

A PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH
AN INSTITUTE OF OUTDOOR DRAMA
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA IN CHAPEL HILL

THE PROPOSAL

The Department of Dramatic Art of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and its producing organization known as The Carolina Playmakers, proposes that an Institute of Outdoor Drama be established at the University, and that the Institute be directed by the Department in collaboration with the Extension Division of the University, as may seem feasible, and that the staff and budget of the Institute be allied with that of the Department.

THE NEED

The outdoor historical drama, a new and distinctive form of theatre originating in North Carolina, has developed greatly in recent years, and its reputation has spread both nationally and internationally. The staff of the Department of Dramatic Art at Chapel Hill, together with alumni of the department such as Paul Green and Kermit Hunter, have been intimately and extensively associated with the development of this form of theatre, both as individuals and as a group. Within the last two decades Chapel Hill has become the center to which calls for help, information and advice are directed. These calls for assistance are usually along the following lines:

1. Tell us how other groups have produced outdoor dramas.
2. Help us find a playwright.
3. Help us find a General Manager.
4. Help us find a Director (or Choreographer, or Costumer, or other key personnel.)
5. Help us design an outdoor theatre, and its production equipment.
6. Help us prepare a budget.
7. Send us an experienced and informed adviser to talke with our planning committee.
8. Send us some helpful books, plans, financial statements, etc. on the subject.

At present this flood of request for assistance is answered largely on an individual basis, by members of the staff of the Department of Dramatic Art, by the two most active playwrights in this form of drama, and by the management of the leading outdoor dramas themselves. In an effort to avoid duplication of time and energy a bulletin, "Producing America's Outdoor Dramas", was prepared in 1954. Two printings of this handbook (1000 copies) have now been exhausted.

What is needed is a central, coordinating agency which could receive, catalog and make available all kinds of materials pertinent to this type of drama, such as exemplary playscripts, architects' drawings, scene and costume designs, lighting plots, equipment specifications, information on sound and on acoustical problems, playbills and souvenir programs, constitutions and bylaws of typical producing organizations, budget recommendations, fund-raising plans, audits, etc.

Such an agency or service needs a trained director who can devote his full time to the work, with sufficient office facilities to enable him to prepare and organize needed informational materials, to coordinate the advisory and consultative services of experienced specialists needed in the field, and perhaps to function as a placement office for available personnel of all kinds for direct participation in such productions.

The demand seems clear and strong, and the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, where the concept of this type of drama was evolved, and where the collective services of experienced personnel in the field are notably available, is the ideal place to situate such an agency. Two other universities (Wisconsin and Southern Illinois), have already initiated efforts to establish such an office, with funds specifically earmarked for the purpose. It would be deplorable if the University of North Carolina, where the idea of outdoor historical drama was born, and the State of North Carolina, where the concept has flowered into concrete and continuing reality, did not continue to lead in this form of theatre, for which they have become known throughout the world.

THE BACKGROUND

In 1918, almost half a century ago, Frederick H. Koch was brought to the University of North Carolina to encourage original playwriting on native themes drawn from the State's rich storehouse of history, legend and folklore. He founded The Carolina Playmakers, dedicated to the making of a native drama, and one of his first interests was the production of plays in the open air, in the Forest Theatre which the University provided for him in Battle Park.

Almost equally early Mr. Koch became active in the writing and staging of several pageant-dramas celebrating historical events in North Carolina. With a limited staff and a modest budget, he brought into being such dramas as Raleigh, Shepherd of the Ocean (for the Raleigh Tercentenary) and The Pageant of the Lower Cape Fear (for the Wilmington community). Both were highly successful, and represented a departure from the traditional form of English and American pageant-making. The Bureau of Community Drama of the University Extension Division for a number of years provided a Field Representative who traveled throughout the State organizing, writing and staging pageants of local interest and significance. Children of Old North Carolina was a favorite, and complete sets of costumes were kept in stock at the University for rental purposes. In 1937, as a part of the celebration of 100 years of public education in North Carolina, the State called upon the University to provide leadership in writing and staging a series of pageant-dramas on an educational theme. The culminating drama, A Century of Culture, was staged in the Duke University Stadium with over 3,000 performers.

Not until the middle 1930s was a major stride taken in the development of pageant-drama. At that time Paul Green, Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright and sometime Professor of Dramatic Art at the University, was commissioned to write a play to celebrate the 350th Anniversary of the first English colony in the New World. He called his work The Lost Colony. Because of the unique methods he employed in telling the story in dramatic form (a skillful blending of music, song, dance and spectacle with a clearly defined plot set forth in dialogue and action) he labeled this ingenious composition a "Symphonic drama." Later playwrights, experimenting in the field of outdoor historic drama, have been strongly influenced by the pattern of writing established by Mr. Green. The Lost Colony, intended at first for a one-summer run on Roanoke Island off the North Carolina coast, was an overwhelming success. It has been played there now for twenty-five seasons to an audience of well over a million people.

Mr. Green has written a score of symphonic dramas, notably among them The Highland Call, (Fayetteville, N. C.), The Common Glory and The Founders, (Williamsburg, Va.), Faith of Our Fathers, (Washington, D. C.), Wilderness Road, (Berea, Ky.) and The Stephen Foster Story, (Bardstown, Ky.). Many of these productions have enjoyed extended runs over many seasons. He is now engaged in writing several new symphonic dramas, scheduled for early production in Texas, Florida and Kentucky.

Kermit Hunter, a former student in the Department of Dramatic Art and later an Instructor in the English Department of the University, has considerably advanced the cause of outdoor historical drama initiated by Mr. Green. His first such drama, Unto These Hills, written while he was a student and staged at Cherokee, N. C. by the current director of the Playmaker group, Harry Davis, has been spectacularly successful; in its thirteen seasons it has played to almost two million spectators, breaking all box-office records for outdoor dramas in America. Mr. Hunter has written some twenty-odd plays of this genre, and they have been produced in Tennessee, Ohio, Kentucky, Florida and West Virginia, as well as in North Carolina.

A number of other writers, connected at one time or another with the play-writing program at the University as students, teachers or lecturers, have produced one or more scripts of similar nature and purpose. Among them are Thomas Patterson, Josefina Niggli, Albert Klein, Christian Moe, John Ehle, and Frank Brink. But there is still a need to develop new writers in this form of drama.

Of significant note is the number of jobs which the productions of these outdoor dramas have provided. Literally thousands of college drama students, together with local actors and technicians, have found summer employment in these plays, gaining an income and professional theatre training at the same time. In many of the productions the nucleus of the production company has been provided by students and members of the staff of the Department of Dramatic Art at the University.

It is important to note here that, aside from artistic merit, prestige, entertainment value, and cultural significance, the production of these plays has contributed heavily to the "tourist industry" of the localities in which they have been presented, and to the economy of the State as a whole. This contribution has been so great that state and municipal leaders throughout the country are clamoring for information on how to go about getting a similar dramatic attraction for their particular localities or regions. The number of these requests has been constantly increasing.

THE PLAN

As indicated in the above proposal, the Institute of Outdoor Drama would function under the Department of Dramatic Art at the University of North Carolina, offering practical assistance to individuals and groups throughout the country in the writing, staging and management of plays of this nature; serving as a clearing-house for information; acting as a correlating agency for channeling professional services both on campus and in the field; promoting the writing and publication of helpful material; providing a repository for all types of manuscripts, books, charts, designs, papers and memorabilia pertinent to this field of dramatic endeavor, and making it available for use; serving as an agency for administering funds set up as scholarships or grants-in-aid to students and theatre artists wishing to specialize in this field; promoting conferences, workshops, and programs of formal instruction; correlating existing services and facilities; and, striving to augment and extend additional services, personnel and facilities as the need or opportunity may arise.

An office space of two rooms added to existing facilities already assigned to the Department of Dramatic Art would be the only space needs at the beginning. Space for a combination library-museum and a classroom-laboratory might be needed in future years, as the work of the Institute grew.

A full-time Director of the Institute and a full-time secretary would comprise the additional staff needed.

THE ANNUAL BUDGET

(Proposed as a four-year project)

Director	\$ 8,500.00
Secretary	4,000.00
Scholarships and Grants-in-Aid	16,000.00
Office Equipment and Supplies	2,000.00
Travel	4,000.00
Consultation Expenses	3,000.00
Library and Exhibit Materials	2,000.00
Printing and Publishing	3,500.00
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	\$ 43,000.00
For a Four-Year Period	\$ 172,000.00

Note: Certain income may be derived from consulting fees, professional services, and the sale of publications.

EXHIBIT A

A PARTIAL LIST OF OUTDOOR HISTORICAL DRAMAS

Prepared November 1962

(Indicating some University of North Carolina Personnel who have been closely connected with the production of these plays)

MAJOR PRODUCTIONSThe Lost Colony, Roanoke Island, N. C., 1937 to date.

- Paul Green, Playwright. (Resides in Chapel Hill. Alumnus of The Carolina Playmakers.)
- Samuel Selden, Director. (Former Director of The Carolina Playmakers and Chairman, Department of Dramatic Art, UNC. Now at the University of California, Los Angeles.)
- Harry Davis, Actor, Stage Manager, Assistant Director. (Current Director of The Playmakers and Chairman of Department of Dramatic Art, UNC.)
- Ora Mae Davis, Costumer. (Deceased, 1944. Former Costume Director, The Carolina Playmakers.)
- Irene Smart Rains, Costumer. (Current Costumer Director, The Carolina Playmakers.)
- John W. Parker, General Manager. (Business Manager and Associate Director, The Carolina Playmakers.)
- Foster Fitz-Simons, Choreographer. (Staff Director, The Carolina Playmakers.)
- Lynn Gault, Actor, Designer. (M.A. in Dramatic Art, UNC. Formerly Technical Director, The Carolina Playmakers.)
- Kai Jurgensen, Actor. (Staff Director, The Carolina Playmakers.)
- Earl Wynn, Actor. (Chairman, Department of Radio, Television and Motion Pictures, UNC. Formerly member of Dramatic Art staff.)
- John Walker, Lighting Director; General Manager. (A.B. in Dramatic Art, UNC.)
- J. Sib Dorton, General Manager. (Escheats Officer, UNC.)
- William B. Aycock, Board of Trustees. (Chancellor, UNC.)

The Highland Call, Fayetteville, N. C., 1939, 1940.

- Paul Green, Playwright. (See above.)
- John W. Parker, Producing Director. (See above.)
- Harry Davis, Technical Director. (See above.)
- Ora Mae Davis, Costume Designer. (See above.)
- Jan Schinnan, Organist. (Formerly Music Faculty, UNC.)

The Common Glory, Williamsburg, Virginia. 1947 to date.

- Paul Green, Playwright. (See above.)
- Robert Dale Martin, Narrator. (Graduate, Department of Dramatic Art, UNC,) Current Casting Director Director, CBS-TV, New York.)

Faith of Our Fathers, Washington, D.C., 1950, 1951.

- Paul Green, Playwright. (See above.)
- L. Poe Legette, Producer. (M.A. in Dramatic Art UNC.)

Unto These Hills, Cherokee, N. C., 1950 to date.

Kermit Hunter, Playwright. (M.A. in Dramatic Art, UNC, 1950. Currently teaching at Hollins College, Virginia.)
 Harry Davis, Director. (See above.)
 Lynn Gault, Scene Designer. (See above.)
 Foster Fitz-Simons, Choreographer and Actor. (See above.)
 Kai Jurgensen, Actor. (See above.)
 Earl Wynn, Actor. (See above.)
 Suzanne Davis, Costume Director. (M.A. in Dramatic Art, UNC.)
 Edgar Loessin, Stage Manager. (Kay Kyser Fellow in Dramatic Art, UNC.)
 William Hooks, Dance Director. (Graduate, UNC; Playmaker alumnus.)
 Robert Mardis, Lighting Director. (UNC graduate; Playmaker alumnus.)
 Donald Treat, Technical Director. (M.A. in Dramatic Art, UNC.)
 Joseph McCarthy, Technical Director. (M.A. in Dramatic Art, UNC.)
 William C. Trotman, Narrator. (M.A. in Dramatic Art, UNC)
 Tom Rezzuto, Jr., Actor. (M.A. in Dramatic Art, UNC; Technical Director, The Carolina Playmakers.)

Forever This Land, New Salem State Park, Illinois, 1952, 1953.

Kermit Hunter, Playwright. (See above.)
 Samuel Selden, Director. (See above.)
 William McIlwinnen, Director. (M.A. in Dramatic Art, UNC.)

Horn in the West, Boone, N.C., 1952 to present.

Kermit Hunter, Playwright. (See above.)
 Samuel Selden, Supervising Director. (See above.)
 Tom Rezzuto, Scene Designer. (See above.)
 Harry Davis, Lighting Consultant. (See above.)
 Charles Elledge, Actor. (UNC graduate; Playmaker alumnus.)
 Wilton Mason, Musical Advisor. (Department of Music, UNC.)
 Dr. I. G. Greer, President, Board of Trustees. (Business Foundation, UNC)

Florida Aflame, Lake Wales, Florida, 1953; Safety Harbor, Florida, 1955.

John W. Caldwell, Playwright. (M.A. in Dramatic Art, UNC.)
 Edgar Loessin, Director. (See above.)
 Lynn Gault, Scene Designer. (See above.)
 William Hooks, Choreographer. (See above.)

Wilderness Road, Berea, Kentucky, 1955-1958.

Paul Green, Playwright. (See above.)
 Samuel Selden, Director. (See above.)
 Harry Davis, Lighting Consultant. (See above.)
 James Riley, Scene Designer. (Former Technical Director, The Carolina Playmakers; A.B. in Dramatic Art, UNC.)
 Bedford Thurman, Actor. (A.B. in Dramatic Art, UNC.)

Voice in the Wind, Ruskin, Florida, 1956

Kermit Hunter, Playwright. (See above.)
 M. David Samples, Director. (MA. in Dramatic Art, UNC.)

Chucky Jack, Gatlinburg, Tennessee, 1956-1960.

Kermit Hunter, Playwright.

Robert Tedder, Director. (M.A. in Dramatic Art, UNC.)

Sword of Gideon, Kings Mountain, N. C., 1952-1955.

William Trotman, Director. (See above.)

The Aracoma Story, Logan, West Virginia, 1952-1953.

Thomas M. Patterson, Playwright. (Staff Director, The Carolina Playmakers and Instructor in Playwriting, UNC.)

Claude Garren, Stage Manager. (A.B. in Dramatic Art, UNC.)

The Confederacy, Virginia Beach, Virginia, 1958-1959.

Paul Green, Playwright. (See above.)

Samuel Selden, Director. (See above.)

Edgar Loessin, Director. (See above.)

The Stephen Foster Story, Bardstown, Kentucky, 1959 to date.

Paul Green, Playwright. (See above.)

Samuel Selden, Director. (see above.)

James Byrd, Director. (M.A. in Dramatic Art, UNC.)

Tom Rezzuto, Jr., Scene Designer. (See above.)

John Cauble, General Manager, (A.B. in Dramatic Art, UNC.)

The Founders, Williamsburg, Virginia, 1957-1958.

Paul Green, Playwright. (See above.)

Thy Kingdom Come, Roanoke, Virginia, 1957-1959.

Kermit Hunter, Playwright. (See above.)

Old Four Eyes, Medora, North Dakota, 1958 to date.

Thomas M. Patterson, Playwright. (see above.)

Frederick Walsh, Director. (M.A. in Dramatic Art, UNC.)

The Road to Orange, Hillsboro, N. C. and Chapel Hill, N. C., 1953.

John Ehle, Playwright. (M.A. in Dramatic Art, UNC.)

James Leonard, Director. (MA. in Dramatic Art, UNC.)

A number of other outdoor historical dramas, written by Paul Green, Kermit Hunter, Legette Blythe (UNC graduate, Playmaker alumnus), and others, have been produced in various parts of the United States, including one in Alaska by Frank Brink (M.A. in Dramatic Art, UNC.) and have played for short summer periods. Several new scripts for outdoor dramas are being readied for production next summer (1963) by both Mr. Green and Mr. Hunter.

In addition to the large number of UNC personnel who have been closely associated with the writing and staging of the above productions, literally hundreds of students from the University, mostly Dramatic Art majors, have been employed in them as actors, dancers and technicians.

EXHIBIT B

Typical souvenir programs, brochures, publications and photographs,
selected to represent a number of outdoor dramas.