# Duke 1000

# DEPARTMENT Of THEATER STUDIES

The posters, playbills and photographs here assembled represent an infinitesimal fraction of the theater produced at Duke, whether by student groups, outside professionals working in Duke venues or academic departments. Nonetheless they trace how theater on campus has evolved. The original Trinity College charter in fact forbade theater. But as in other antitheatrical times and places, it persevered and even flourished. By 1915 touring companies regularly presented on campus.

Amateur theater's emergence into prominence is owed to Helen Cantrell, a student, and Gladys Gross, a chemistry professor's spouse who became Duke's first de facto instructor of theater. The success of their pioneering club was vertiginous: within a few years it had more members than any other campus organization and was folded into the English department. Under Professor Alfred West, who came to Duke from the North Carolina College for Women, the group was transformed. No longer a student club, "Duke Players" had its programming steered by West and supported by his "Play Production" course – the first in technical theater to be offered by the university.

After West's death arrived Kenneth Reardon, who worked with Trinity Dean Herbert Herring to enshrine theater as an academic subject. Reardon oversaw the building of a scene shop and theater in Branson Hall on East Campus; Herring doubled the theater faculty to two. Multiple courses were tied to the production season, mimicking the approach at other universities. All the same, a 1958 Planning Committee Report called Duke's investment "lamentably inferior" to its peers and recommended an arts center and a more robust arts curriculum. The plan went unrealized.

But successes were on the horizon. Leveraging from a report that implored Duke to "accept ... the arts as respectable intellectual pursuits," the newly hired John Clum, together with other sympathetic English professors, inaugurated a Drama Program followed by a major. Reardon's Duke Players evolved again into a student-run club operating alongside faculty professionals, including more technicians and acting teachers.

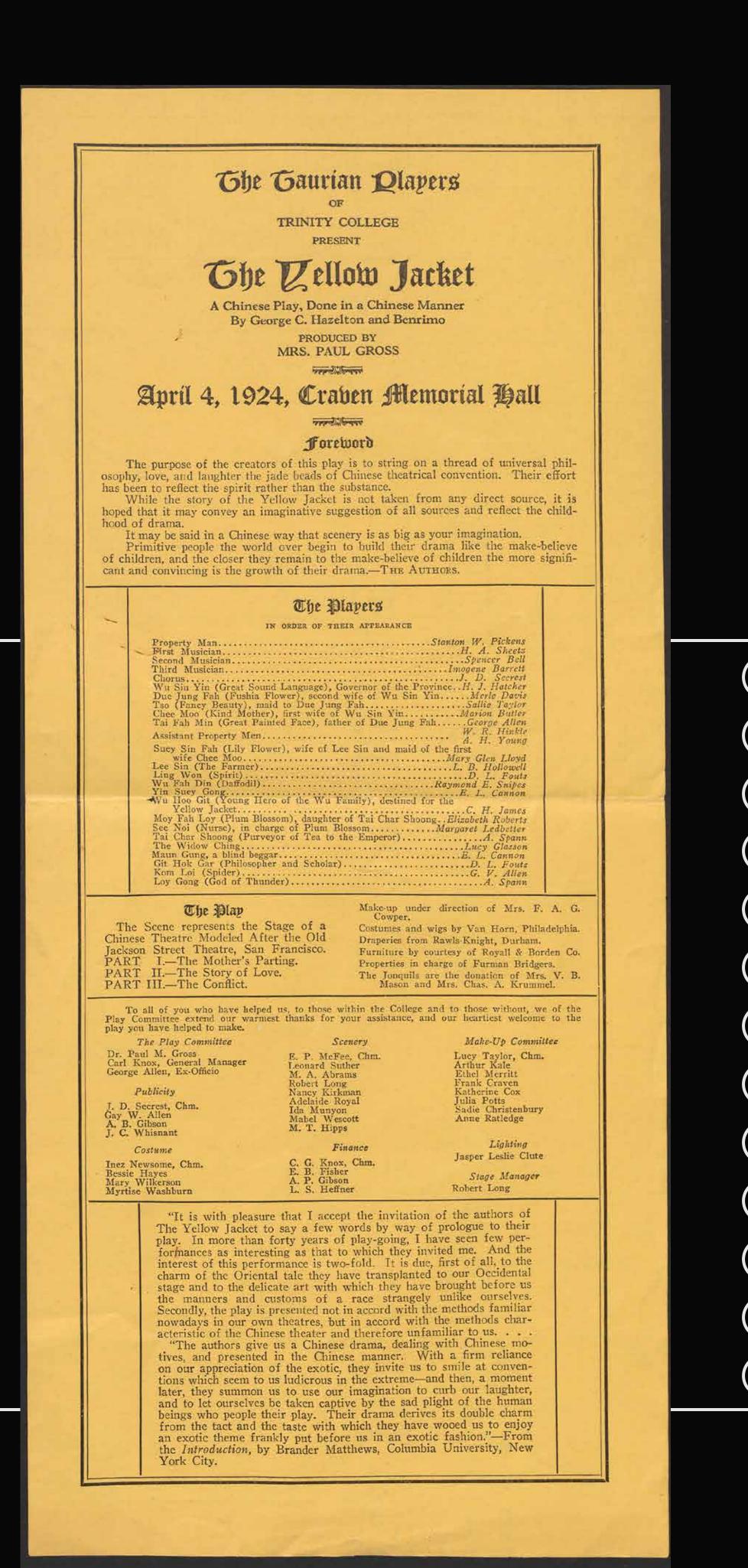
Eventually, under the leadership of Richard Riddell, Theater Studies became its own department.

Today its faculty is larger than ever, with an endowed chair of playwriting joined by equally sized cohorts of acting professors, stage designers and theater historians. In other words, the department has never more fully bridged creative to humanistic study or more fully synthesized theory and practice. Even as it celebrates Duke's centennial and the fiftieth anniversary of the major, then, this exhibit urges us to imagine the still-stronger century ahead.

R. Darren Gobert

Chair, Department of Theater Studies





1921

Under the direction of Gladys Gross, student Helen Cantrell starts Trinity College Dramatic Club

A FAMOUS REVIVAL!

The Taurian Players Present

To Inaugurate Their Freshly Renovated and Greatly Improved

**NEW TAURIAN GRAY-ROOM** 

On Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday Evenings February 15, 16, 17, 18, 1928, at 8:30 p.m.

BLACK-EY'D SUSAN

or: ALL IN THE DOWNS

In Two Acts and Several Scenes (The curtain will be drawn once in Act I.)

A nautical Drama of pathos and gaiety, of suffering and surprise, written by Douglas JERROLD, the "Surrey Shakespeare"; based on the well-known ballad by the author of "The Beggar's Opera"; first performed 26th Jan., 1829, at the Surrey Theatre, London, and later repeated with enormous success at the Adelphi and elsewhere; but not known to have been publicly performed in America since 1838; with a new Prologue specially written for this performance by Mr MITCHELL.

Personae Dramatis

First Mate, also a rogue

CAPTAIN CROSSTREE - Mr ROPER
A villainous lover

The Music, besides the original ballad of "Black-Ey'd Susan" by Mr. Richard Leveridge, has been chosen from popular songs of an hundred years ago; and is performed by Miss McInroe (at the piano) and Mr.

Hulme (at the violin). During the 1st Act Miss Edwards and Mr. Menaker will each sing "Black-Ey'd Susan". Mr. Roper will sing "Cease Rude Boreas". Mr. Miller assisted by other members of the cast will

The Direction and Mounting of the Play are By Mr ROPER and Mrs GROSS

COMMITTEES

THE TAURIAN PLAYERS wish to express their appreciation of the work done by their various committees in the preparation of this play, and their gratitude to Dr GROSS, to Miss GREEN (of the *Durham Herald*), to Mr BARRY (of the *Durham Sun*), and to many other friends who have aided them in sundry ways.

Between Act I and Act II coffee will be served in the Lobby of the Theatre. At which time Associate Members are requested to cast their votes for the choice of two plays to be performed before the Season closes.

Raker - Mr Martin

WILLIAM - Mr MENAKER

The Hero

Gnathrain - Mr Keever

Jacob Twig - Mr Cotton

Ploughshare - Mr Glassie

Miss Fulton

Miss Jenkins

Miss Moyle

Miss Taylor

Miss Conner

Mr Wingate

Mr Bridgers

Lighting

Mr Hardin

Mr Martin

Duke University Archives

A lover of parts

A young bailiff

Mr Miller

Messrs Glassie, Martin, Angle, Acheson Misses Pillow, Zachary, Caldwell, Shull

Make Up

Miss Weber

Miss Kaufman

Miss Jennette

Miss Johnson

\ Mr Rodriguez

Lt Pike - Mr Lucas

BLACK-EY'D SUSAN - Miss EDWARDS

The Choice of Plays

Dr Baum

Mrs Gross

Dr Hubbell

Miss Weber

Mr Roper

Admiral - Mr King

Doggrass - Mr Zimmerman

A villain, Uncle to Susan

Dolly Mayflower - Miss Pitt

Hatchet - Mr Rayford

A captain and a rogue

Friend to Susan

Blue Peter

sing several songs of the period.

Executive Mrs Gross, Director

Mr Roper, President

Mr Peele, Treasurer

Scenery

Mr Coble

Mr Bradburn Mr. Rodriguez

Mr Culbreth Mr Joyner

Miss Weber, Secretary

Mr Cotton, Press Agent

Seaweed

Quid

1922

Men join
Trinity College
Dramatic Club



1924

Taurian Players integrate into the Department of English, which introduces study of theater for first time

Trinity College
Dramatic Club
rechristened
Taurian Players

1927

Taurian Players begin producing in "Little Theater" in West Duke Building as well as Duke Auditorium (now Baldwin Auditorium)

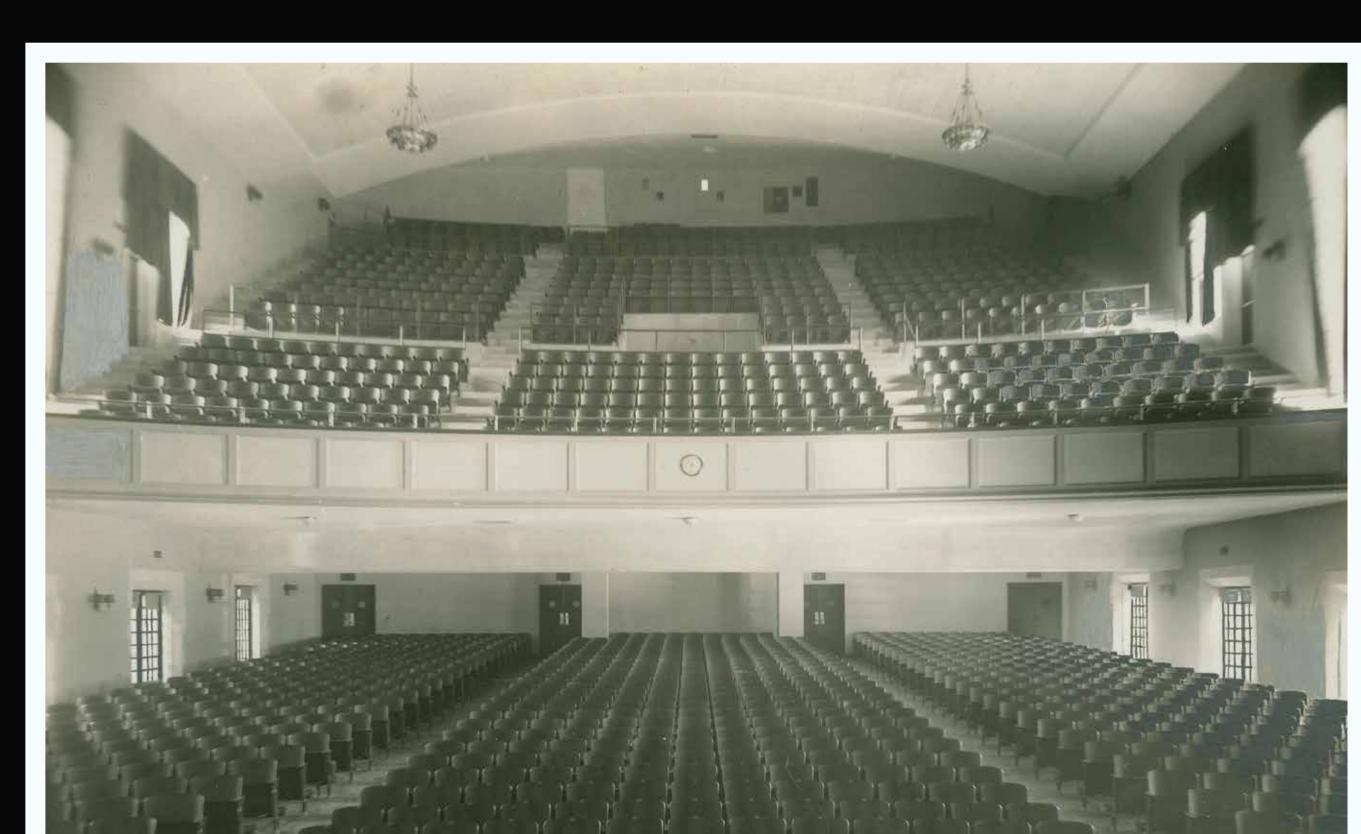
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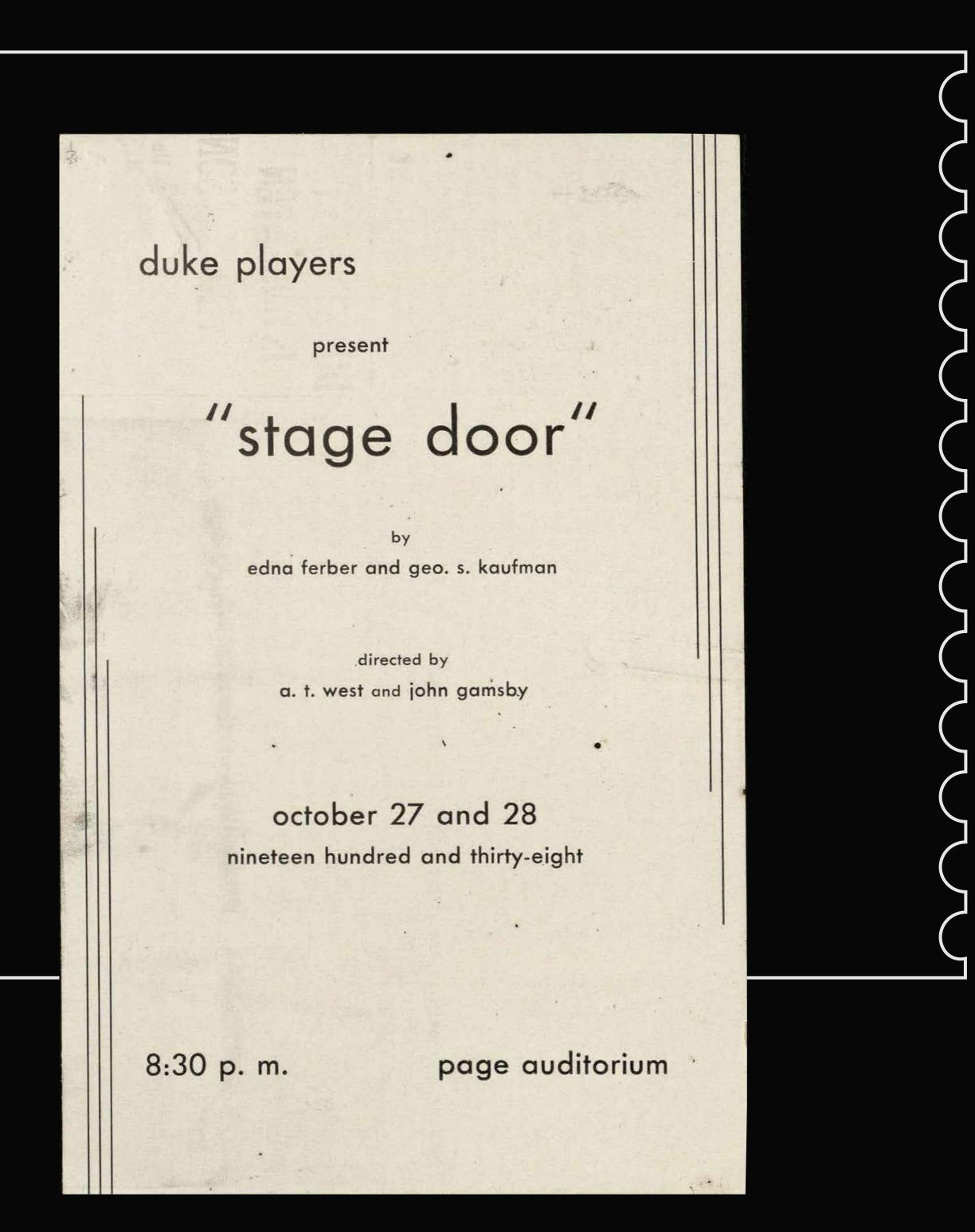
Phillip Barry's *Hotel Universe*, directed by Alfred West



G. B. Shaw's *Androcles and the Lion*, directed by Alfred West

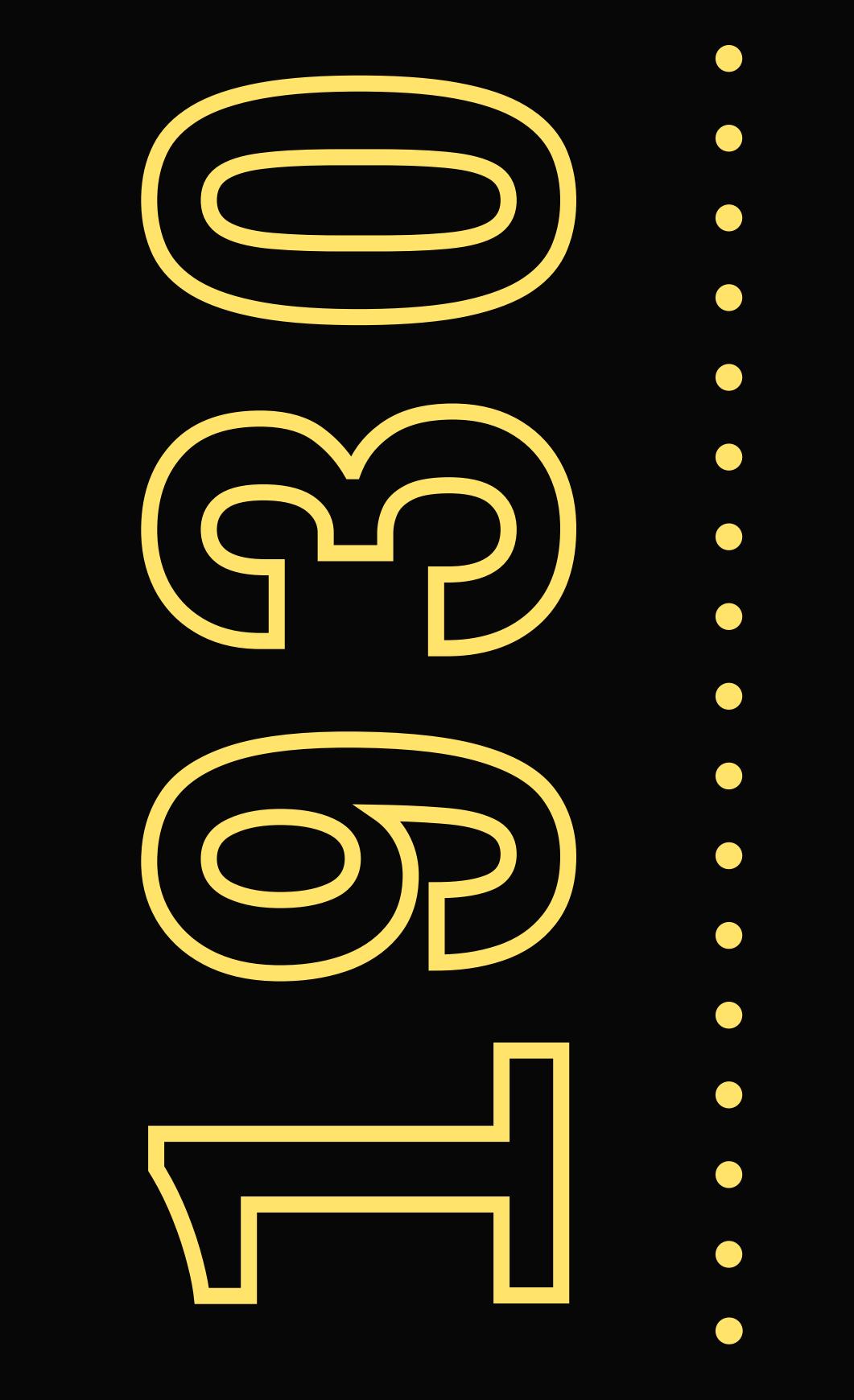


Interior of Page Auditorium



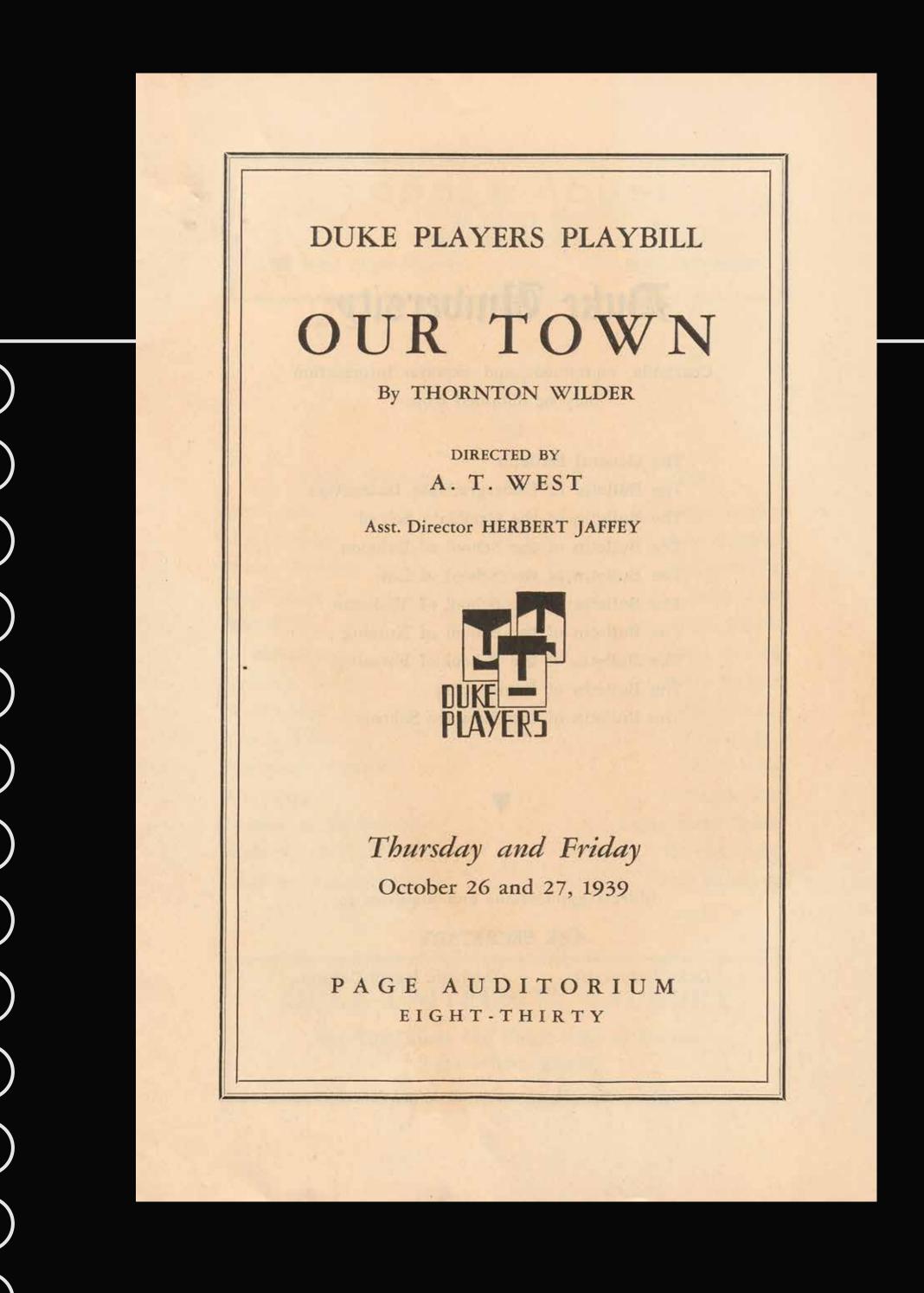
1930

Page Auditorium opens and becomes a popular venue to present touring Broadway productions



#### 1930

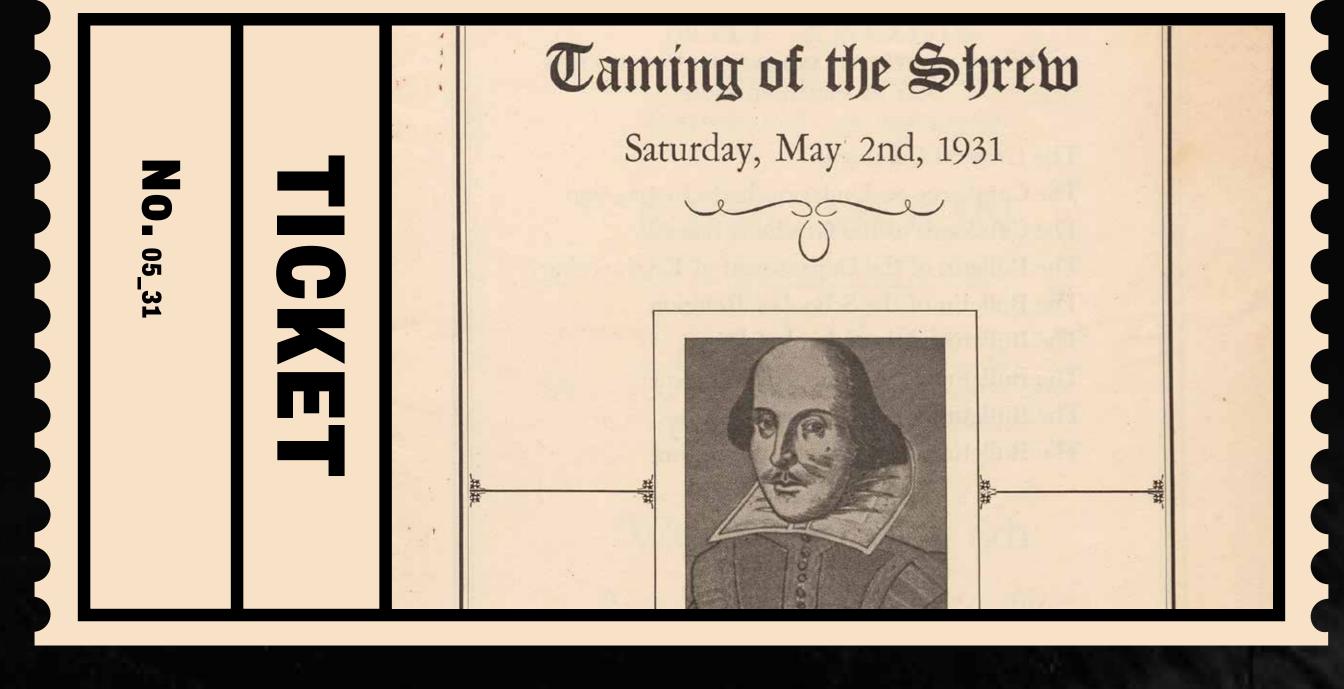
Replacing Gross,
Alfred West joins
Department of English as
Director of Taurian Players
and offers four theater
courses per year, including
technical theater



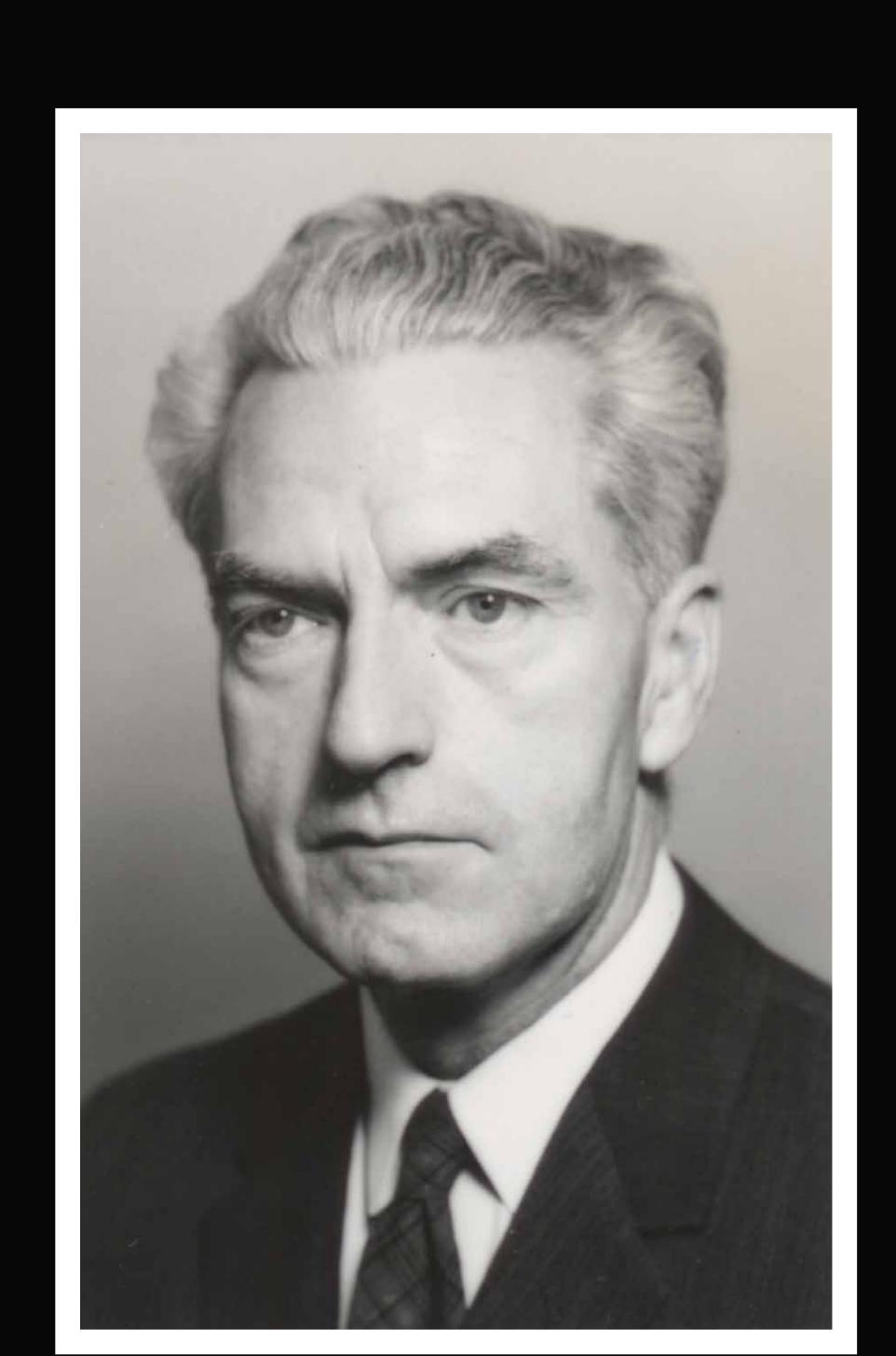
Duke Players and "Pop" West Here is the man who sees that the show goes on, Professor A. T. West, Assistant Professor of English at Duke University, and Director of The Duke Players. "Pop," as he is affectionately known to the students, made his first appearance on the stage of life down at Birmingham, Alabama. He graduated as an engineer, at Auburn University, and later received his M.A. degree at the University of Alabama. Then he went after dramatics at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts, New York City. He toured with stock companies, with such persons as Miriam Hopkins, Frederic March, and Ian Keith. When the first World War started, West enlisted, and went to France. He organized stock companies to entertain the soldiers, and in the great variety of real and imaginery drama, was incidentally winner of a Croix de Guerre. He came to Duke University in 1931, where he immediately reorganized the old Taurian Players, and eventually started The Duke Players, with eight members making up the personnel. Today there are 100 active men and women students on the roster of that organization. "Pop" keeps them all busy and interested. He has an almost unprecedented ability to take untrained actors and actresses and turn them into performers worthy of commendation from the highest critics. And all without altering the exceptional naturalness of their ability. Among the successful productions given by The Duke Players this year are: "Arsenic and Old Lace," "Eve of St. Mark," "Hayfoot, Strawfoot" (the new Civil War play by Harbach and Hammer- "The Man Who Came to Dinner." Tonight's stein, with music by Jerome Kern, given its performance of "My Sister Eileen" is the final southern premiere at Duke University), and major production of the season.

#### 1931

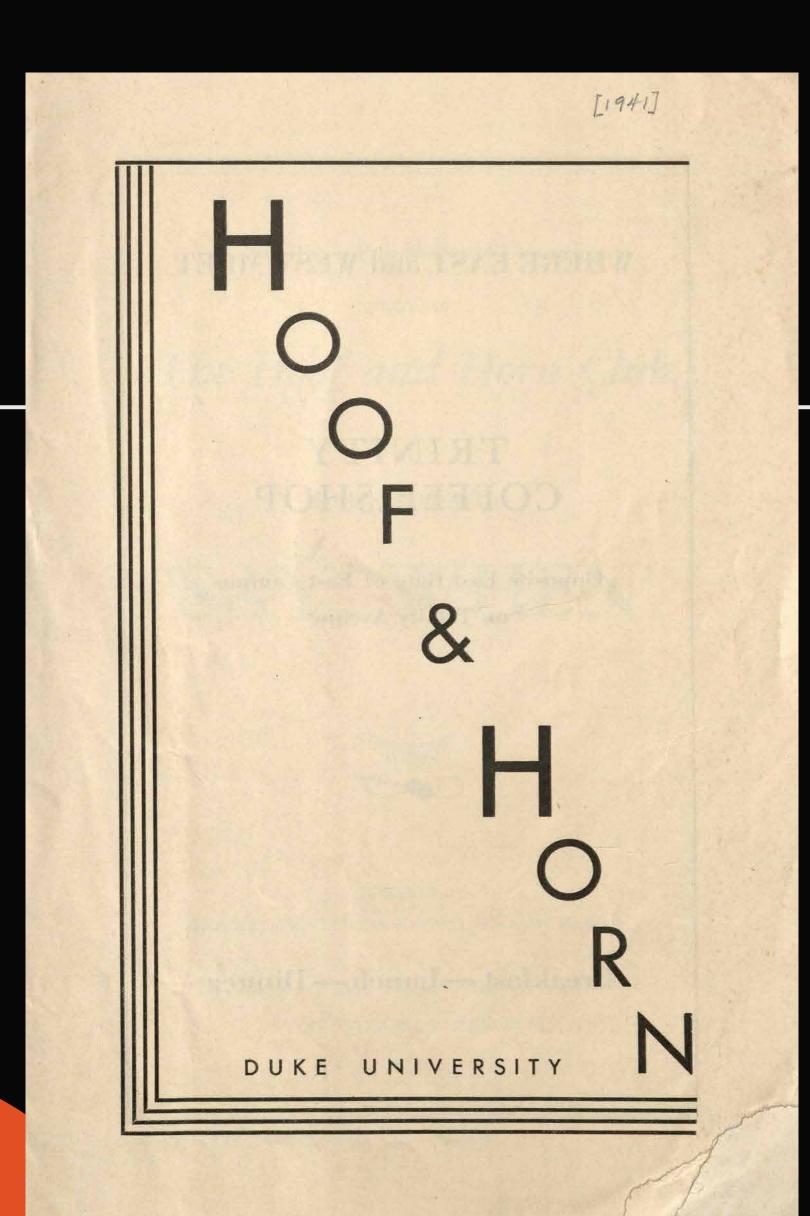
West makes first unsuccessful attempt to start a Department of Drama and re-establishes Taurian Players as Duke Players







Kenneth J. Reardon

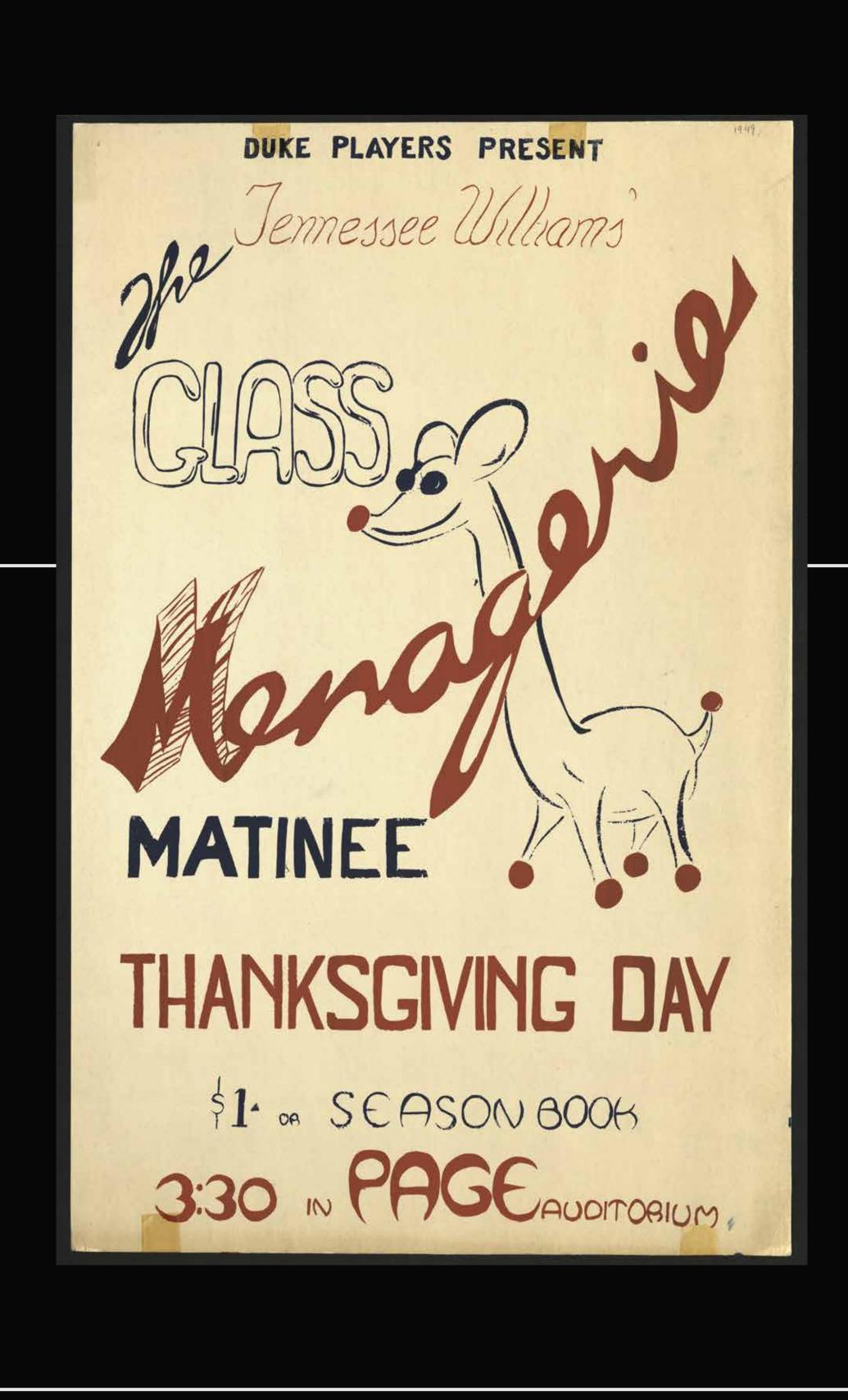


1941

Hoof 'n' Horn student group founded



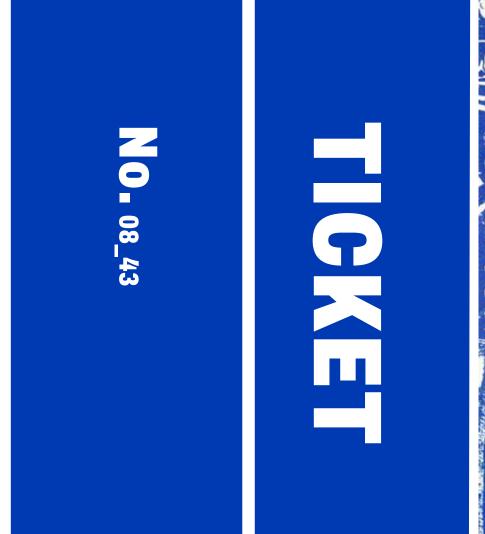
West dies and is replaced by Kenneth Reardon, Duke Players' second director (retired 1980)





THE PLAYBILL



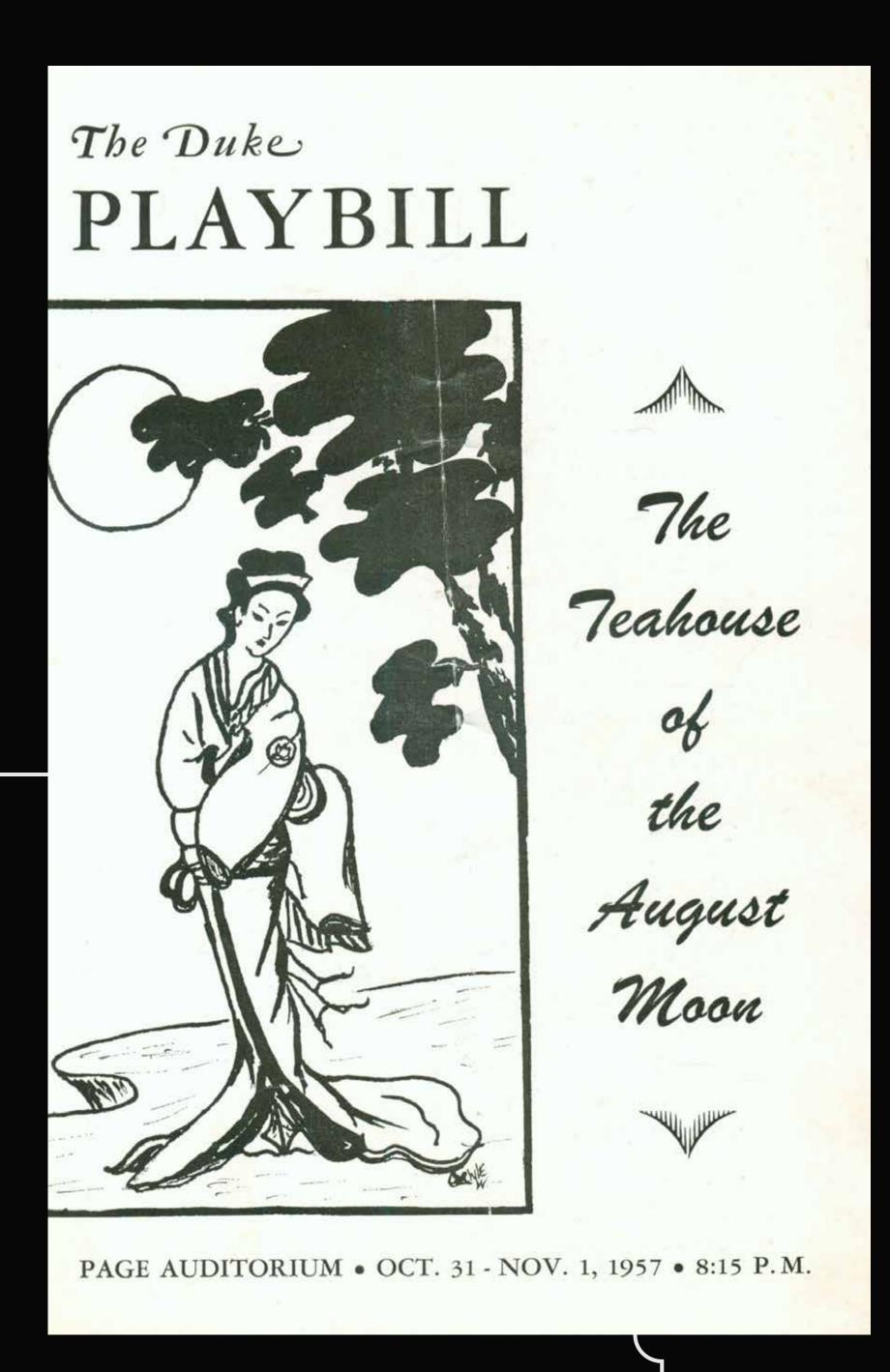




# 1949-1950

Branson Hall remodeled as a theater with a scene shop and inaugurated with a production of Molière's The Miser







Cast of Hoof 'n' Horn's Belles and Ballots

Victor Michalak joins the faculty (retired 1979)

#### 1955

Productions tied to curriculum for first time under Michalak



# DUKE PLAYERS present BRANSON HALL-DEC. 8-11 ~ 8:15 pm PRICE \$ 1.00

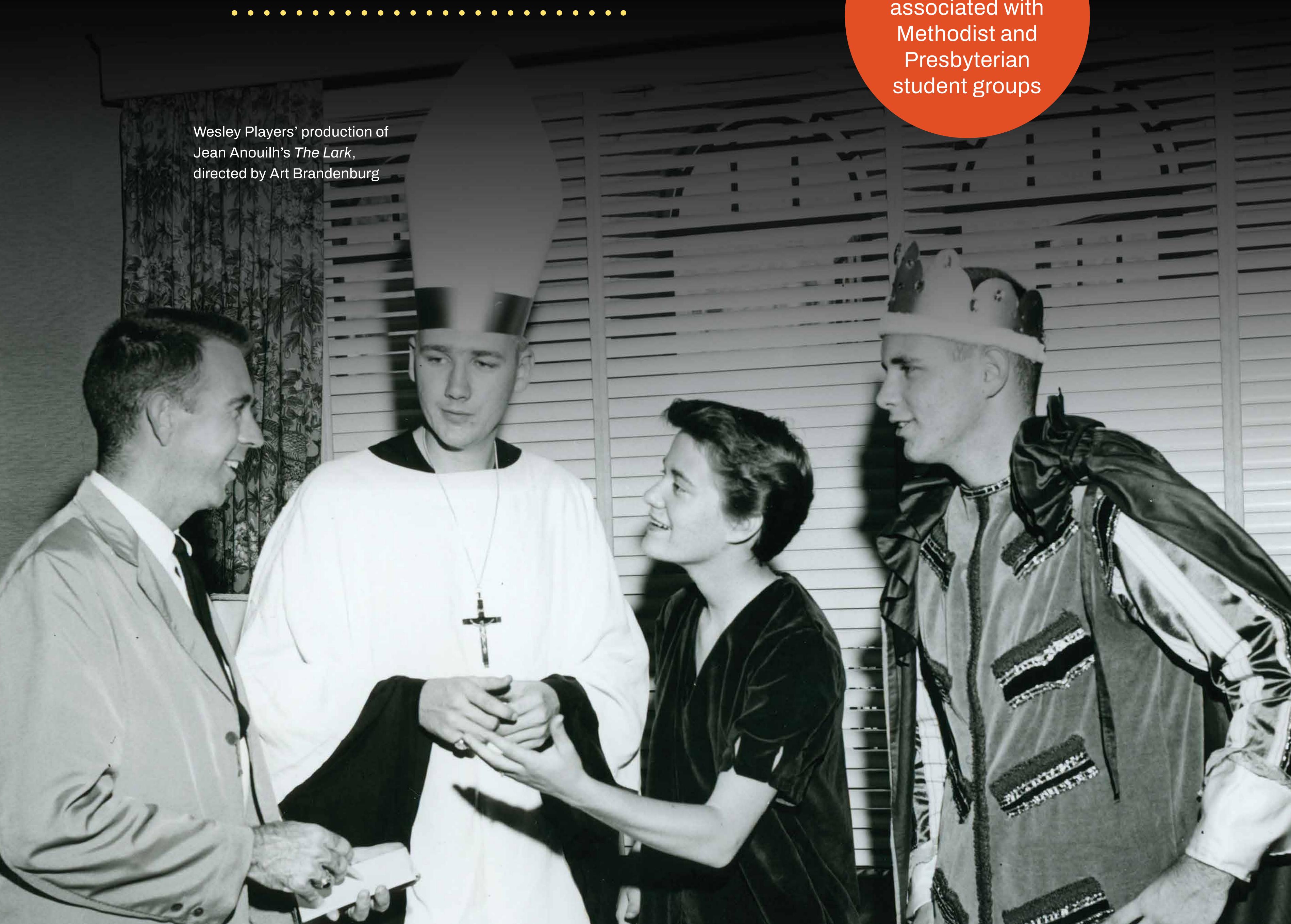
### 1958

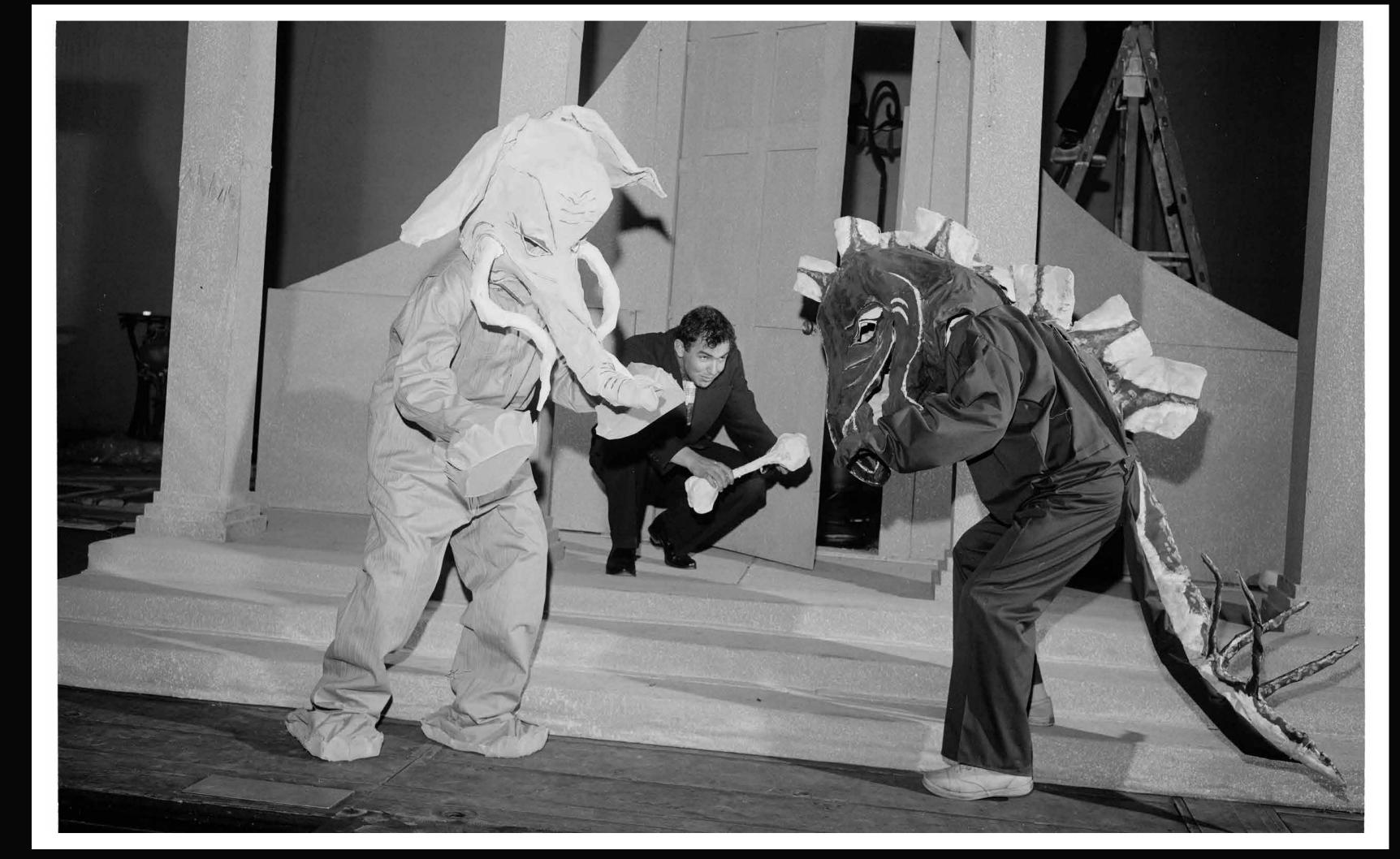
Planning Committee recommends an Arts Center, finally built in 2018

Dale Randall is hired to teach Renaissance drama (retired 1999)

#### 1951-1967 Wesley Players,

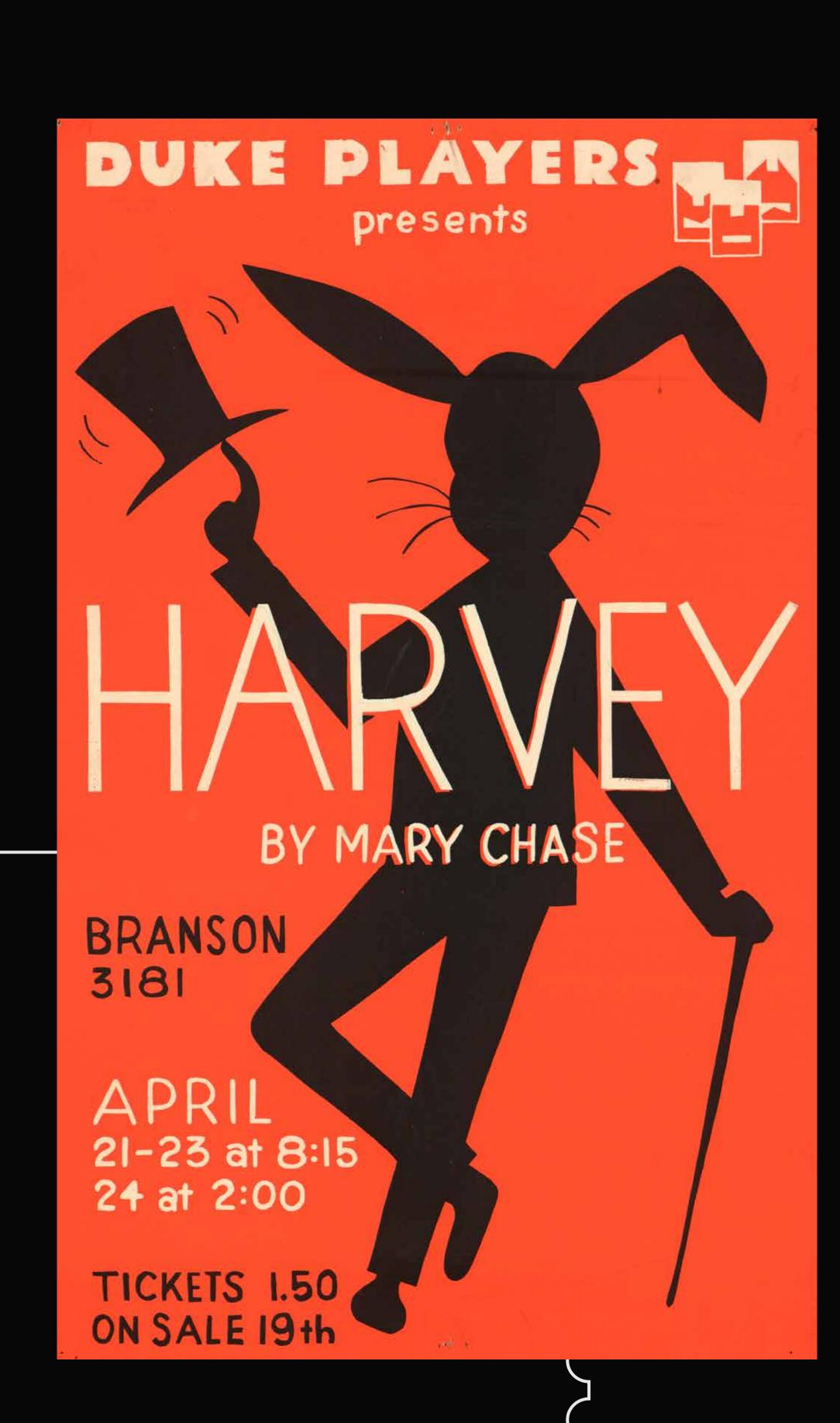
associated with Methodist and Presbyterian

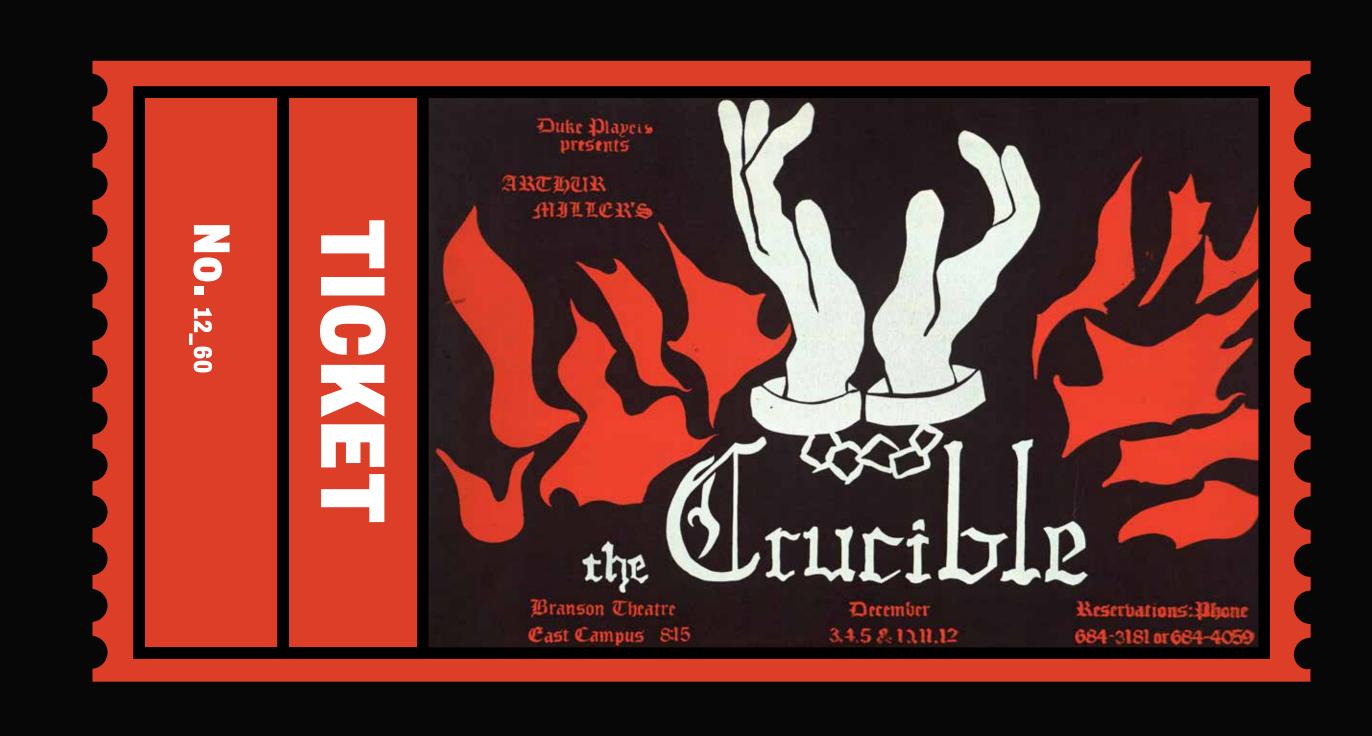




Thornton Wilder's *The Skin of Our Teeth*, directed by Kenneth Reardon

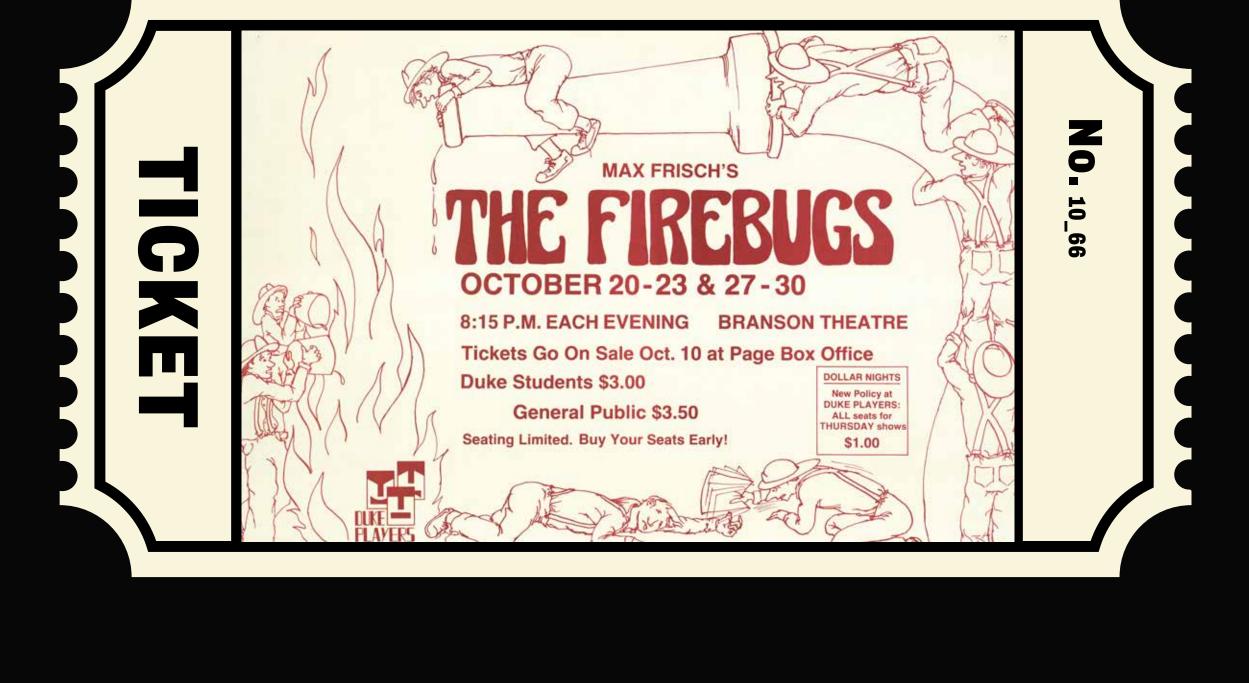






Kenneth Reardon leads second unsuccessful attempt to start a Department of Drama





# 1967-1971

Duke Players again operates as a student-run club

### 1966

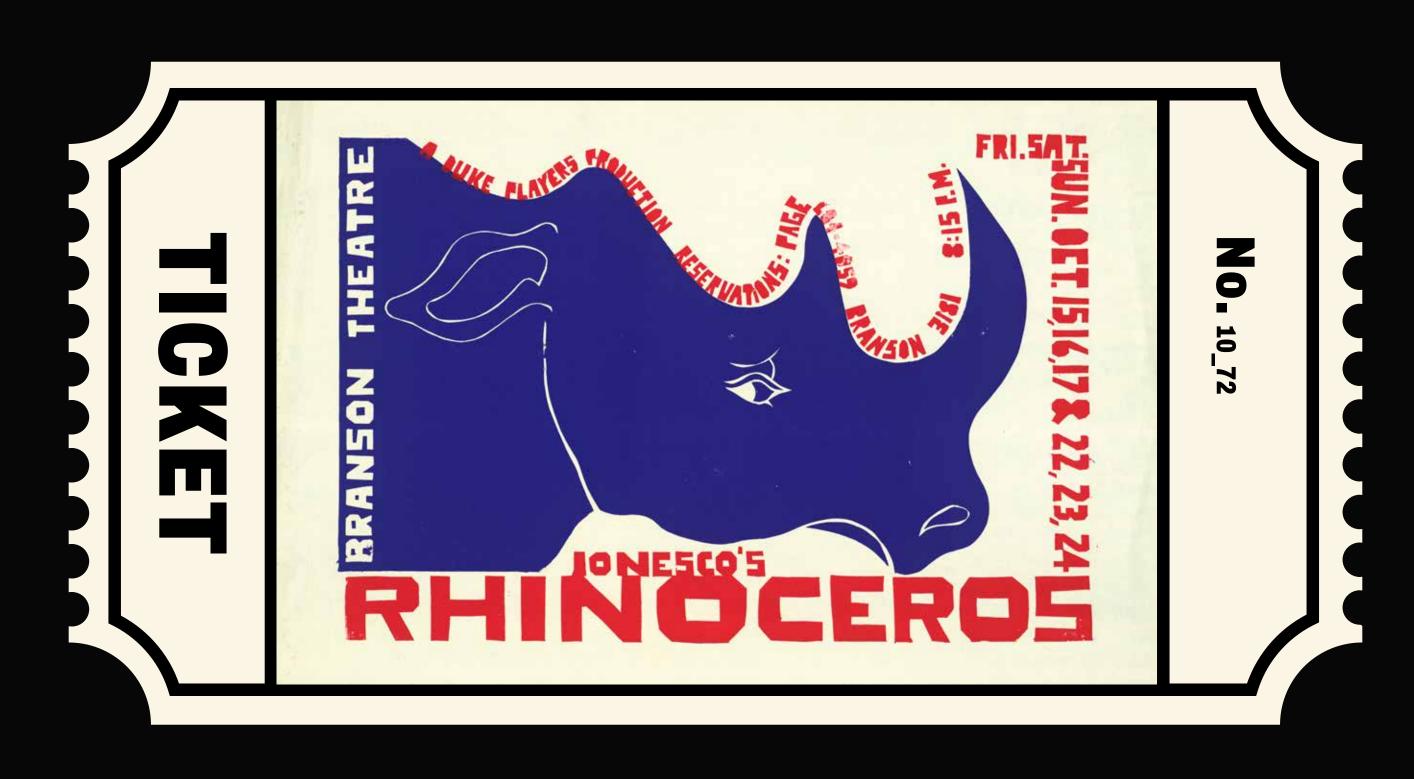
John Clum hired by Department of English and pulled into theater discussions (retired 2011)





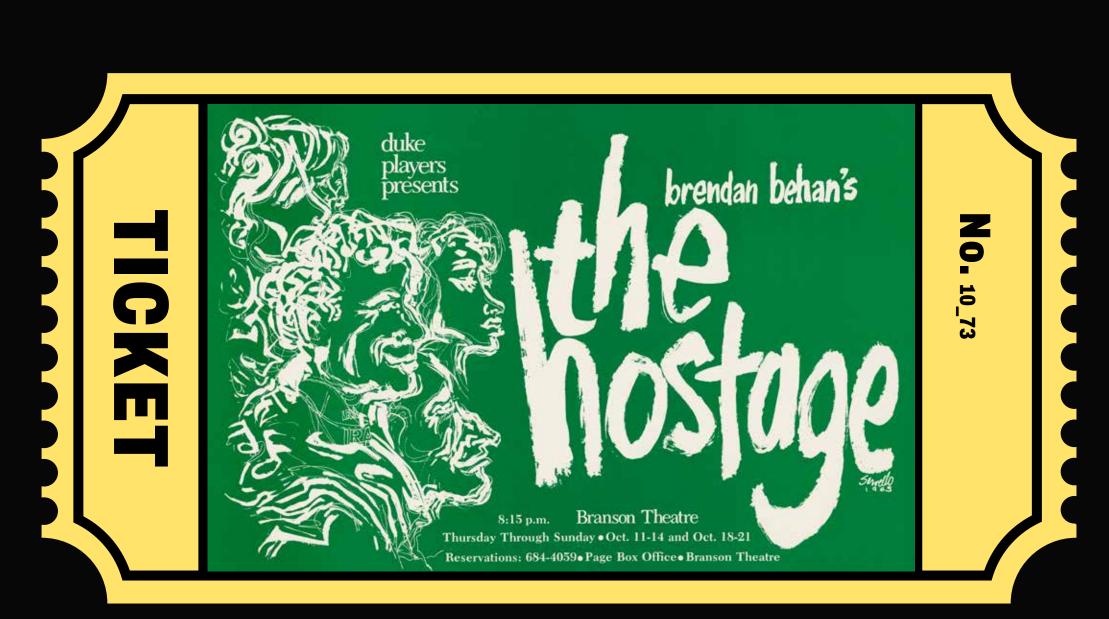


Duke Players re-integrated into department with professional technical director



1974-2013

Black student group Karamu



#### 1972

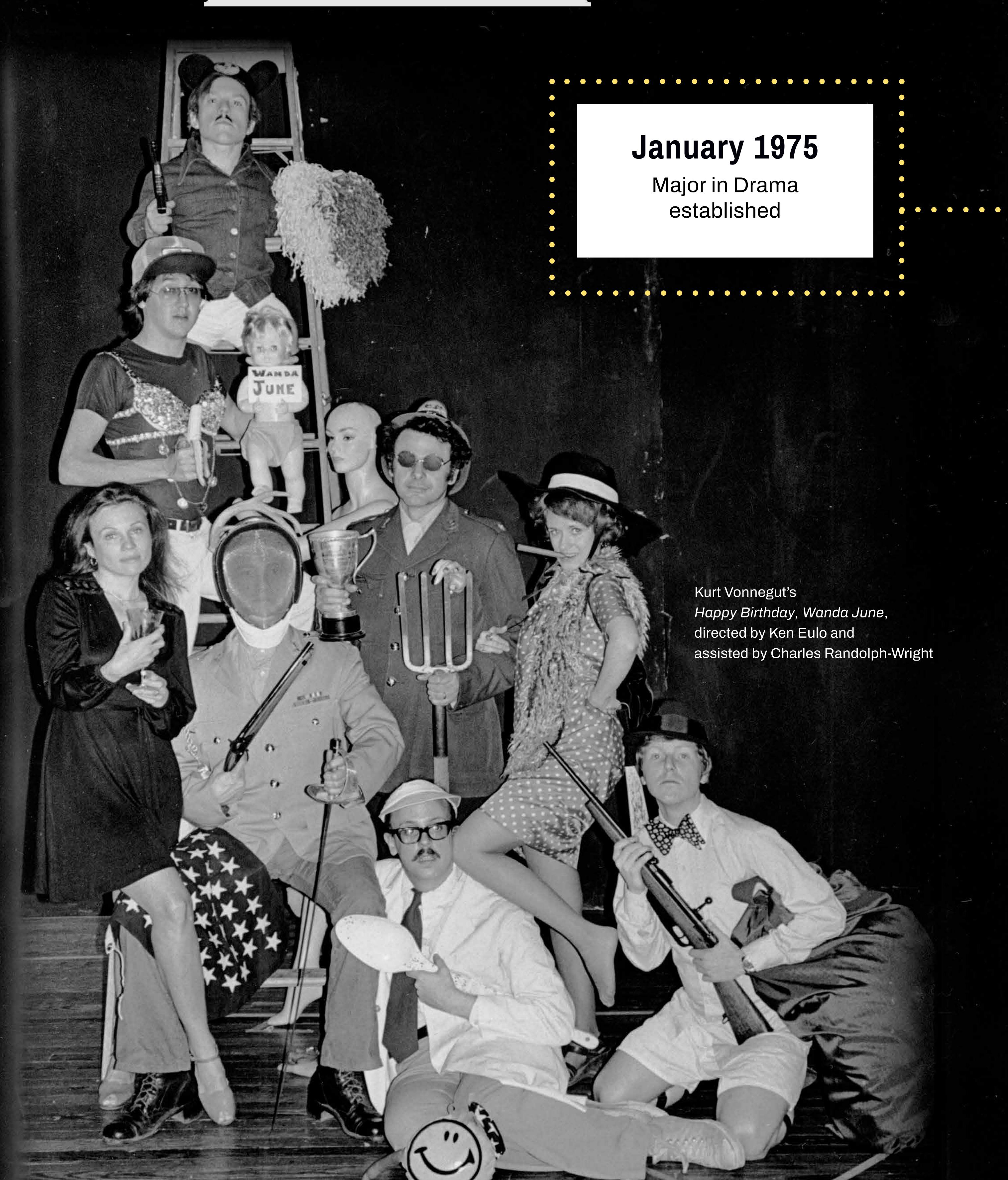
Clum begins third attempt to establish a Department of Drama

#### 1974

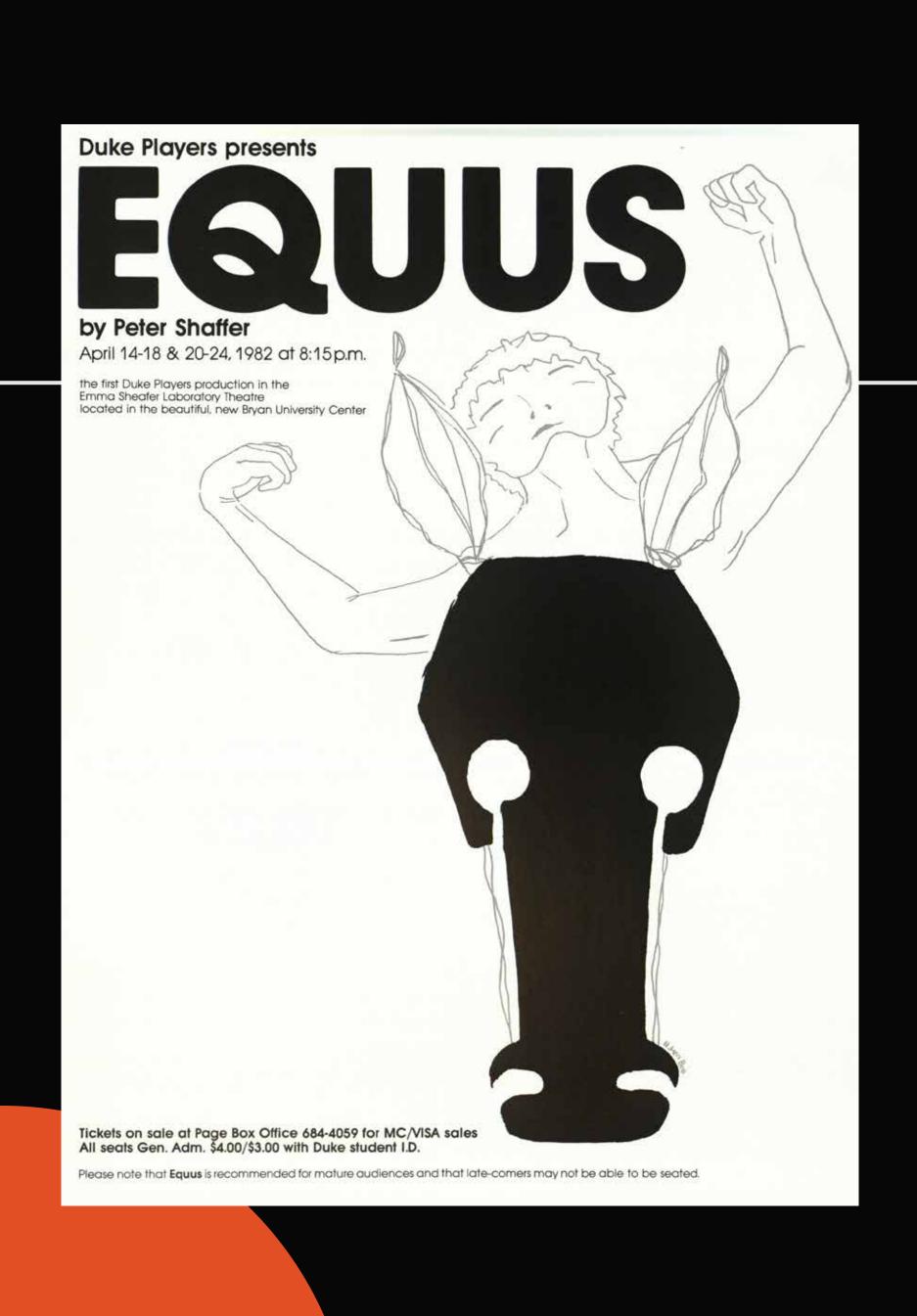
Drama Program established within Department of English, offering courses in acting for the first time





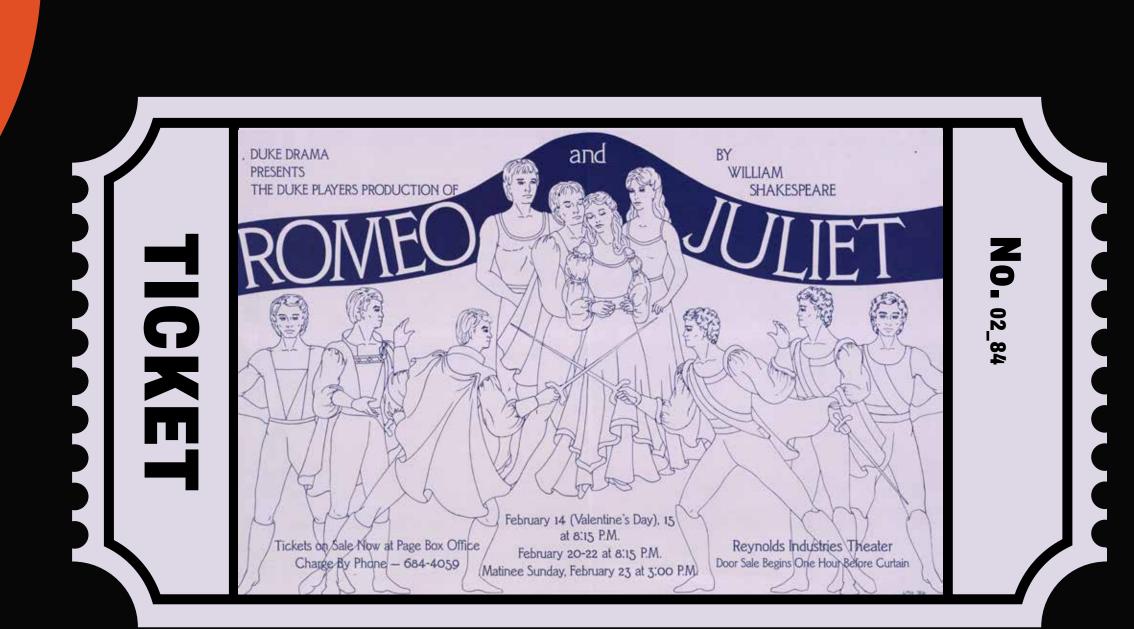






1986-2014
Wendell Theater

student group



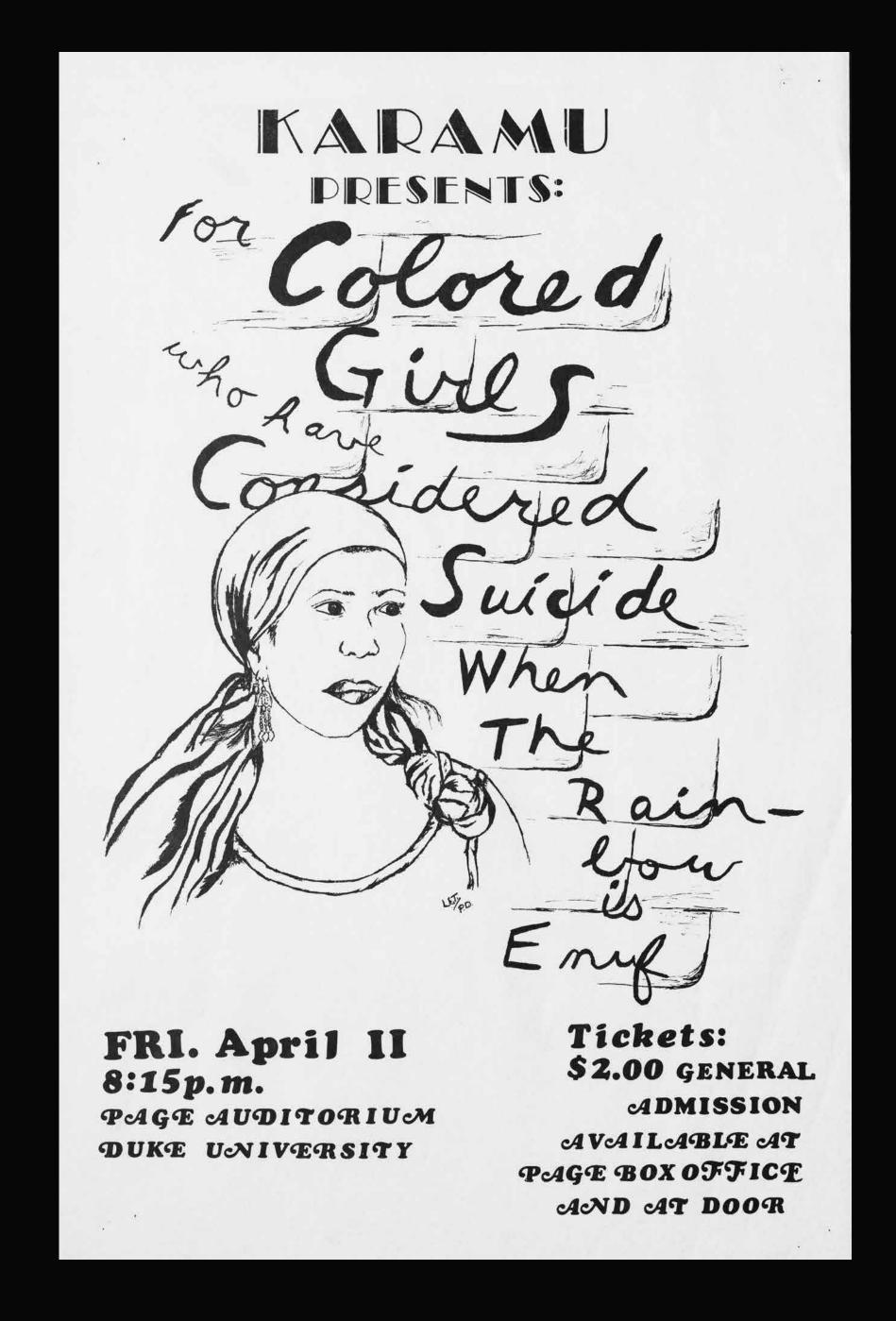
#### 1986-2007

Broadway Previews, later Theater Previews, brings professional shows to Duke for tryouts



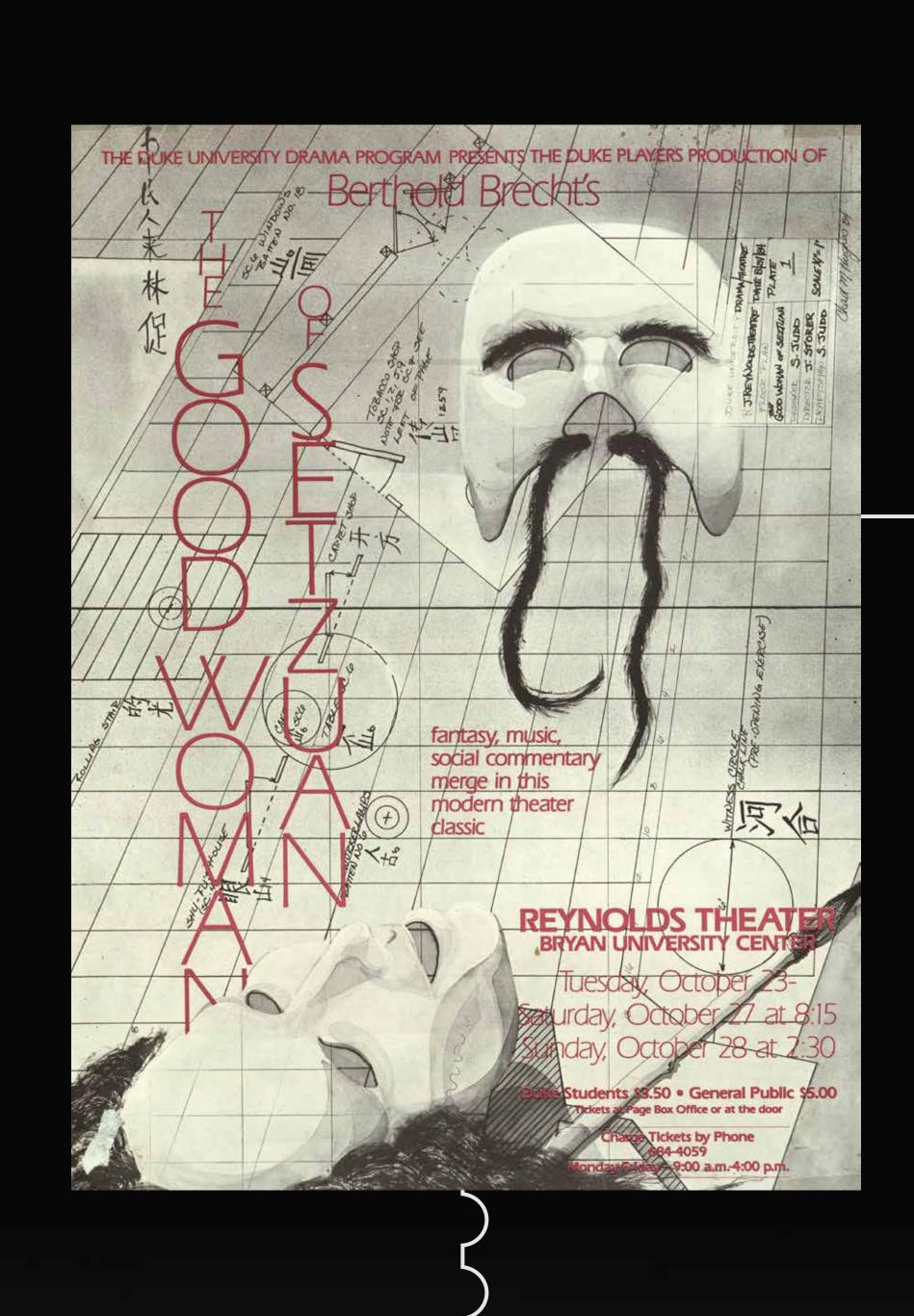
#### 1982

Actor and director
Jeff Storer joins
the faculty

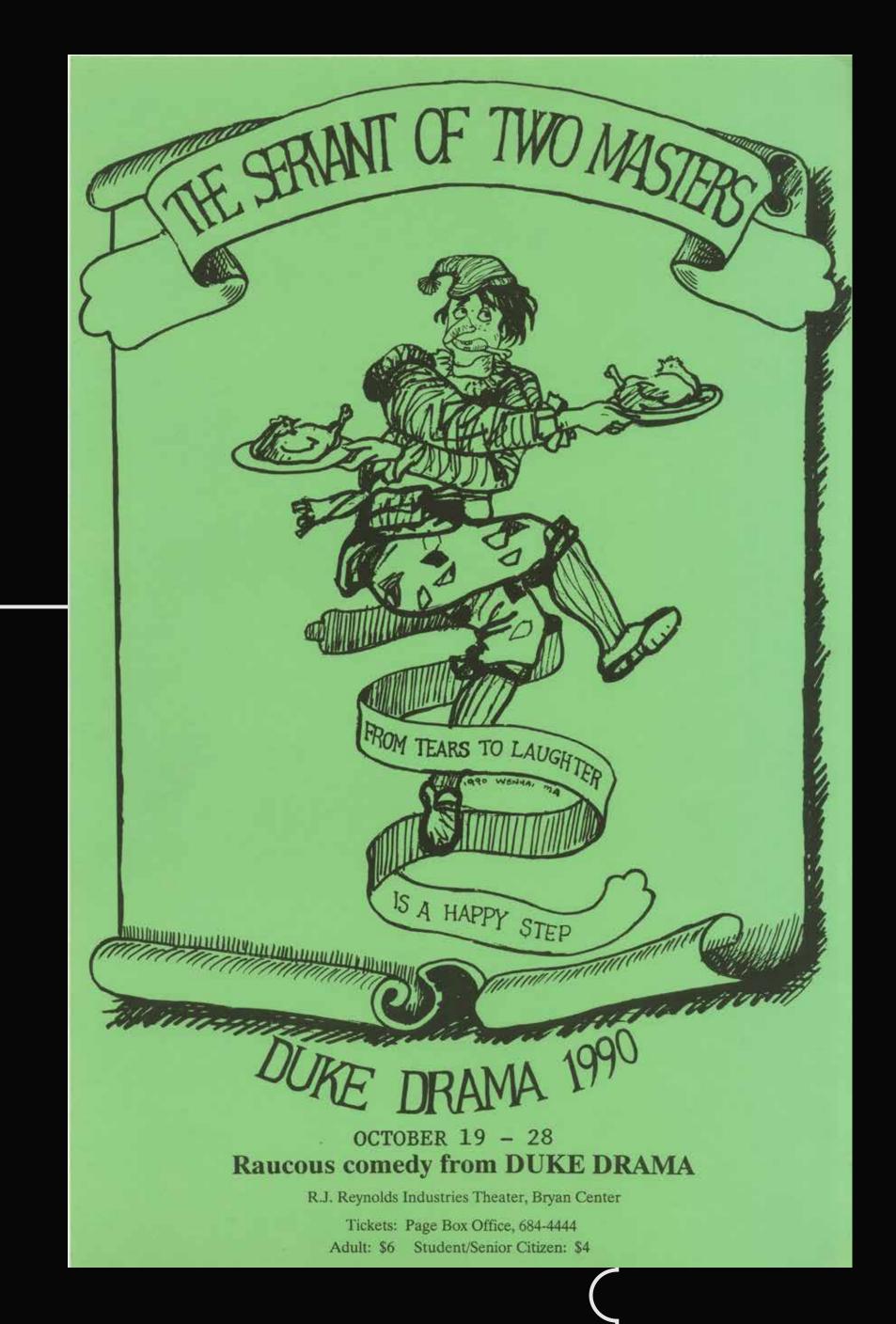


## 1987

Director Jody McAuliffe joins the faculty



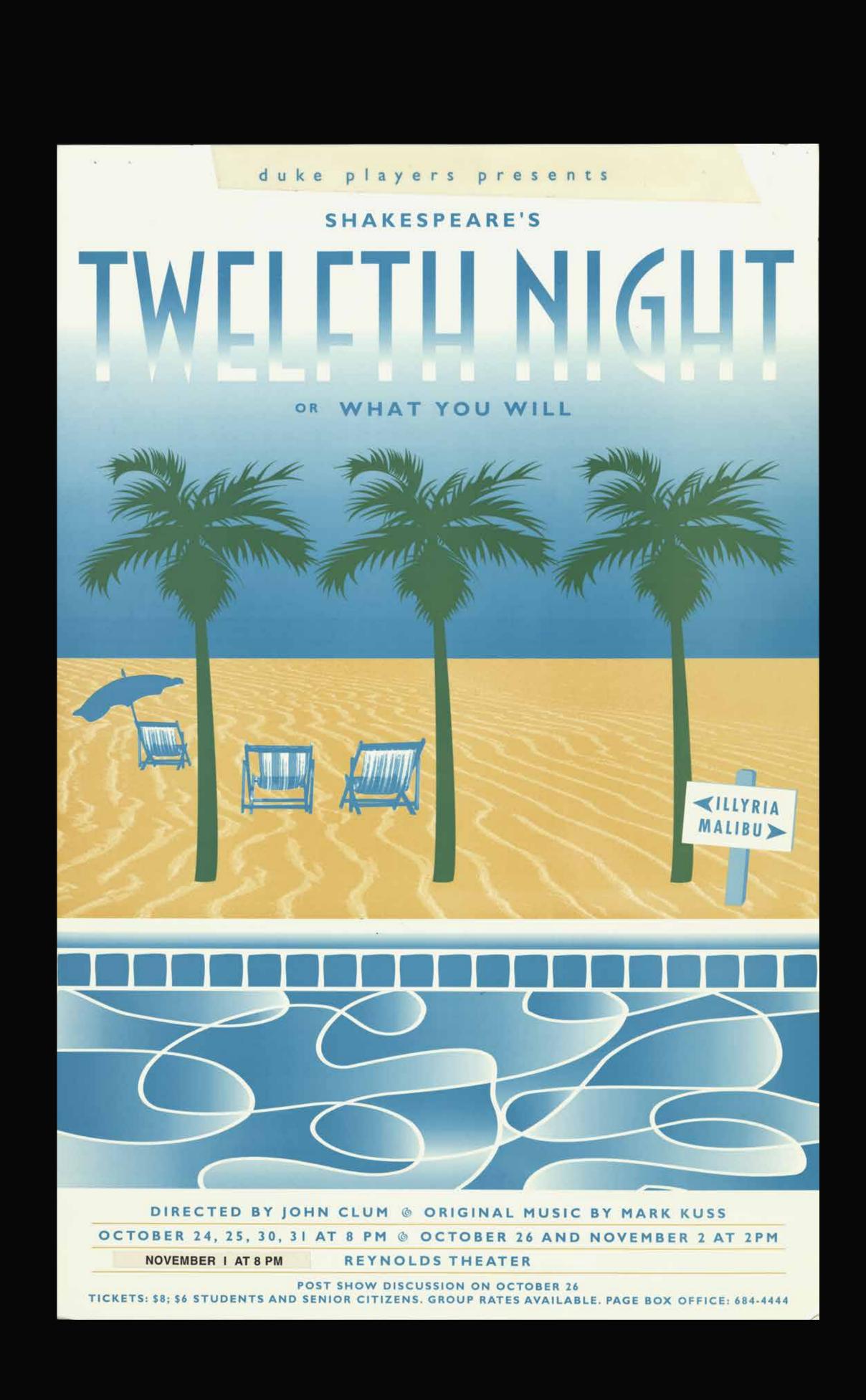


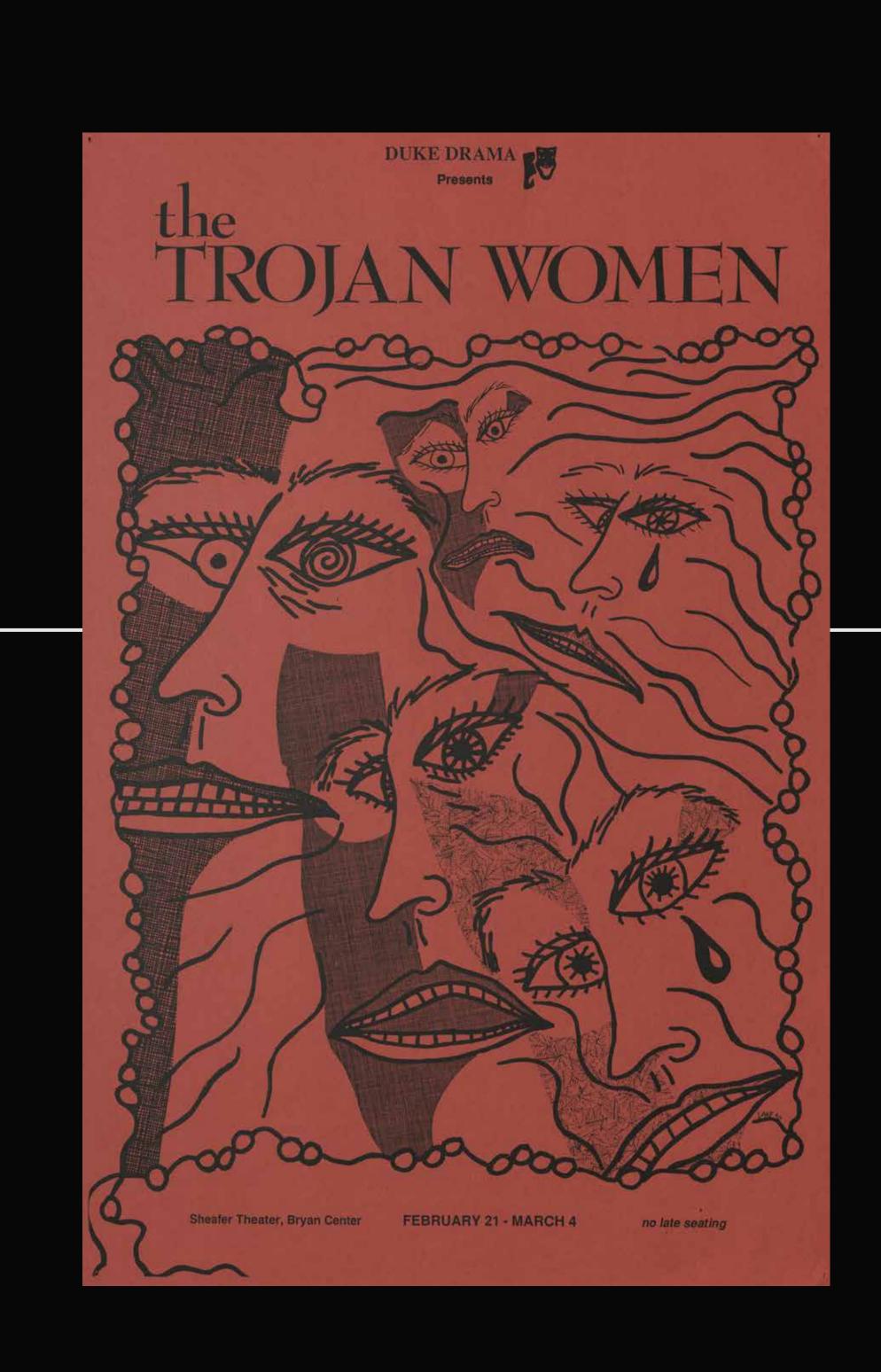




Neal Bell's *McTeαgue*, directed by Jody McAuliffe

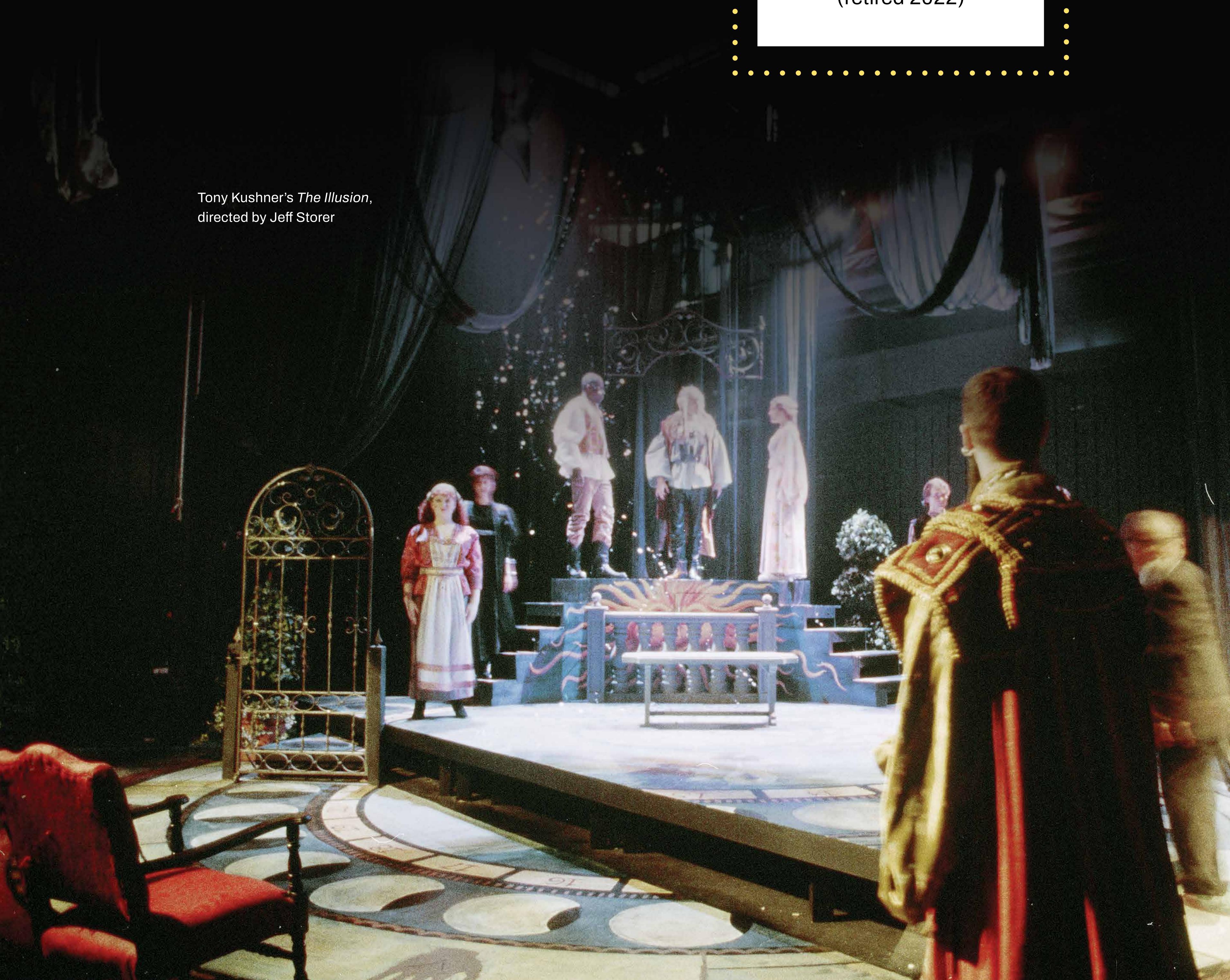
Lighting designer Richard Riddell joins the faculty (retired 2023)





#### 1993

Actor Ellen Hemphilll joins the faculty (retired 2022)





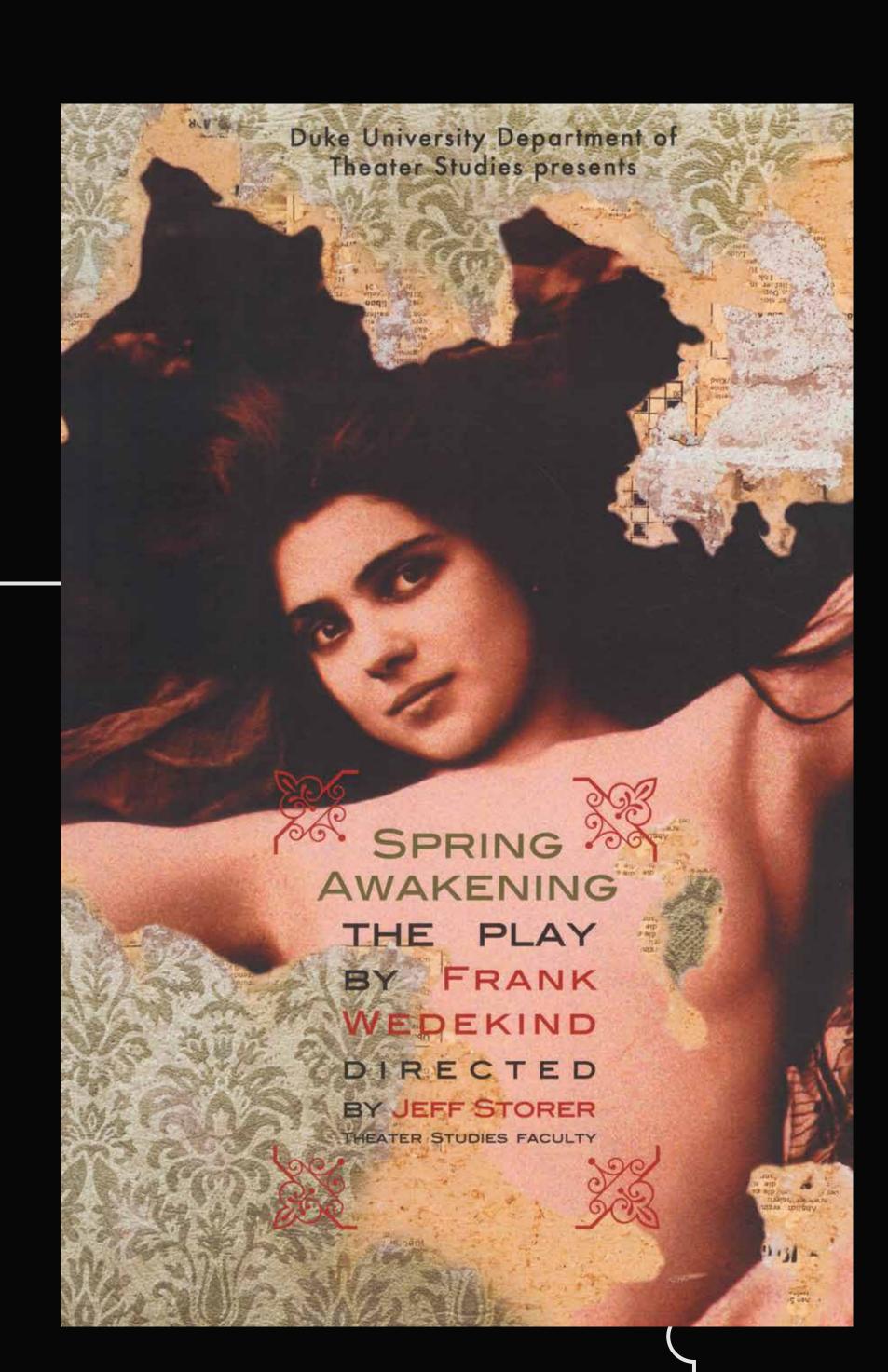
Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*, directed by Jeff Storer



Euripides' *Trojan Women*, directed by Ellen Hemphill

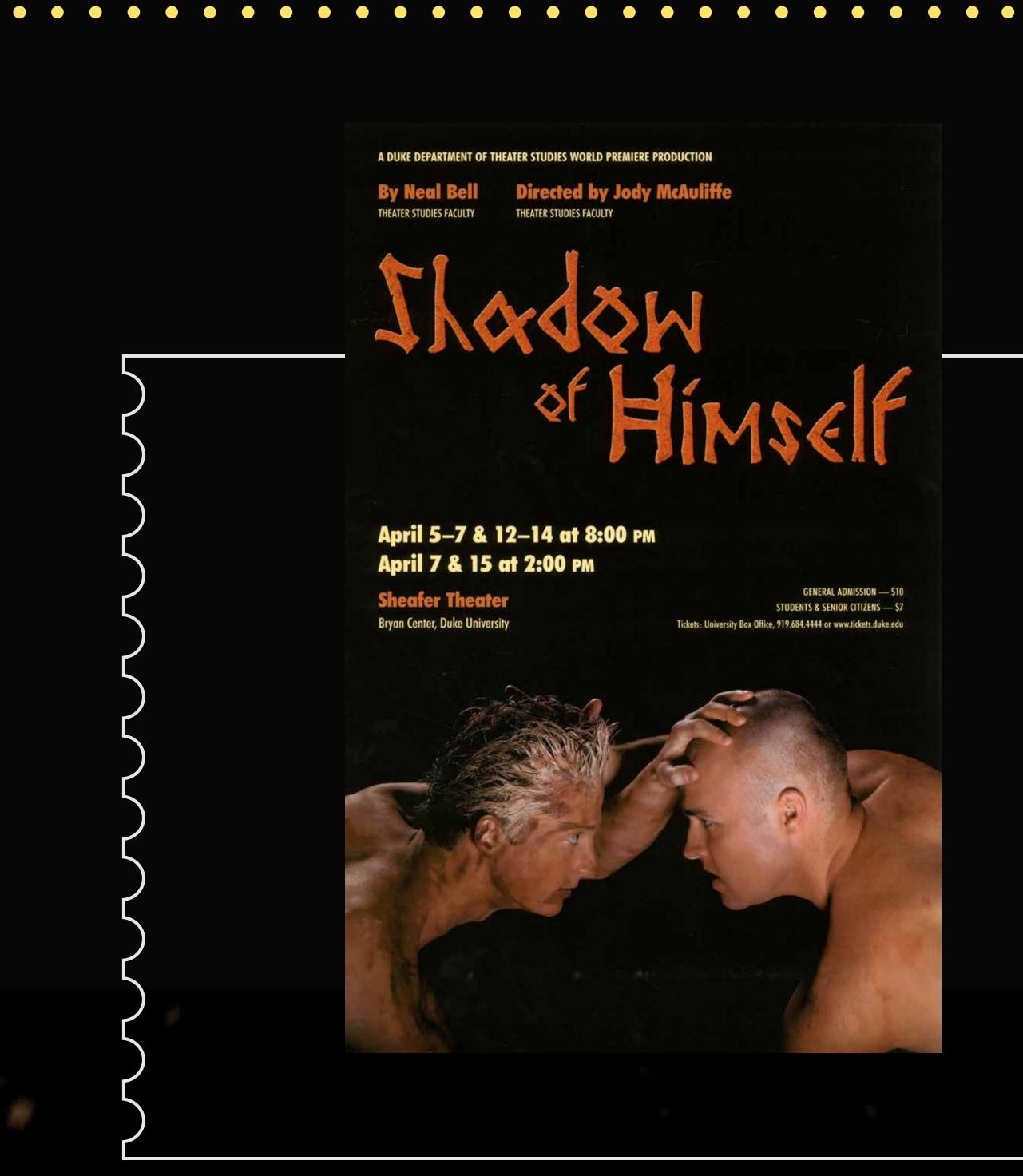
#### 2003

Theater Studies addition to Bryan Center opens



#### 2003

Change from program to Department of Theater Studies under Richard Riddell, who is succeeded as chair by John Clum



Caryl Churchill's *Cloud 9*, directed by Jeff Storer

#### 2006

Playwright Neal Bell joins the faculty

# 2009

Professor of English
Sarah Beckwith joins
the department

### 2009

Scenic designer and puppet artist Torry Bend joins the faculty





Anton Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya*, directed by Jeff Storer



Torry Bend & Howard Craft's *Dreaming*, directed by JaMeeka Holloway



Young Jean Lee's *Lear*, directed by Jody McAuliffe

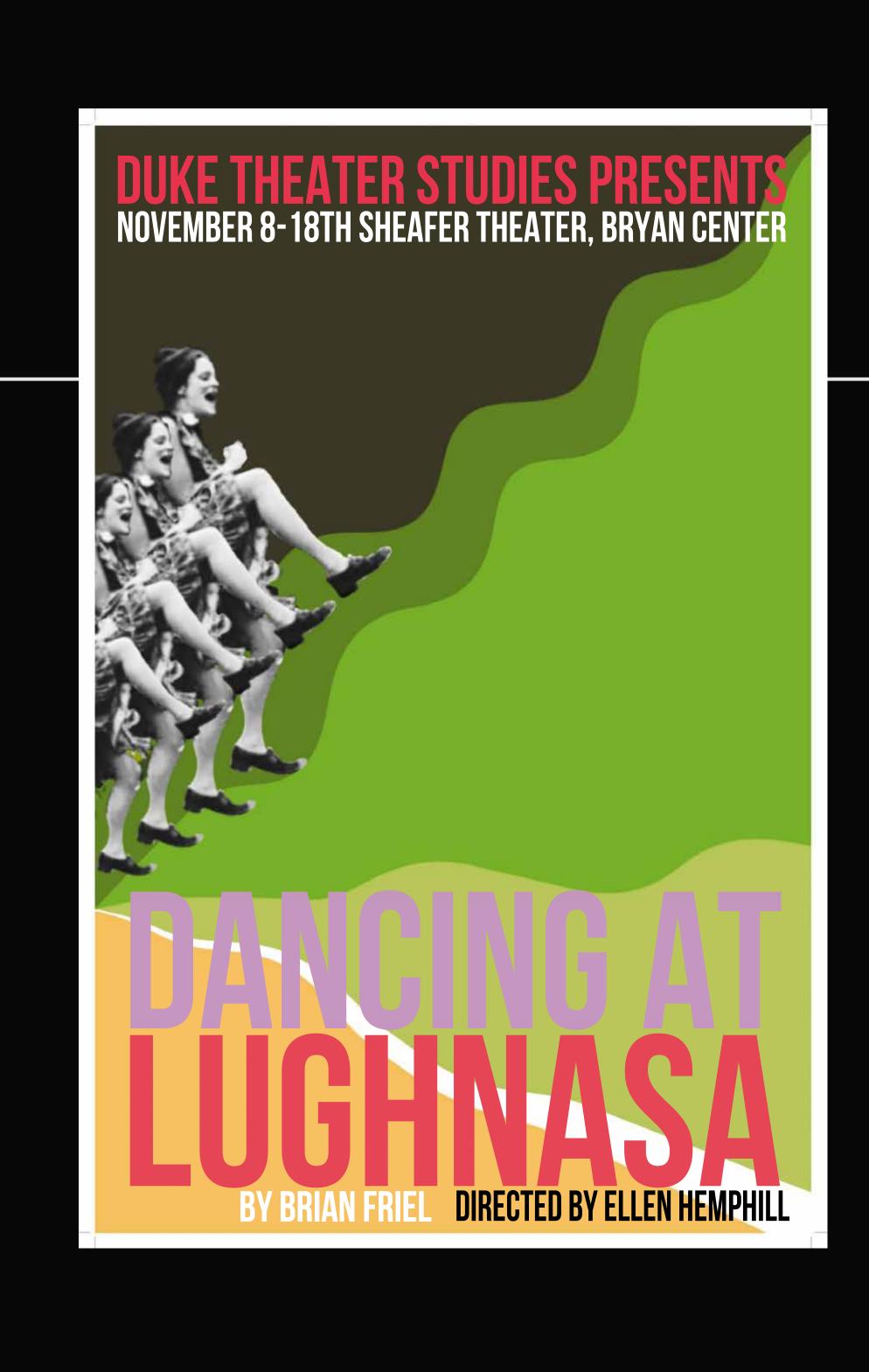


Peter Sinn Nachtreib's Bob, directed by Ellen Hemphill



Stephen Flaherty, Lynn Ahrens and Terrence McNally's Ragtime, directed by Jeff Storer

Duke Asian
American Theater
student group
founded



2017

Duke Chinese Theater student group founded

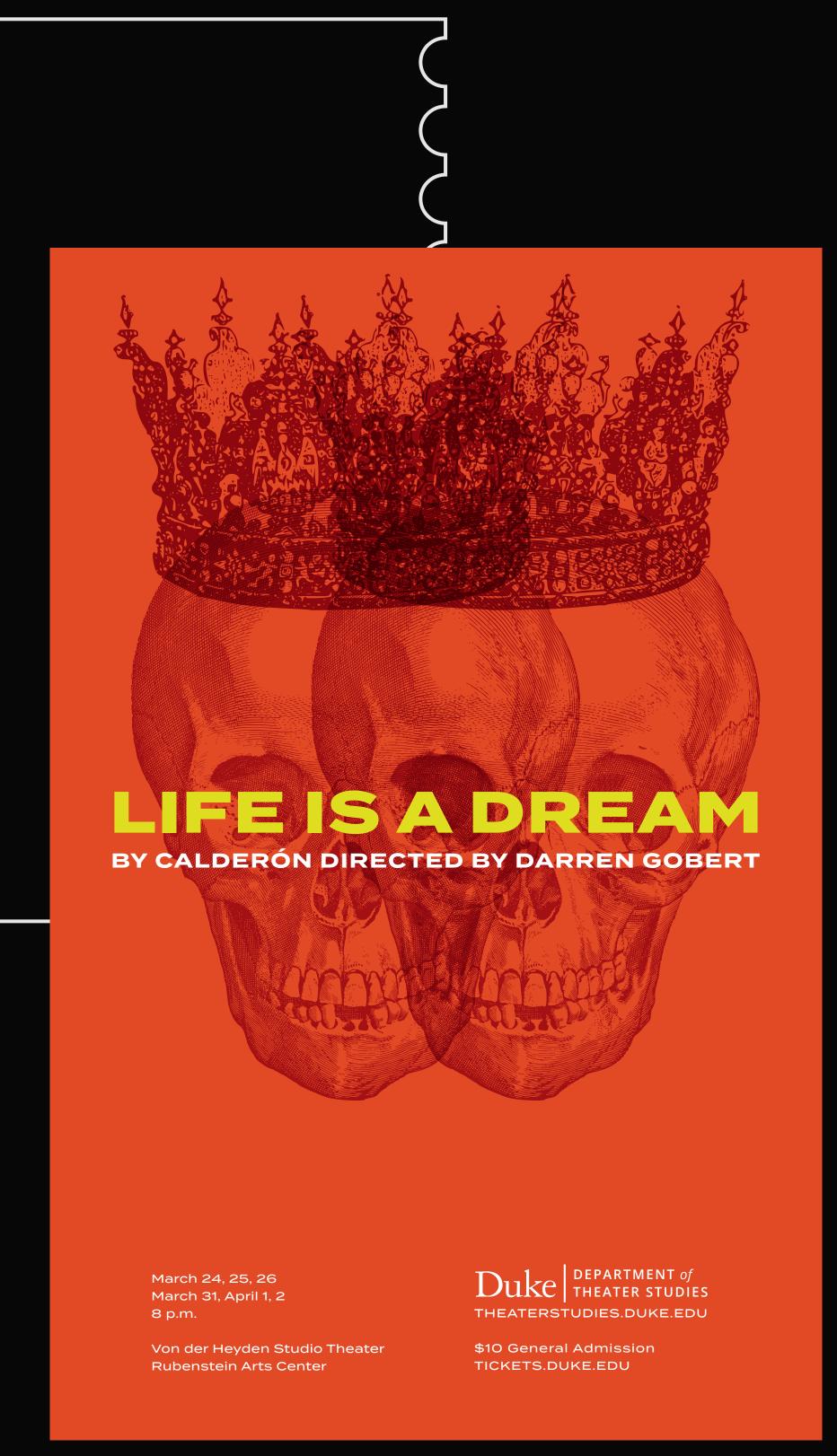
#### 2018-2019

Theater scholars Esther Kim Lee and Darren Gobert join the department, which hires Thom Quintas as its Director of Theater





Actor Johann Montozzi-Wood and theater scholars Ryan Donovan and Douglas A. Jones, Jr. join the faculty



### 2023

Costume designer Hannah Haverkamp and lighting designer Bill Webb join the faculty



Jonathan Larson's *Rent*, directed by Chauntee' Schuler Irving



Neal Bell's *Golem*, directed by Jody McAuliffe



Shakespeare's Twelfth Night, directed by Jonathan Cullen

### 2024

Audio, video, and projection designer Ethan Eldred joins the faculty

#### Credits

This exhibit was designed by

