

'Tech crew works more than actors'

By Vickie Horton
School of Journalism

"A technician spends more time than an actor on a show" said Robert Mond, summer repertory theatre technical director.

"A tech crew puts in a nine to 16-hour day to get shows ready, at times, that's seven days a week," Mond said.

Working with a crew of about 10 the technical staff has the responsibility of designing and coordinating the set construction, lighting and sound, costumes, and props for the three summer repertory productions.

"Getting three shows on stage is a big load," Jerry Lewis, lighting director, said. Budget, space and building restrictions are considered in designing and constructing a set in addition to theatrical considerations.

Weeks of preparation

Weeks of preparation go into designing a set and constructing it. "Depending on the difficulty of the show, set design and construction averages about four weeks for each show," Mond said.

To hang the lights, design a lighting pattern which will have a particular look relating to each show and functions for all three "takes about three weeks and ten years of experience," Lewis said.

One of the major difficulties in the lighting and set design was that the three shows were different in the kind of space they use. "Company" is fairly wide open, "What the Butler Saw" is a closed off interior setting, and "The Taming of the Shrew" makes flexible use of space," Lewis said.

Space and mobility

Space and mobility are the major considerations of a technical director during the repertory season, according to Mond. "Whether a set is able to be shifted offstage and stored, whether it will collapse, whether it is light enough to fly (hang from the ceiling on stage) are prime considerations," said Mond.

Each production provided a separate technical problem. The set design of "Company" called for an "open, gymnastic, jungle gym" look. This presented a problem because the units would have to be fairly

large structurally sound (because actors would be standing on them) and had to be able to be shifted depending on the performance, according to Mond.

Steel was first considered but was rejected in favor of plastic water pipe tubing which weighed less, cost half as much, was structurally sound and could be joined by glue rather than by welding (Howell Theatre has no welding facilities).

Box set

In "What The Butler Saw" the use of a full box set with a skylight was the major difficulty facing the tech crew. A box set has three-dimensional walls surrounding the action with a ceiling over a portion of the set. Working out the mechanics of the skylight which had a door in it and making the cornice which surrounds the ceiling light enough to be supported by the walls were two problems which were eventually solved.

"Taming of the Shrew" is the repertory touring production, and the need for the set to be able to be broken apart for storage and packed in a truck presented problems. This necessitated that some set units break down into as many as 12 units to be pieced together.

Touring

Going on tour presents special problems as a study of each town's theatre facilities will have to be made prior to the tour, according to Mond.

"Sound and lighting facilities, dressing, storage and loading areas will have to be checked in order to prepare for possible contingencies," Mond said. "A lot of time is involved in doing this." The tour includes Broken Bow, Kearney, Grand Island, Gothenburg and McCook.

Summer repertory seems to manage in spite of the handicaps of time, help and resources. "The major restriction is the size of the building (Temple) and the shape of the theatre," Lewis said. Howell is a reconvered opera house built in 1907. The building lacks a scene shop facility at stage level which necessitates the building of sets on stage. The scene shop is on third floor making it functional only as a storage area.

Repertory's 'Shrew' on tour

The Repertory Theatre's presentation of William Shakespeare's "The Taming of the Shrew" will be on tour the first week in September.

"Shrew," directed by Tice Miller, will perform in Grand Island, Kearney, Broken Bow,

Gothenburg, and McCook.

Gary Lamb, the music director of "Company," another Repertory Theatre production this summer, is the high school music instructor at McCook, one of the cities where "Shrew" will perform.

Mellerdrammers

Theatre Inc. of Lincoln will open its fourth and final production of the season at The Gas Light Theatre, 322 South 9th Street in Lincoln on Wednesday, August 8 at 9:00 p.m. and run on Wednesday through Saturday nights until September 1.

This presentation will be in the form of two individual plays. "Shoot Out At Hole In The Wall" is a fresh new approach to the over-popular Western Comedy. The story takes place at the turn of the century in Wyoming's notorious Hole-In-The-Wall country. When a good, honest couple set up shop in the midst of this den of outlaws and rustlers and a wagon load of ladies take refuge there problems erupt all over the place. Audiences of all ages will be delighted at one rollicking scene after another till the good guy and the bad guy meet in the final hilarious show down and shoot out at hole in the wall.

The second production "He Lured Her To The Primrose Path But He Was Nipped In The Bud" was written for the Fourth Cavalry's 20th Reunion and premiered at the University of Missouri's 1966 Homecoming weekend.

Wily Sidney Shift uses profits from fraudulent dealings with the Cavalry to live grandly at the White Hotel in Muddy Gap where he pursues the Heroine Alice White but Alice is loyal to the Cavalry, especially to P.F.C. Will Dew, the hero, and Will's horse. To save him she reluctantly agrees not wed Shift, unwittingly aiding his plot to seize the hotel. But virtue triumphs and Will rights wrong in true melodrama style.

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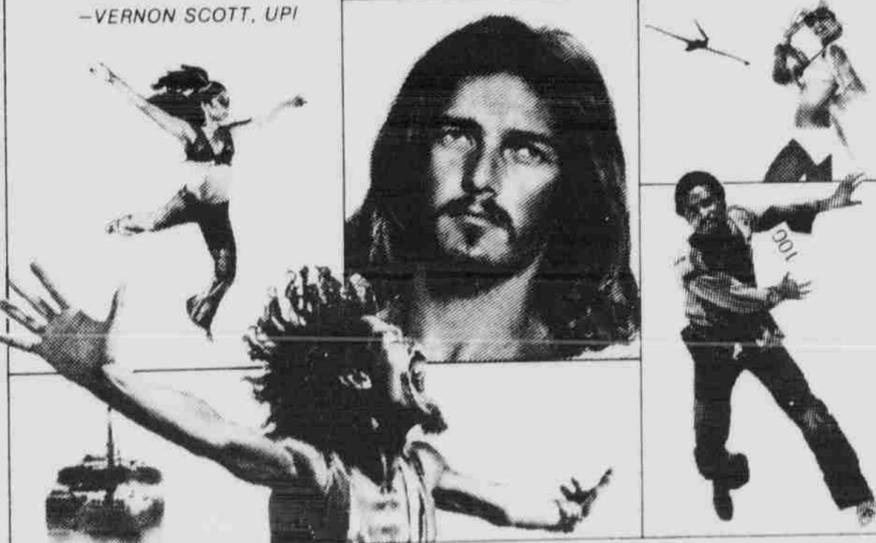
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