

Dreamy jazz

Marsalis hypnotizes audience

By JOHN RIGHTER

Branford Marsalis, part of jazz's legendary first family (along with brother Wynton and father Ellis), brought his renown quartet to the University of Texas' Performing Arts Center election night to cast his vote for modern jazz.

Performing just a week after Time magazine made a much-to-do cover story about him and brother Wynton ("The New Jazz Age"), Branford evinced the monumental proof that a lifetime exists between the tradition-via-modern-flair jazz he delivers, and the contemporary garbage of more known, but falsely classified artists, Kenny G, Najee and Harry Connick Jr.

It had been rumored that legendary pianist Kenny Kirkland would not be performing with the Branford Marsalis Quartet, thus knocking it down to a trio. Not knowing how the trio would sound, I was

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pleased to find the quartet intact, with Kirkland providing the schizoid chords on the more plebiscitary numbers and added tranquility to the ballad-like airs.

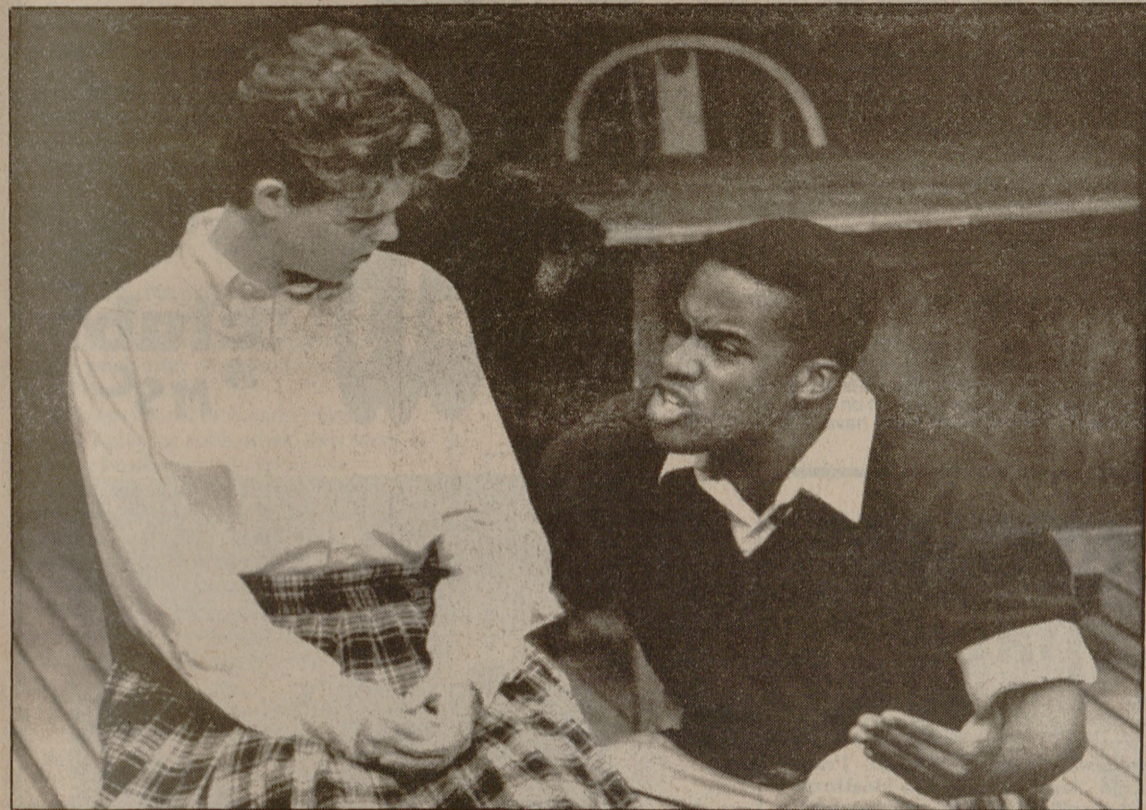
The real stalwart of the evening, though, was drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts. The fact that Watts was a blistering, yet tempo-precise performer was certainly not surprising, but the demonstratory and flair that he displayed was captivating and exciting. Equally adept was bassist Robert Hurst, who strung several hard-tempered solos together as interludes to Marsalis' saxophone parts.

Of course, Marsalis was great. Alternating between tenor and soprano, he combined with Kirkland, Watts and Hurst for a tranquil, dreamy ambience, heightened by

the center's surreal stage lights. On a few songs, such as "Little Stevie," the band let loose with jittery, fragmented solos that somehow glued together behind Marsalis for a synchronized, epic finish.

The unfortunate aspect of the evening was its atmosphere. One, Marsalis' mikes were insufficiently amped, allowing undue competition in the more uptempo numbers. Also, the Performing Arts Center was the wrong location for what should have been a more intimate setting. The center was too large and narrow with a long stretch to the back. This made the quartet's energy and relation more difficult to convey.

It's probably a bias of mine, but the smaller Rockefeller's (Houston), where Marsalis will play this week-end, is a more appropriate setting. Tables, drinks, smoke and congestion — all were missing. Stereotypical? Yes. But it's hard to disagree.



Jessica Lowe and Oliver Tull

SONDRA N. ROBBINS/The Battalion

Aggie Players win awards for acting, sound design

By JOHN MABRY

Aggie Players picked up awards for Best Sound Design and two acting awards for its production of "My Children! My Africa!" at the American College Theatre Festival's Northeast Texas division.

Freshman theater arts major Beverly Nelson received an award for the festival's Best Sound Design, and Acting Excellence Awards were given to sophomore theater arts major Jessica Lowe and senior theater arts major Billy M. Thomas.

Both Thomas and senior theater arts major Oliver Tull were chosen to represent Texas A&M at the regional division of the festival at the Irene Ryan scholarship auditions. The winner at the regional level is awarded \$1000 and the national winner is awarded \$2500 in scholarship money.

The festival, held last week at Tarrant County Junior College's South Campus in Fort Worth, is part of a nationwide competition in which over 800 productions and 17,000 students participate each year. Productions are chosen from a primary level for eight regional festivals. Six productions from the regional festivals are then chosen to perform in Washington D.C. at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

The cast and crew spent the week in Fort Worth per-

forming, attending productions from other competitors and sitting in on critiques given by playwright/professor Dr. Jerry L. Crawford of the University of Nevada at Las Vegas.

Senior theater arts major Rick Boultinghouse, stage manager for the show, says the festival is a great opportunity for anyone interested in theater arts.

"During the festival you're totally immersed in eight different shows. Nowhere else can you see eight shows of such quality in such a short time period for free."

The group of eight theater students that attended were able to view everything from the fluffy "You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown," performed by Weatherford College, to the TCJC South Campus' suspense-thriller "Cat's Paw."

One of the most unusual productions of the festival was Chekhov's realist classic "The Three Sisters" staged by the University of North Texas as a John Ford western.

The three productions nominated for regional competition by the directors of the eight shows and Crawford were Texas Wesleyan University's Under-Milkwoodish "Judevine," TCJC North Campus' "The Boys Next Door," and the audience-pleasing finale to the festival, Texas Woman's University's melodramatic "Daisy Pulls It Off."

Brazos Writers supports novice efforts of local would-be Hemingways, poets

By JOHN MABRY

Even Mark Twain and Charlotte Bronte had to start somewhere. If you think you've got what it takes to be a writer, but just don't know where to go, the Brazos Writers' next workshop might be worth checking out.

Brazos Writers, a non-profit organization and member of the Arts Council of the Brazos Valley, will hold a workshop titled "Write Nonfiction That Sells" this Saturday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the Mark Francis Room in the Veterinary Medical Administration Building.

The workshop will be led by Candace Leslie, a well-known freelance writer. Leslie has written for several magazines and newspapers and is the author of a recent travel book, "Hidden Florida Keys and Everglades." She is also a contributing editor of "Hidden Florida," winner of the 1989 Lowell Thomas Award for Best Travel Guide.

Her workshop will address various aspects of writing nonfiction, including marketing, targeting publications and editors, tight writing and dealing with rejection. A short writing exercise will be included.

Holly S. Coast, publicity director for the workshop and a writer herself, says that anyone interested in writing in the Brazos area should realize that living in a small writers' market isn't really a hindrance anymore.

"You don't have to live in a big city to write," she said. "Technology has allowed writers to do their work through the phone or on a modem. It doesn't really matter where you are."

Coast said one of the purposes of the workshop is to let writers know that there is a market outside Bryan

/College Station for their work.

"I think there are a lot of people who like writing," she said. "They have good ideas, but don't know how to go about getting published. Popular publications like Ladies Home Journal are hard nuts to crack. People don't realize that there are lots of smaller magazines out there that love freelance work... All they need is focus and direction."

The cost of the workshop is \$15 per person. Participants should bring a sack lunch. Beverages and snacks will be provided. For more information call 693-7545.

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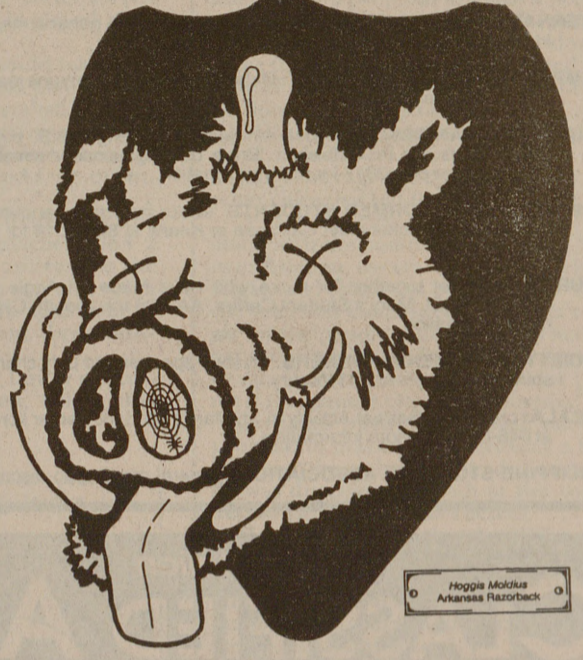
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