

arts/entertainment

Lincoln's streets to come alive with performers

By Patti Wieser

Setting up a permit allowing artists and street performers to perform and accept donations may be the result of combined efforts by Marc Willy, a.k.a. Marco the Clown, and officials from the mayor's office.

Willy, who made a presentation to the Downtown Advisory Committee, said he got an endorsement from it to go ahead with this project and to work with the mayor's office to set up a permit for artists and street performers.

Willy said he hopes the permit will be "a year permit which would allow performers to play and accept donations... there may

be some stipulations as to places in the downtown area (where) they can perform."

"Although there's been a lot of support from city officials, there's been some hesitancy from completely opening up the streets," Willy said. "So there may be some initial restrictions."

Grant to perform

To help initiate the project of street performing, Willy received a grant from the Nebraska Arts Council and the Lincoln Transportation System to perform at bus-stops as a mimic and clown two afternoons a week for four weeks, beginning May 7.

Elaine Carpenter, administrative assis-

tant to the mayor, said, "We're trying to explore ways in which to accommodate performers in the street and still not cause unnecessary obstructions to the merchants."

Some sort of permit will be involved, she said, but one which would not be necessary to obtain each day.

Right now a street performer needs a permit to perform. The permit costs five dollars a day and must be approved by the city council.

Willy said he hopes the permit will be good for one year, but Carpenter said the length has not been decided.

Nothing definite has resulted from their efforts.

Limitations needed

Some compromising as to what will be allowed will have to be done, said Willy. For the first year, he said, some city officials feel there need to be some limitations while testing it out. He said these limitations include restricting performing places in the downtown area.

"One thing city officials are concerned with is that citizens' private space is not violated... and that's something for performers to keep in mind, to respect," he said.

Willy said the mayor's office is expected to make a permit available so that anyone can perform in the streets if they get a permit. It may cost between \$3-\$5 and allow them to accept donations, he added.

Willy said he started working on the project because he received encouragement from students and citizens from his own street performances, mimes and characters. These characters include playing Cupid on St. Valentine's Day, a leprechaun on St. Patrick's Day and a May Day clown yesterday. He jokingly said he'd like to play a mummy during dead-week.

Encourage other performers

The main focus of Willy's efforts towards a new permit is to encourage artists and performers to play in downtown Lincoln, he said. He hopes to liven up the downtown atmosphere by having performers at all times. This would make Lincoln like other cities that have street performances, including San Francisco, New

Orleans and Boulder, he explained.

"Lincoln is ready for street theater, street performances," Willy said.

"The main thing I'm really hoping is that performers will take advantage of this opportunity and take advantage of the public areas... get Lincoln going... get Lincoln alive this summer," he said.

Willy set up a Lincoln Arts Festival booth and talked to hundreds of citizens, and received a "real positive response" to the idea of street performers, he said.

"Some said, 'this is just what the town needs,'" Willy said, adding that he talked to poets, musicians, dancers, comedians, clowns, jugglers and people who just want creative play and they seemed interested in his project.

"At this point, (there's) not really an organization of street performers but an encouragement of individuals to motivate themselves to perform."

Willy said he got started as a clown "by just going downtown and doing it."

Some negative response

He has studied mime and acting and joined a professional theater company, the Pied Pipers, when he was 15 years old. The Pied Pipers did children's theater and comedy theater.

Last fall, Willy also traveled with the Jungle Wonders Circus through Arkansas and Louisiana.

Through his years of performing, Willy said he has received both negative response and positive response.

"Mainly it's just people looking angry and ignoring and occasionally calling me names—verbal abuse," he said. This is caused, he explained, by people feeling threatened by something new.

He said, however, "The few negative responses do not even stop my enthusiasm from all the positive responses."

Willy said he plans to set up a booth in the Nebraska Union North Lobby, Monday and Tuesday, to talk to interested performers about the project.

This month the project should be completed, he said.

"The mayor is really behind street performers," Willy said.



Photo by Tom Gessner

Marc Willy recently has been seen on campus as a variety of characters. On St. Valentine's Day he played Cupid, on St. Patrick's Day a leprechaun and on May Day, he was a May Day clown. Jokingly, he said he'd play a mummy during dead week.

UNL graduate assistant wins national playwriting contest

A UNL graduate teaching assistant in theater has been named the winner of Wichita State University Theatre's sixth national playwriting contest.

Dale Wilson, who will receive an MFA in Playwriting in August and is currently working toward a Ph.D. in theater won \$250 for his full-length play "Penny Dreadfuls."

The winner of three earlier playwriting awards, Wilson said either his new play or the second-place winner will be produced by the Wichita State Experimental Theatre in the fall of 1980.

"Penny Dreadfuls," which is scheduled to be presented by the UNL Theatre Department in the spring of 1981, "concerns the people of a small and dying community

in southern West Virginia," Wilson said.

"The story centers on a young girl who has a religious 'vision' only to be propelled into 'stardom' by the selfish desires of those around her," said Wilson, who has been selected the General Manager—Artistic Director of summer theater activities at the University of Evansville in Indiana for the second year.

Wilson has also won playwriting awards for his "Surprise Party for Mrs. Meeker," "And In The Land Of Tyrants," and "Flight of The Albatross," which was produced in UNL's Studio Theatre in 1979.

He is also the author of "Charles Dickens—A Christmas Carol," which holds the record for sales and attendance at both the Universities of Evansville and UNL.

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