

Popular laser light and sound show could result in permanent program

By Casey McCabe

The persons who filled UNL's Ralph Mueller planetarium for three days of laser light and sound shows liked what they saw. And, the encouraging response results in a more permanent laser program.

Lawrence Goodridges' *Laserworks*, a portable laser show, visited Lincoln recently, played for sell-out crowds and stirred up considerable interest in the unique art form.

"There are a lot of negative images surrounding lasers, so it was gratifying to see such interest," according to planetarium director Jack Dunn. "It adds a different dimension to the planetarium, and it is a rather large departure from our regular shows, but I think it belongs here."

The set up is selling for \$30,000, a price which Dunn says is less than that of most systems.

He said the planetarium is a good place for the show and *Laserworks* poses no problems in physical set up, requires no special heavy-duty wiring and has no specific power requirements.

The portable unit also can be used for other types of programs, Goodridge said.

"The way the system is set up, it is specifically programmed, but still retains a live option to create other images," Dunn said. "It can vary from shows if desired. I like the artistic input in *Laserworks*, and the different possibilities.

Quite successful

"Other laser programs look like they have been put together by TV programmers. They are very nice, slick, and commercial, and are quite successful, but his (Goodridge's) is much more artistic and goes better with the music."

Dunn said other commercial laser shows include *Laserium*, which has a chain of 10 outlets around the country, and *Eye See the Light Show*. He said he has contacted both of these programs, but they are very expensive and not enough money could be made in the 100-seat planetarium.

"The laser show belongs in the planetarium, even though it is not astronomical in content," Dunn said. "The hemispherical dome is found to be best for these shows, and the whole idea fits into our program. Other places are doing regular light shows, and of the large planetariums around the country, only one is not currently doing work with lasers."

Dunn said that in the beginning, conservative planetariums wanted nothing to do with lasers, but soon were swayed by the greatly increased revenue they brought.

The use of lasers as an entertainment form did not gain much notice until about four years ago, and have picked up interest tremendously in the last two years, Dunn said. The stigma that surrounds the laser as being a dangerous object often has hindered its progress, he said.

Goodridge is intent on dismissing this theory and takes time out before his shows to explain the benefits and myths about the laser.

Useful tool

"We stress the laser as being a useful tool for man, not a death ray that's going to zap somebody," Dunn said. "There is no heat from these lasers. They couldn't melt an ice cube. The only possible danger is that of any bright light, a direct beam in the eye. Otherwise they are a perfectly safe form of entertainment."

But lasers have been subject to misuse, Dunn said. They have become increasingly popular in light shows for several rock groups and often have been used without thought, shining them directly onto the audience, he said. The government has been cracking down on these uses, and in most states guidelines for laser use have been established.

"We want to do programs, that people will enjoy, and get people interested in the planetarium," Dunn said. "And *Laserworks* certainly stirred up interest. Anything in the universe is possible and this is just another way of serving people."

Evening's recital marks 20th year

UNL School of Music piano instructor Larry Lusk will commemorate his twentieth year at UNL with a recital in Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery Auditorium at 8 p.m. Tuesday.

Lusk said he is confident and prepared for the recital because "at my ancient age of 45, I'm still learning. I'm constantly still making progress," he said.

Lusk will play piano compositions by four composers. The first piece will be "Sonata in E Minor" by Haydn. Lusk said it is a "very charming, fun piece that sounds simple but is harder than hell to play."

"Variations Serieuses, op. 54" by Mendelssohn will be second. Lusk called it "very light music by a guy who never had a trouble in life," but also said it contains almost every technique used in playing the piano.

Next will be nine "little gems" from "Visions Fugitives, op. 22" by Prokofiev, who Lusk described as "one of those composers kind of like Picasso or Stravinsky who tried everything there was to try."

The final selections are both by Chopin, four pieces from "Preludes, op. 28" and "Ballade in A-flat major, op. 47." Lusk said the last work, is "perhaps the most perfect piano piece ever written."

The concert is free to the public.

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