

Lifelong practice pays off for singer



By Sarah Duey
Staff Reporter

You never know when someone will be watching you. For that reason, Mary Penner, a senior speech communications major and a member of Scarlet & Cream, said that every time she performed, she gave it her best.

"Everyone has one chance in life to make or break it," she said. "Every audition, every show you do, you should go for it."

Penner is taking all of the chances she gets. Along with seven other Scarlet & Cream members, Penner will tour the Mediterranean for eight weeks this summer with the United Service Organization.

Although this is Penner's first singing job out of the United States, she worked for two summers at Worlds of Fun in Kansas City, Mo.

"Working for Worlds of Fun was my first taste of being away from home," she said. "More than anything, though, it was the first performing job I got paid for."

Her show at Worlds of Fun, called "Stax of Wax," involved five costume changes. She performed this 27-minute show six times a day, six days a week.

"The atmosphere was very comfortable, even though the other performers were older," Penner said. "Most were students from different universities, so that made it really fun."

And Penner has devoted more than just her summers to music.

Her earliest memory of singing was at age 2. The day after her tonsils were removed, she was home singing.

In fourth grade, Penner said she received positive reinforcement from teachers about her musical talents. Her parents had her take lessons. Along with using her voice, Penner learned to play the flute and piano.

She started performing in the geriatric section of the Beatrice Community Hospital. Both Penner's mother and grandmother were volunteer nurses



Shaun Sarin/DN

Mary Penner, a senior speech communication major and a member of Scarlet & Cream, will tour the Mediterranean this summer with the USO. Penner is one of nine UNL students taking part on the tour.

at the hospital, so they encouraged her to perform, she said.

"My grandma would also take me to her sewing circle and I would perform," she said.

The youngest of four in a "super supportive" family, Penner said her family encouraged her in a million ways.

"I will never be able to pay them back for making me sing."

Penner said she also had one of her voice teachers to thank. Throughout high school, Penner took lessons from Bernie Wherry in Pawnee City.

"She was the best thing that happened to me," she said. "She's the lady that gave me style. She put forth the idea that each person had their own individual personality that should be brought out when singing."

"When people see me perform, they see a different person. It's confidence from something you've done for so long."

Penner's dedication has paid off. She's performed with Scarlet & Cream for four years. Since sixth grade, Penner said she kept a file on Scarlet & Cream.

"It was always my goal," she said. Step by step, Penner said she worked her way up to being an active member of the group.

"My experience with the group turned out to be nothing like I imagined it to be," she said.

"Some of my lifelong friends will be from this organization."

Scarlet & Cream selected for Mediterranean tour

By Sarah Duey
Staff Reporter

Nine members of Scarlet & Cream will tour the Mediterranean this summer with the United Service Organizations.

The group will perform for the USO for eight weeks at military bases in Spain, Sicily, Sandidnia, Italy, Greece, Turkey, Crete, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain.

“It will be the summer of a lifetime.”

Callahan, sophomore Family Science major

Scarlet & Cream videotaped its pre-audition, and after a live interview with a lieutenant from the USO in November, the group was chosen to tour.

Because of costs, the government can afford to send only nine members of the 21-member group. But not only will the government pay for the trip, it also will pay the performers.

Selected to tour were: Sandra Koch, piano player, Brent Kuenning, Travis Turpin, Kevin Witcher, Corey Hurlbert, Jennifer Callahan, Aubrie

Washburn, Mary Penner and Tricia Turpin.

Penner, a senior, said the group started working on its show about a month and a half ago and practiced four times a week.

The show will be well-rounded, Penner said, with a '20s medley, '40s medley and a contemporary medley. The group will perform enough music for a two-hour show, with four solos for each person.

Callahan, a sophomore family science major, said, "It will be neat to represent the university and America as a whole."

"Through our music we hope to bring the (service) men closer together and we will become closer ourselves."

"We are all really excited to be able to share different types of music, our singing, dancing and acting with people that are so far away."

"It will be the summer of a lifetime."

Corey Hurlbert, a senior broadcasting and marketing major, said, "We hope to provide a good time for these men. We will be bringing a piece of America to them."

"Being exposed to different people and situations, the trip will be like no other experience we've had."

Author presents erotica as art



"In Praise of the Stepmother"
Mario Vargas Llosa
Penguin Books

By Mark Baldrige
Senior Reporter

Mario Vargas Llosa is no ordinary writer.

He's one of the foremost of the South American "boom writers" and one of Peru's greatest writers ever. (His other works include "Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter" and "The Storyteller.")

But his latest novel, "In Praise of the Stepmother," is no ordinary book.

Though it was a national bestseller in 1990, it's not the kind of work the National Endowment for the Arts would be quite up to funding these days.

It's an excellent book, and a damned good read, but it's probably a little too racy for the self-appointed censors among us.

However, if "Stepmother" appeals to the prurient interests, it does so in the context of high art.

It is simply that rarest of items, a good erotic novel.

Too often the act of writing an erotic work sends otherwise excellent authors into goofy self-parody. And while it's no crime for a novel to refuse to take itself seriously, one can begin to wonder if it's possible for erotica to be anything more than fluff.

Science fiction, as an example of genre, is full of good ideas and memorable characters. There's lots of trash too, of course. But it's at least possible for a science-fiction novel to be a good book as well.

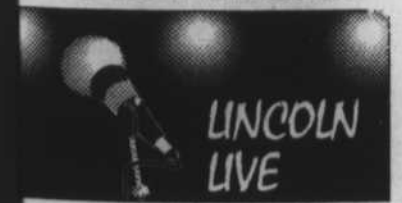
Llosa is one of the writers who has done for erotica what, say, writers like Ursula K. LeGuin did for sci-fi: He has brought art into the arena.

But that's not all he's done. "Stepmother" goes where other erotic writ-

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'Ethno-clectic' Decades hit Duffy's

Four-member band features husband, wife combination



By Laura Ray
Staff Reporter

The music of The Decades could be described as a mixture of folk, jazz, classical and ethnic rock, one band member said.

The Decades' guitarist Eric Rea said, "We've been using a phrase to describe our music lately — ethno-clectic."

The Decades, who have been going strong for the past year, will play tonight at Duffy's Tavern, 1412 O St.

Based in Omaha, the band is made up of Rea, Rea's wife Mary, lead singer; Steven Ziegler, bass; and Blake Engelhard, drums.

The Reas formed the band three years ago and adopted Engelhard to replace the old drummer in January.

Eric Rea said he was in a few small bands before The Decades, but "nothing of note." He is the main songwriter for the band, but his wife and the other members also contribute.

Rea said he has many different musical influences, including Richard Thompson, Neil Young, and Duke Ellington.

The band members have different personalities, interests and tastes, Rea said, all of which add a twist to the band's music.

Although playing with The Decades has made him poorer, Rea said he enjoys touring. The group has played at bars in Miami, Denver, and Chicago.

Rea said touring has been a learning experience.

One of the worst learning experiences the band has had happened one month ago in a Lincoln bar. Mary lost her voice just before the show. The opening band played a little longer and Eric Rea sang as many songs as he could.

Then the Yardapes walked in. This Lincoln band did a set of their own on The Decades' instruments, for which Rea said he was grateful.

"Basically, people everywhere are pretty nice," he said. "There aren't as many jerks in the world as you might think."

Rea said he'd like to play music for a living because it is one of the things that motivates him.

When he gets up in the morning, Rea said, his biggest goals are "to keep pursuing the band, music, and my wife." The Decades' show begins at about 10 p.m. Cover charge is \$3.



The Decades