division continues to expand; and (to quote a past adjudicator) our community theatres “set the bar.” While we already offered some educational opportunities with workshops outside of the festival for educators and community theaters, there is still room to grow. MTA must continue to offer more learning opportunities for our members as well as for others across the states. MTA needs to focus on the underserved in our schools and communities and insure that the many facets of theatre are represented. MTA needs to establish long-term goals in order to grow strengthening the organization. As we continue to grow, we need to expand our vision and our mission.

I am proud of the membership of this organization. I am proud of our continued success. I am proud of our desire to move forward. And I am especially proud to be in the company of people who value the arts, community theatre, and are committed to keeping theatre alive and strong in our state. — MD Etna

Delta Center Stage, continued from page 1

"Theatre is what gets me out of bed in the morning. To be given the opportunity to share my love for theatre at a prestigious convention like SETC is such an honor. It’s unbelievable how over those few short days my eyes were opened to numerous new theatrical aspects." Did You Know?

When governments reduce their support for the arts, they are not cutting frills. Rather, they are undercutting an industry that is a cornerstone of tourism, economic development and the revitalization of many downtowns. When governments increase their support for the arts, they are generating tax revenues, jobs and a creativity-based economy.

Data collected from 40,000 attendees at a range of arts events reveal an average spending of $22.87 per person, not including the price of admission. This spending generates an estimated $80.8 billion on valuable revenue annually for local merchants and their communities. (Source: Americans for the Arts. 2002.)

For more information go to Americans for the Arts at http://www.americansforthearts.org

Robert Chairs KC-ACTF Region IV

Shannon Robert, William Carey College, has been named as the Chair of Region IV for the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival (KC-ACTF). Robert who has been associated with KC-ACTF since 1996 has served as vice chair for Region IV for two years and served as design chair for 2000-2003 and the state festival coordinator for Mississippi since 1996. She served on the board of the Mississippi Theatre Association as the College/University Division Chair from 1996 – 2005 and served as the SETC State Representative from 1999 – 2005.

As a part of her new responsibilities as the Chair for Region IV she will be working with and encouraging, recognize, and celebrate the work produced in university and college theatre