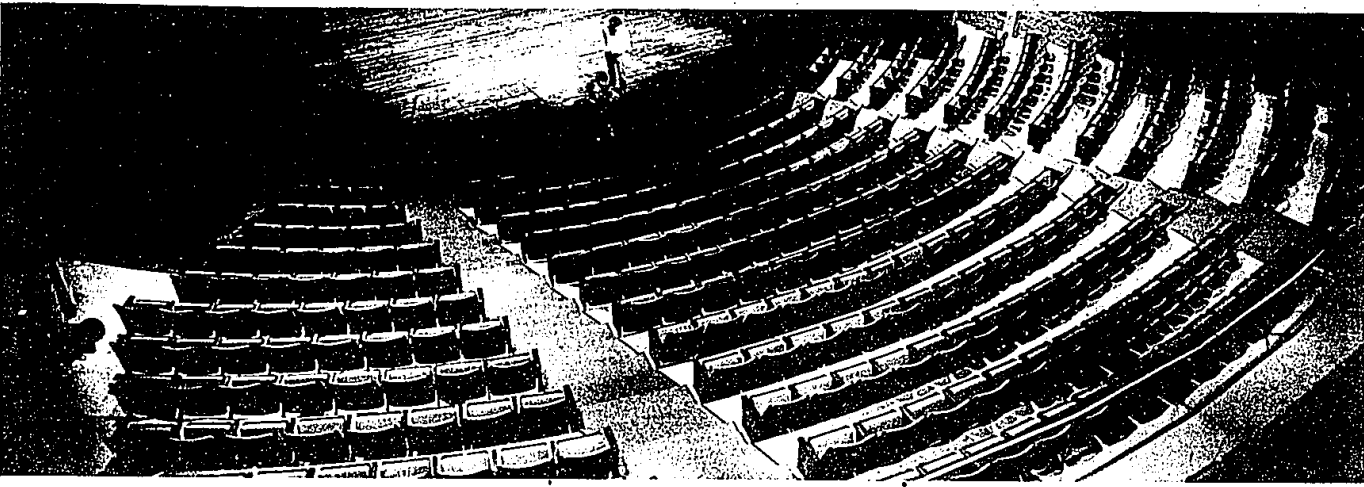




Intimacy is cue for new theater at Orchard Ridge

By Mary Klemic
staff writer

Camera, lights and action will be on the stagebill when Oakland Community College's Fine Arts Theatre makes its debut this month.

Four years in the planning, the theater is the first such structure at the college, according to Wallace Smith, professor of communications in the communications arts and technical department at OCC. And the new building was well worth the wait, he said.

"It's an acoustical gem," Smith said. "It's well equipped and that's a plus."

Smith said highlights of the new structure include its computer memory lighting system and its recording capabilities.

With the computer memory, as many as 150 lighting cues can be pre-set. The theater is fully equipped for "full scale TV recording," along with eight-track audio recording, he said.

"We will do live concert recording, and that's a real unique thing," he said. "There are not any facilities I know of that are equipped that way."

"It's a real plus for the students." The theater seats 420. "There are so many high school auditoriums in the

Farmington, Southfield, West Bloomfield area that are 8,000 to 12,000 seats, we decided to go with an intimate setting," Smith said.

Smith, who is producer and director of the theater, was a consultant on its planning.

Instead of the traditional proscenium stage, the state of OCC's Fine Arts Theatre "thrusts" out into the audience.

Included in the theater's first season,

starting Jan. 27, are three series — featuring speakers from Channel 7, dance and music. There will also be dinner theatres, college productions and a visit from the Second City touring company.

"There's a whole season of things coming up," Smith said.

The structure, situated on the site of the old amphitheater, was built with a \$1.8 million bond issue, according to

Smith. This included renovation of the fine arts area, such as sculpture and ceramics, he said.

Smith said the college became heavily involved into video production several years ago and saw the fine arts area was lacking, which led to construction of the theater.

"It's a real important addition to a person's education," he said. "Our culture is so mechanically oriented."



Wallace Smith, professor of communications at the Orchard Ridge campus, sits in the new theater

which he calls "an acoustical gem."

Keeper of the light

Kevin Moore, left, although his degree study interests lie elsewhere, has found time to enjoy working in the world of theater by putting light on the playhouse.

Staff photos by
Randy Borst



Keith Trolie, left, and Karl Apel, both of Farmington Hills, have found a major interest in the various aspects of theater production. In the new Orchard Ridge

theater they have opportunities to hone their skills. Here they work on getting the sound quality just right.



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