

# Playhouse stages new look

BY IEVA AUGSTUMS  
Staff Reporter

After four months, the curtain has risen again at the Lincoln Community Playhouse.

The playhouse, 2500 S. 56th St., closed its doors to the public June 24 and allowed Brager Construction to take over the director's chair for its latest production: renovation.

A project made possible through the 1996 capital campaign, A Time to Act, raised \$750,000 through community support and donations to remodel the 26-year-old building. Part of the money, \$300,000, was used to pay the playhouse's debts for past projects.

The remaining money, a \$450,000 birthday present in honor of the playhouse's 50th anniversary, literally brought down the house with jackhammers, ladders and construction workers scattered throughout, Rod McCullough, executive director of LCP said.

The season premiere performance of "The Secret Garden" on Oct. 31 marked the end of renovations.

"The mainstage was finished only 1 1/2 hours before curtain," McCullough said. "A little pressed for time, yes, but the final results were worth the stress."

Renovations include a larger entryway, an expanded lobby, bigger doors, new restrooms, new heating and air-conditioning units, new ceilings, new carpet, a fresh coat of paint, new lights, reupholstered and cushioned seats and additional seating for handicapped persons.

McCullough said the main reason for the remodeling was to take care of the heating and air flow throughout the building. The addition of other items, such as automatic doors and additional bathroom stalls, were added in the process.

"We wanted to do as much as we

“It's reassuring that there is still great support and concern for the fine arts.”

ROD MCCULLOUGH  
executive director, Lincoln Community Playhouse

could with the amount of money we had," McCullough said.

He said 62 percent of the playhouse's budget is raised from ticket sales, tuition and concessions. The other 38 percent comes from the community.

"We are very thankful for the generous community we have," said McCullough. "It's reassuring that there is still great support and concern for the fine arts."

Major contributors for A Time to Act include Dale Jensen, National Bank of Commerce, Woods Charitable Fund, The Acklie Charitable Foundation, Aliant Communications, Ameritas and the Rogers Foundation.

Beginning as the Cirlet Theatre, LCP has been serving the community since 1946, and had to relocate three times in search of more space.

"The playhouse has been housed here on 56th Street since 1972," McCullough said. "Until the recent renovations, nothing has been changed since then."

McCullough said some construction was done when the Children's Theatre opened in 1980, but no significant changes were made to the building and Mainstage Theater.

Playhouse employees and patrons felt tension and anxiety throughout the summer, McCullough said. Many of the summer workshops, including theater classes and the Theatre Arts Academy, were relocated to The Wagon Train Project, 517 S. Seventh St.

"There was a slight inconvenience placed on the community," McCullough said. "However, participation was high, and actually the enrollment for our summer programs overflowed once again."

Tryouts and rehearsals for the 1997-98 season were also affected by the renovations.

Ken McCartney, a University of Nebraska-Lincoln freshman pre-med and biochemistry major and LCP actor in "The Secret Garden," said it was awkward trying out and rehearsing on a stage that was in an auditorium with no carpet or chairs.

"We had a hard time with rehearsals," McCartney said. "The Secret Garden is a musical, and trying to learn lines and sing in a large empty room was extremely difficult. It was like a large echo chamber."

The whole construction process was hard for everyone, but overall the cast and production crew did well, McCartney said.

"I realize opening one's mouth and swallowing dust wasn't the best situation," McCullough said. "But we tried to accommodate production members to our best abilities."

Beth Whitaker, a UNL biological science research technologist and LCP season-ticket holder, said the renovations help make the theater more impressive and up to date.

"The renovations have given the playhouse a nice, fresh look," Whitaker said.



## Robbery

Four people leaving a house Saturday night were held at gunpoint with a shotgun, and one man's wallet was taken.

The 20-year-old Papillion man told Lincoln police that he and three others were walking out of a house on the 2500 block of S Street about midnight. As they approached his car, a man with a sawed-off or short barrel

shotgun approached them, pointed the gun at them and demanded money.

The Papillion man gave the man with the gun his wallet — a \$37 loss — and the man forced the group into the car. He then fled eastbound.

The man described the gunman as a black man, 5 feet 8 inches tall and 115 pounds. He was wearing a dark hooded sweat shirt and blue jeans.

# Target aims to restore national monuments

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Thacker said his company had helped restore U.S. national parks for several years, donating about \$12 million, and it wanted to become involved with a project of national prominence.

"Two years ago, we went to the national parks and said we wanted to be identified with one really important thing we could do — something that would be very symbolic and appeal to the whole mass of America, and we'd like to adopt that," Thacker said.

Thacker said the National Park Service suggested that Target help restore the badly deteriorating Washington Monument.

Thacker said Target adopted the plan, and visited the monument to see its cracking walls, broken elevator and damaged interior.

"We raised \$5 million in one year in hopes that the monument would be restored by the millennium," Thacker said.

He said the deteriorating monument should be complete by 2000, until when it will have an architecturally designed scaffolding.

Thacker said he requested the services of Michael Graves, a prominent architect who designed a scaffolding at his cost.

He said the scaffolding would be a silver, aluminum structure with blue grid work. The grid work would be a mesh-like substance which would allow people to view the lighted monument through the scaffolding at night, he said.

"I wanted the monument to still be a piece of art while it's being restored," Thacker said.

He said if the monument were to have traditional scaffolding, people, especially children, would not be able to enjoy it.

"The monument is a 50-story building and it dominates the skyline. The thought of 2 million people, and especially about 1.5 million school kids, seeing an eyesore would really be a crime," Thacker said.

Thacker said he also wanted to insure Target had a liaison to work between the company and the National Parks Service, which is restoring the building.

He said Bob Ripley, who lives in Lincoln and is also a UNL graduate,

“The thought of 2 million people ... seeing an eyesore would really be a crime.”

BOB THACKER  
vice president marketing for Target

was a nationally recognized authority on restoration projects.

Ripley also is heading the restoration of the Nebraska State Capitol.

"I wanted to make sure that we had someone who really was an authority on historic buildings, who is an architect, who knew government and who has a national reputation in restoration and architecture — and we got Bob Ripley — he's a gem right here in Lincoln," Thacker said.

Thacker said visitors would ride to the top of the newly renovated Washington Monument in a partly glass elevator, where they would be able to see the stones that represent different states and cities.

He said the stones also were deteriorated, and that he would request the help of the respective states or cities to restore them.

Thacker said another man from Lincoln, associated with the Save Outdoor Sculpture group, was assisting Target with its other goal — restoring 100 monuments across the nation.

An exhibit featuring the 100 monuments Thacker said Target would restore, will be at the base of the monument.

The monument, along with the 100 other exhibits, would be unveiled in a collective celebration of the millennium.

The renovation of the monuments is a part of Target's community service efforts, which Thacker said are unprecedented in the retail industry.

"The reason you do it is because it strengthens the community. You can't have a great store if the town isn't strong," he said.

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