

# Masks aid students in learning how to act

Through the use of masks Leslie Geddis of Farmington Hills, Leslie Straus of Southfield, and Paul Sugar of Livonia discovered exciting new aspects of acting.

"Masks help the student learn to use the body, and on stage the body is the main means of communication," says Sears Eldredge, instructor of the Mask and Improvisation class at Michigan State University.

"The mask frees the student physically and emotionally," says Eldredge, "and, consequently, the students create some amazing responses with their bodies instead of their faces."

Miss Geddis, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. George Geddis, 2847 Green Willow, is a 1974 graduate of Our Lady of Mercy High School. She is a sophomore at MSU and is enrolled in James Madison College, a residential college with a curriculum emphasizing a multi-disciplinary approach to public policy problems. She is a member of the MSU Fencing Club.

Miss Straus, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Rudolph J. Straus, 27655 Pierce, is a 1975 graduate of Southfield-Lathrup High School. She is a freshman at MSU, enrolled in Justin Morrill College.

Sugar, son of Dr. and Mrs. Maurice Sugar, 20031 Maplewood, is a 1975

graduate of Clarenceville High School. He is a freshman at MSU, majoring in telecommunications.

During the first few weeks of class, students work with neutral masks which are completely without emotion.

"The function of this mask is to universalize the actor," says Eldredge, "which gets rid of the actor's personal idiosyncracies, and finds the movements which are common to all of us."

Students learn to walk, sit, pick up pencils, move about the room without giving off a sense of emotion or personality.

"This neutral state is not static, however," says Eldredge. "It is very dynamic, the engine is still running, and the actor is ready to take off in many new directions."

"Through the use of the neutral mask, the actor begins to see his own self as a character," says Eldredge, "and by giving up his personal traits the actor has greater potential to create varied characterizations."

"For example, Dustin Hoffman is an actor who creates many varied characters as opposed to someone like Cary Grant, who always plays a similar personality," says Eldredge.

After the students understand the concept of the neutral mask, Eldredge

introduces masks of emotion, which are simple white masks with a minimum of black lines conveying emotions such as anger, joy, and disgust.

"Students discover what a particular mask tells them to do, in terms of physical movement and sounds," says Eldredge. "When the actor transforms himself, the audience knows immediately if it works."

During the class period students critique each other and then go back to further explore the characterization of their masks. When students want to talk to each other out of character, they must take off the mask.

The third type of mask used by students is one they have made themselves. This mask, which must be simple and expressive, is usually made from papier-mache over a clay mold. Students choose the age, sex and personality of their mask, as well as a costume for it.

"The students explore the life that the self-made mask prompts them to create," says Eldredge.

"Students work with each others' masks in order to get a wider range of characterization for each mask."

After finding the appropriate character of the mask, the students integrate the characters in a theatrical performance. "which will probably turn out to be a comedy or a farce," says Eldredge.



Learning new aspects in acting through the use of masks are (from left) Paul Sugar of Livonia, Leslie Straus of Southfield and Leslie Geddis of Farmington Hills.

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## Women's programs study is finished

A national study of women's programs at community colleges has been completed by Dr. Don Nichols, dean of students, at Oakland Community College's Orchard Ridge Campus.

The study resulted from Nichols' role as advisor of the Womencenter, a campus and community organization which sponsors programs for women.

Nichols will be presenting his findings at the American Association for Junior Colleges Convention next March in Washington, D.C.

"The interest in, and success of, our program made us wonder about what was happening at colleges across the country," he said.

An 86 per cent return was achieved on a survey sent to deans at 630 colleges and is seen as an indication of the great interest in programs for women, he said.

Half of the two year colleges offer

special programs for women students. The survey indicated that programs are financed directly by the colleges and student fees. However it is rare to find formerly organized Women's Resource Centers, such as Orchard Ridge's Womencenter, Nichols concluded.

"We were particularly interested in the perceptions of deans," commented Nichols, "on the degree of concern for women at their colleges. Our findings show that 77 per cent of the deans perceived their institution as having a high, or moderate concern."

The Orchard Ridge Womencenter is currently offering a series on Women's issues for campus and community members.

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