

Theater crew work brings little limelight

'Team effort' important behind the scenes of dinner theater production

by STACY ALEXANDER

Like a scene from *Snow White*, the "whistle while you work" atmosphere pervades the Rudder Center scene shop where the stage crew is busily at work building the sets for a coming production.

The banging of hammers on nails, the grinding of saws on wood, and the mingled scents of sawdust, glue and wet paint create an aura of hard, but creative toil in the large, garage-like room.

The crew of a theater production is its carpenters and artists—its magicians. They build the sets, arrange and produce the lighting and sound for a performance and create mystery and surprise with special effects.

The work of the crew is what makes an audience "believe," and yet the crew members seldom get any real credit.

Leslie Rhorer, a junior physics major on the crew and the cast of the coming dinner theater production of "You Know I Can't Hear You When the Water's Running," said most members of a production at Texas A&M University are not theater arts majors.

"There's no prejudice on cast or crew between those who do have majors in drama and those who do not," Rhorer said. "Both have the same chance at getting a part or working on crew."

Bob Wenck, director of the production scheduled to run Thursday-Saturday, said the set crew for one play in 1980 consisted of all business administration majors. They built the revolving stage which has been used several times by the department and was recently rebuilt to be used in "You Know..." he said.

Ginger Lewis, who recently changed majors from environmental design to theater arts, is one of the few theater arts majors involved in the coming production. She is on the crew, working as a paid student assistant, but not in the cast.

She calls her vocation "art for money," but actually, Lewis said, she has serious ambitions to do technical work in either set design or lighting when she graduates.

Lewis, who got her start in theater crew work last spring in "Guys and Dolls" and "When Are You Coming Back, Red Ryder?" said, like most crew members, she had little formal training in crew work, but she likes to be creative. Lewis and Rhorer agree that "anyone on crew can be expected to do anything."

The crew members said a variety of things motivate them. Many crew members say the job is "expected" of them.

"If you don't make a role, you're sort of expected to help with the production," Rhorer said, "and like me,

In one play, a phone failed to ring and a quick-thinking actor pretended to call his answering service instead.

even if you get a part, crew work is still expected of you."

In the dinner theater production, the crew consists of the 12 actors and about six extra helpers, Wenck said.

Another incentive for helping out only with the set, sound or lighting is the time involved. It takes more time to be a member of the cast than to help out on crew.

Actors rehearse scenes four to five hours each day and must memorize lines and work on characterization.

Director Wenck said members of the crew can come in any time they are free and work for a couple of hours.

There is always a crew head, another crew member or the directors to explain what to do if someone is unfamiliar with the job to be done.

Rhorer, who acted in high school, said he has headed set crews, sound crews, and was in charge of special effects for "A Midsummer Night's Dream" last fall.

"It's fun and a chance to be a part of a play," he said. When asked about the lack of "glory" in crew work,

most crew members said they felt it was not that important to them.

Crew work, the members stress, is team work, and, as in many team sports, it is the entire team effort that creates recognition.

Most of the time, an audience will not notice the technical part of a play unless something goes wrong. Sometimes, actors have to cover up for technical mistakes.

Rhorer told of an incident when, in one play, a phone failed to ring and a quick-thinking actor pretended to call his answering service instead. He also invented

several minutes of monologue to cover up the error.

Even with the pressures, hard work and mistakes, technical work, like many creative jobs, "creeps into the blood."

Director Wenck and R. O'Valle, technical director for "You Know..." said that theater work, no matter what it is, becomes addictive.

"We put on a play about every six weeks—whenever we need a fix," they said, laughing. For crew members at Texas A&M, all the world is, indeed, a stage. But its members are not only players—some of them are crew members.

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by SCOT K. MEYER

Battalion Staff
If you are a male between the ages of 18 and 20, you probably already know that Uncle Sam wants you. What you probably didn't know is that, a couple of weeks ago, NBC's Today Show was also looking for 18 to 20-year-olds.

But there were no posters with a grim looking Fred Silverman pointing and saying "I want you," nor were there slogans like "Join the few, the proud, the peacocks!" There was not even a need to register at the local post office.

NBC did all of its recruiting over the phone, in one morning. But they were only looking for two people.

The Today Show decided to stage a debate about the proposed registration of 18- to 20-year-olds, using two college students of the affected age group to give one-minute pro and con arguments.

Texas A&M came within five minutes of being represented on the show. Dr. Carolyn Adair, director of student activities, said.

The University News Service had been contacted by NBC, and it called Adair and asked her if she knew anyone who could do the segment.

Adair called Alan York, a junior biology major, and asked if he was interested in giving the pro argument on the show. He would have had to be ready to leave in two hours. He told her he could do it.

"I was sitting here waiting for the call, with my suitcase out and ready to be packed," York said.

Although York had been found and had agreed to do the segment within five minutes, a Princeton University student agreed to do the spot before UNS could get back to the Today show people.

When asked whether not getting to go was a let-down, York said: "kind

of—I wouldn't have had to go to my Poly Sci class the next day."

York said the question to be debated was: "If you were called to serve your country during a time of war, would you go?"

York would go, "because I have grown up in America and I believe in American values. I would be willing to fight for them," he said. "I worked in a vet hospital over the

summer, and the experience just reinforced my beliefs," York said. "I would be willing to fight to see that the next generation will have the same opportunities, or better, that I did."

York said he was not in the Corps, and he does not intend to enlist in the military. York said he does not believe in a peacetime draft, but he supports draft registration.

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