

# Workshop, troupe backing among masquer activities

By Debra L. Miller

The Nebraska Masquers, honorary service organization of the UNL Theater Department, have traditionally limited their activities to two or three events annually.

But as the theater department is changing and adapting to meet the challenges of displacement and the renovation of the Temple Building, so have the Masquers' activities expanded in the last several years.

In addition to its sponsorship of student productions, assistance with department promotion and publicity, and the serving of punch during intermissions of UNL productions, the group recently sponsored a workshop for students considering careers in professional theater.

The all-day workshop Saturday featured David Rosen, vice-president of the Actors Information Project (AIP), a New York-based organization founded and headed by Jay Perry, a former MFA graduate of UNL, for the assistance and support of young actors and actresses.

### Children's theater company

One of the more far-reaching projects undertaken by the Nebraska Masquers is their sponsorship of Progeny Players, a touring children's theater company.

According to Masquers' president Kathy Saylor, the troupe was formed in the fall semester of this year.

Originating as a fund-raising project, Progeny Players also provided an outlet and much-needed training ground for young actors and actresses interested in children's theater, Saylor said.

Masquers' sponsorship includes providing the company with funds for any sets, props, costumes and scripts necessary, Saylor said. Creative control of the company remains within the group.

### 'Improvisational approach'

The goal of Progeny Players was to perform "children's theater with an ensemble,

improvisational approach," said former UNL student Dennis "Dexter" Adams, the primary organizer and original director of the group.

"We also wanted to take children's theater out into the community, and hopefully get kids interested in the appeal of live theater at an early age," he said.

According to Adams, the original company of 12, and the scripts they performed (one of which he wrote himself) were fluid and versatile enough to be performed anywhere and with any or all members of the ensemble.

This versatility aided in coping with the frequent schedule conflicts of the actors, and increased the availability of the group for performers, Adams said.

Among the places Progeny Players has performed are many city elementary schools, the Adolescent Unit at the Regional Center, Beatrice State Hospital, the Easter Seals Christmas Party, and the Capitol Association for Retarded Citizens.

### Seven players

They have also performed under the auspices of the Lincoln City Parks and Recreation department.

The current Progeny Players consists of seven actors and actresses after spring semester schedule changes and departures caused a reorganization of the group, said Eric Hager, coordinator for the company.

Their new show, *Miss Muffet's Day*, is a story theater production based on group improvisations which were then formed into a set script, Hager said. Their presentation also includes a short mime workshop and a "lot of interaction with the kids."

Since Progeny Players is dependent upon donations by the groups they perform for, they will never be a huge money-maker for Masquers, Saylor said, but added that it's not really the purpose of the group.

For the members of Progeny Players, the important dividends are the valuable experience and appreciation they receive from their audiences.

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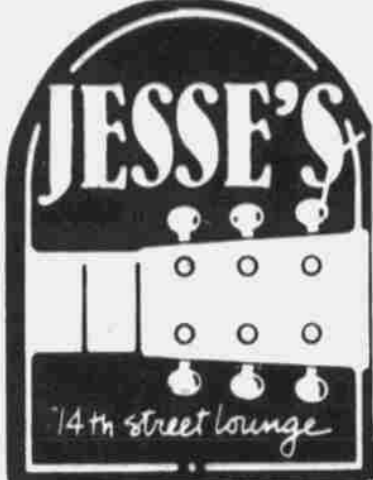
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