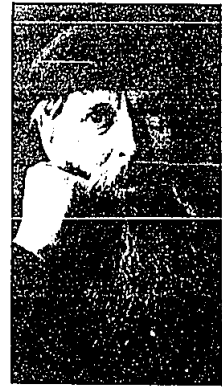




Wallace F. Smith takes center stage in the 420-seat theater that bears his name.



# Theater design is labor of love

By Jean Adamczak  
staff writer

While many buildings are named after benefactors or prominent persons — often posthumously — the new theater building at Oakland Community College Orchard Ridge campus is an exception.

The Wallace F. Smith Performing Arts Theatre stands in tribute to a man who is very much alive and who is a vital part of OCC's theater department.

"It's an exhilarating, indescribable experience," says Smith as he surveys his theateric creation.

"People are sometimes surprised when I answer the phone (at OCC). They say things like 'Oh, I didn't know you were still alive!'"

Smith, 44, has been particularly active for the past six years designing and supervising the construction of the theater. He has transformed the once-

open air amphitheater into an enclosed facility noted for hosting string entertainment and celebrities.

Last weekend, blues and jazz singer Ursula Walker performed in the Farmington Hills facility. The Harbinger troupe performed in February as well as jazz musician Larry Nozoro. Jazz pianist Dess Bonnier opened the season in January.

That such talent is willing to perform at the facility is a tribute to Smith's genius in designing the facility.

"THE ACOUSTIC ability in here is great, very adjustable," says Smith.

He took great care in designing the theater to cater to the comfort of the audience and the performers. Visual and sound perception is excellent from every seat in the house, according to Smith, and the performers enjoy working in the midst of such fine facilities.

The theater, which seats 420, was constructed on the site of the outdoor

amphitheater. Smith designed the 28-foot-deep, 45-foot-wide stage with the dancers in mind.

"The hardwood floor has some resiliency for dancers, while the acoustics of the house are a big advantage for theater people and musicians."

The budget would have allowed a 800-900-seat theater, but it was a good decision by campus provost Dick Thompson to go with the smaller theater, enabling us to better equip and maintain it properly," says Smith.

Smith is adamant about the theater providing a professional experience for the students.

"Most educational theater is cluttered, self-contained, with the same staff for years," Smith says.

He likes to bring people in from outside to work with students giving them a whole other perspective on what theater is about.

Smith likes to have the students involved with visiting directors, stage

managers and set designers. According to Smith, this is not often done in many places.

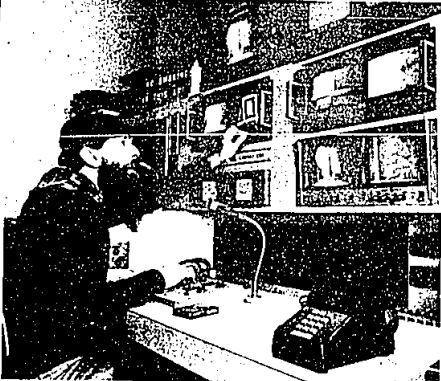
"Usually folks are afraid to let people in and learn new things," he says.

In addition to being artistic director of the theater, Smith is also involved with the Touring Chamber Theatre Group, which travels to communities in southeastern Michigan.

"We play to all kinds of audiences, from pre-schoolers through senior citizens," he says, adding that his wife, Marilee, and daughter, Eden, also participate.

The enjoyment Smith gets from his work is evident in the way he speaks about acting and directing.

"It's great fun, and I want to stay here indefinitely. I have a good relationship with the people here and it's a good community to work in. There is a phenomenal amount of talent in this area."



The video control room serves the theater and the television production classes where Wallace Smith is also an instructor.

## INSIDE ANGLES

Know someone doing something notable? Let us know. Write: Inside Angles, Farmington Observer, 23352 Farmington Road, Farmington 48024.

**SUSAN SOLOMON**, daughter of Amin and Anita Solomon of Farmington Hills, was one of 13 students admitted to the Honors College at Michigan State University. Admission to the Honors College is open to all students who demonstrate outstanding scholastic ability. MSU Honors College students and their advisers develop academic programs tailored to individual needs and interests. Susan was recently appointed assistant director of MSU's academic orientation programs. She graduated from Harrison High School in 1982.

**MAUREEN HAYES**, daughter of Mary O'Sullivan of Farmington, was crowned Maid of Erin at the Irish American Club of Detroit. Her prize is a trip to Ireland this summer. Deirdre Holland of Farmington Hills was first runner-up and Colleen O'Connor of Plymouth was second runner-up.

**REGISTRATION FOR** for South Farmington Little League will be Wednesday from 7-9 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in Farmington High School, 32000 Silwassee. General meeting is Wednesday, March 14, at 7:30 p.m. in Farmington High School cafeteria. On Saturday, March 17, from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. there will be a coaches clinic in the Farmington High School gym.

**THE 13th ANNUAL International Fair** will be held in the Grille of the Wayne State University Student Center Building from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Thursday. Student organizations will create displays reflective of their native countries, sell ethnic foods and craft items and provide an international program of music and entertainment. The Fair is sponsored by the WSU Student Center and Program Activities office and the International Services office.

**DETROIT COUNTRY DAY SCHOOL** cheerleaders were on the receiving end of the cheering last week as they placed sixth nationally in the Miss Drill Team, U.S.A. — International Competition at Santa Monica College, Santa Monica, California. Among a "cast of thousands" (including teams from South Africa, Japan and Australia), as coaches Maggie d'Allemard and Chris Johnson phrased it, the seven member squad (smallest at the event), scored 268 out of a possible 300 points for spirit, execution, precision, gymnastics, stunts, appearance and poise. Lisa Giola of Farmington Hills was one of the cheerleaders. Congratulations.

**PAMELA SLACK**, daughter of Marsha and Bill Slack of Farmington Hills, was inducted into

Phi Chi Theta, the women's professional business fraternity. Pamela is a marketing student at Central Michigan University.

**WITH THE HELP** of Len Finegood of Farmington Hills and Charles Roame of Birmingham, 27 visually impaired students have met the challenge of skiing. They are two of 30 Michigan State University student volunteers sharing their time and skiing skills with students at the Michigan School for the Blind. Each volunteer must go through a four-hour training session before guiding students down the slopes. A simulated blindness exercise requires that the volunteer be blindfolded to experience skiing without sight. Finegood, a Junior majoring in packaging, is the son of Delores and Harold Finegood and a 1980 graduate of Harrison High School.

**WILLIAM FRANCIS DORAN IV**, son of William and Judith Doran of Farmington Hills, placed 18 out of 26,000 Michigan students in the Michigan Competitive Mathematical Examination this school year and was awarded \$125. Bill, a senior at the University of Detroit Jesuit High School, is described by Christopher Buryta, chairman of the mathematics department, as a good example of the type of student attending U of D Jesuit High. After graduation he expects to major in theoretical mathematics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology or Princeton.

**HENRY FORD HOSPITAL'S** "Prostate-bite Hotline" has been replaced by a Spring Sports Hotline, with tips on conditioning the inactive body for softball, tennis, swimming etc. Call 876-2800 anytime for the taped phone message. A second hotline 876-7100 gives information about some bad habits we can break to reduce our chances of developing heart disease.

**MARION MOLT**, of Farmington Hills, retired Feb. 29 from the Metropolitan National Bank of Farmington. Marion has been working at the bank since 1967 and was branch manager and assistant vice president. She received many gifts.

**ELEANOR EVENSON**, of Farmington Hills, received a ten year pin at a dinner honoring 26 employees of the Cottage Hospital of Grosse Pointe. The award was presented by Ralph Wilgarde, administrator.

**DEIRDRE MARIE HOLLAND**, daughter of James and Maretta Holland of Farmington Hills and a 1982 graduate of Dearborn Divine Child High School, is the recipient of the 1984 Alhambra Scholarship awarded by International Order of Alhambra to students majoring in special education with outstanding academic performance. Deirdre has also been named to the first honors dean's list at Madonna College in Livonia for the fall term of 1983. Deirdre is a sophomore majoring in special education.

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