

Mary Michele Hawver, choreographer for the Theater Arts production of "Guys and Dolls," demonstrates some steps for the men and women who attempt to earn a place in the cast of the first musical to be presented at Texas A&M since "Three Penny Opera" last spring. Hawver, a sophomore theater arts major, has been a dancer for 11 years, and is very excited about the prospect of choreographing a major musical. Auditions took place Sunday, Monday and Tuesday nights in the Forum, where over 100 people tried out for the 50-60 member cast. The show will run five nights from April 15-19.



... professional theater is their goal ...

... "It kind of threw them because they hadn't done that before, they were awful, and they'll tell that too."

... other lesson he learned during ... with the Shakespeare Festival ... that it's important to keep ... relationships up-to-date.

... learned you have to have con- ... in order to make a living in ... professional theater."

... help with job placement, Sod- ... calls people just to keep in con- ... and doesn't necessarily ask ... for anything.

... Anne Smith, a theater arts stu- ... who graduated last semester, ... job as a lighting intern when ... others made one of these calls.

... he is now 30 minutes outside of ... New York City, and spends her time ... going back and forth looking for job ... opportunities and making a lot of ... acts, while also getting good ... experience for her resume.

... another way Sodders has tried to ... his students professional expe- ... rience is by accompanying them ... anding them to various confer- ... s and festivals to audition.

... the group got back two weeks ... from Fort Worth where they au- ... ded for the Southwest Theater ... experience, which offers jobs in ... inner stock, summer musicals ... graduate and professional ... ng programs. Sodders said he ... very pleased, because many ... ents were called back for inter- ... s.

... so, three students just recently ... ned from the Midwest Summer ... cal Auditions in St. Louis, ... e they have been called back ... dition again before the final ... es are made.

... when a student is going to gra- ... a, the standard thing in theater ... is to go on to graduate school, ... e they can specialize. There ... some graduate programs that ... professional theaters on cam- ... Sodders said.

... What I'm trying to encourage ... to do is to make sure they get ... ste of professional theater be- ... they waste their time going on ... rgraduate school. If they decide

they don't like it, then they need to find something else.

"Some of them surprise themselves, they think they want to be actors and actresses, and they discover that they are very proficient in scene design or lighting design."

Sometimes a student will get involved in an internship or a training program and when it's over is faced with the decision of whether to go on to New York or not.

"I encourage them to go on to get another training program; they're too young right now to go to New York. There are too many other people running around their same ages," he said.

There are 35 theater arts majors at Texas A&M, and Sodders doesn't know how many minors there are. Until about four years ago, one couldn't get a major in theater because it was only a part of the English curriculum.

Sodders will plan a few changes in the theater arts curriculum probably by next year. Many new courses are needed, such as a make-up course, an on-stage movement course and a history of scene design course, but they need to decide what is the most important, he said.

"I've been very cautious, because I felt like when I first came here I needed to get to know A&M. And I needed to know what kind of students I had here, which I have been very pleased with. They are very intelligent and have a great desire to learn about theater."

Next year, the department will most likely enter the American College Theater Festival in which you must enter a full length production at a state festival, Sodders said. In this case, they would go to a festival held at the University of Houston.

From there, eight plays are presented at a regional festival like one in Fort Worth, which represents the five state area of Oklahoma, New Mexico, Texas, Arkansas and Louisiana.

Across the nation there are 13 of these festivals, from which they will select eight plays to be presented at

Kennedy Center. All expenses to Kennedy Center will be paid. The problem for them now is that the university must pay for entering the state and regional festivals.

"I've been working desparately to get the finances for that," Sodders said.

The two organizations connected with theater arts, Alpha Psi Omega and Aggie Players, are both going to apply for money like other University organizations do. It's a very worthwhile thing, he said.

To add to the department, Sodders has been recruiting high school students to come to A&M. Most people don't know that A&M has a theater arts department, but once the word starts getting around, the department will grow, he said. He has had four definite yes answers and three possibilities.

"I guess we're the only art that has flourished on campus in terms of being able to offer a degree, and I think it's going to take even more time to make drastic changes, but we're certainly working on that."

Sodders is also trying to expose the students to as many professional people as possible.

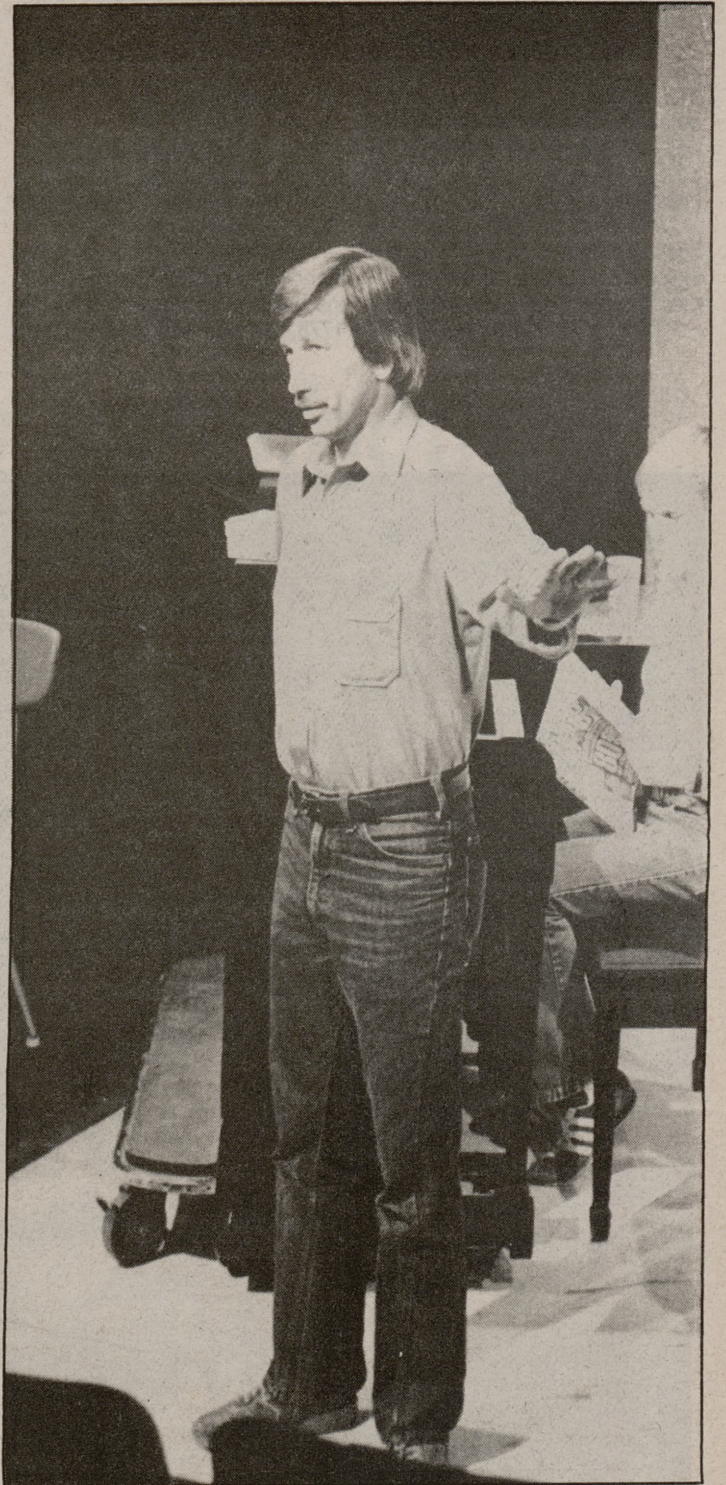
Aggie Players is sponsoring an acting workshop to be taught by New York director Kenneth Frankel on March 3-4. Frankel, who has won many awards, was the original director of "When You Comin' Back Red Ryder," but unfortunately could not be here for the showing of the play, Sodders said.

"Frankel is, I hope, the start of bringing other professional theater people on campus to work with our students."

With the bringing in of more professionals and the other methods used to orient the students to professional theater, Sodders is directing the theater arts department, small compared with some universities, to a higher level of expertise and professionalism.

As he says of the program: "What I can offer them here is experience."

**Photos
by
Lynn
Blanco**



Richard Sodders, head of the Theater Arts department, instructs the students in the procedure to be followed during the auditions for "Guys and Dolls." Sodders, who has been at A&M since the beginning of last fall, tries to make sure the students get as much professional experience as possible by conducting auditions similar to those in professional theater.