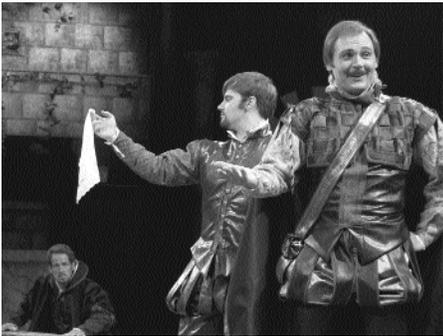


ALABAMAARTS

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On the cover: "Kid Games—I can do that!" by Jim Gunter. Pastel on paper. 36" X 24". Jim Gunter is a professional artist with an extensive exhibition and award record. He is also head of the Arts Department and Visual Arts instructor at Baldwin Arts and Academic Magnet School, Montgomery. The "Kid Games" series looks at the child's world of creativity through the adult perspective.

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Mission Statement

The mission of the Alabama State Council on the Arts is to promote Alabama's diverse and rich artistic resources while highlighting excellence and educational experiences.

The Agency

The Alabama State Council on the Arts is the official state agency for the support and development of the arts in Alabama. It was established in 1966 by an act of the Alabama Legislature. The agency supports not-for-profit arts organizations, programming in the arts for the general public, and individual artists. The State Arts Council works to expand the state's cultural resources and preserve its unique cultural heritage and places a high priority on arts programming by and for schools. The Council's primary means of supporting the arts and making the arts more accessible to varied audiences is through a multi-faceted grants program which covers all disciplines and fields of creative expression.

The Council

The fifteen members of the Council are drawn from communities throughout the state. They are appointed by the Governor for six-year terms, and selection is based on expertise in the arts, business, or community affairs. The officers of the Council are elected by its members.

The Council meets four times each year, at various locations throughout the state. It approves agency programs and policies, develops long range plans, and makes final decisions on state and federal grant dollars under its jurisdiction.

Alabama's Council on the Arts:

Learning Opportunities

by Al Head

Whether one is directly or indirectly involved in creative expression, experiencing the arts is a growing and learning exercise. In Alabama, there are abundant growing and learning opportunities in the arts. Artists and audiences, educators and students come in many configurations and interact in many different environments.

Generally, we think about teaching and learning taking place in a classroom setting. We also tend to think about obtaining an education, even in the arts, as part of a tried-and-true system of students progressing through K—12 and higher education, taking tests, earning credits, graduating, and being professionally prepared. While these traditional settings and structures are entrenched in Alabama, there are many innovative and unique opportunities for learning in and through the arts in our state. From Sam Mockbee's Rural Studio in Hale County to the Metal Arts Program at Sloss Furnace in Birmingham, Alabama boasts an array of model programs that are known nationally and are major success stories.

This edition of Alabama Arts attempts to spotlight a few of these unique programs and thereby share some particular information that will perhaps generate broader respect for some of our state's under-appreciated cultural and educational resources. While our state clearly has some great programs focused on arts education across the board, we have a long way to go in providing sufficient exposure to the arts as part of the learning process. If, however, it is true that success breeds success, perhaps springboards are in place that will stimulate more education in the arts in the future.

I often use the old expression, "We know what we like and we like what we know." This expression seems especially appropriate when talking about the arts and arts education. It is difficult to have an appreciation for ballet if there is no knowledge about the training, conditioning, discipline, and grace through movement, or the history and tradition of the

art form. Likewise, it is difficult to appreciate sculpture without knowledge of line, form, material, scale, and its aesthetic impact on our cultural landscape. This analogy holds true with all of the performing, visual, and literary arts. Multifaceted educational experiences are critical to understanding the strength and power the arts have relative to individuals and the community. Learning in and about the arts are also critical to our on-going efforts to improve the quality of life for all Alabamians.

We know that education in the arts enhances and makes important connections to learning in other subjects, such as math, science, and reading. We know study in one or more arts disciplines leads to life-long learning and the pursuit of excellence in other fields. We know that forms of community celebration through the arts bring people together in positive ways and help cities grow, not only culturally, but economically as well.

Hopefully, after reading about the programs featured in this publication, you will know that, in virtually all parts of the state, great opportunities exist for learning in the arts, involving all sectors of the population. We also hope these profiles will inspire more programs, more innovation, and more appreciation for what the arts can do to lift the human spirit. ■

*Al Head is the
Executive Director
of the Alabama State
Council on the Arts.*



ALABAMA SCHOOL OF FINE ARTS OFFERS ARTISTIC AND ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

by Jaronda Little

Photography by ASFA Executive Director John Northrop

Picture a place where young talent overflows like a fountain, where young artists learn how to execute their visions, their best creative imaginings. Such a place actually exists: it is the Alabama School of Fine Arts, located in the Cultural District of downtown Birmingham.

The Alabama School of Fine Arts, a statewide public school, has, for 30 years, provided a unique educational opportunity to middle and high school students. In addition to its outstanding arts program, ASFA offers unparalleled curricula in math and the sciences. The school boasts more than 2,000 graduates, a majority of whom enjoy successful careers in the arts, sciences and other professions.

Opened in 1971, the school's original purpose was to provide specialized training to students in dance, music, theatre arts and visual arts. A few years later, a creative writing program was established, and in 1990 the curriculum was augmented with an honors level math and science program. In addition to studying a distinguished core curriculum of literature, history, mathematics, science, foreign language and computer science, ASFA students spend three hours a day in specialty classes. Instruction in the classroom is highly focused, in-depth and individualized.

WORKING ARTISTS TEACH THE VISUAL ARTS

"The 7th through 10th graders in our visual arts program work at a pace

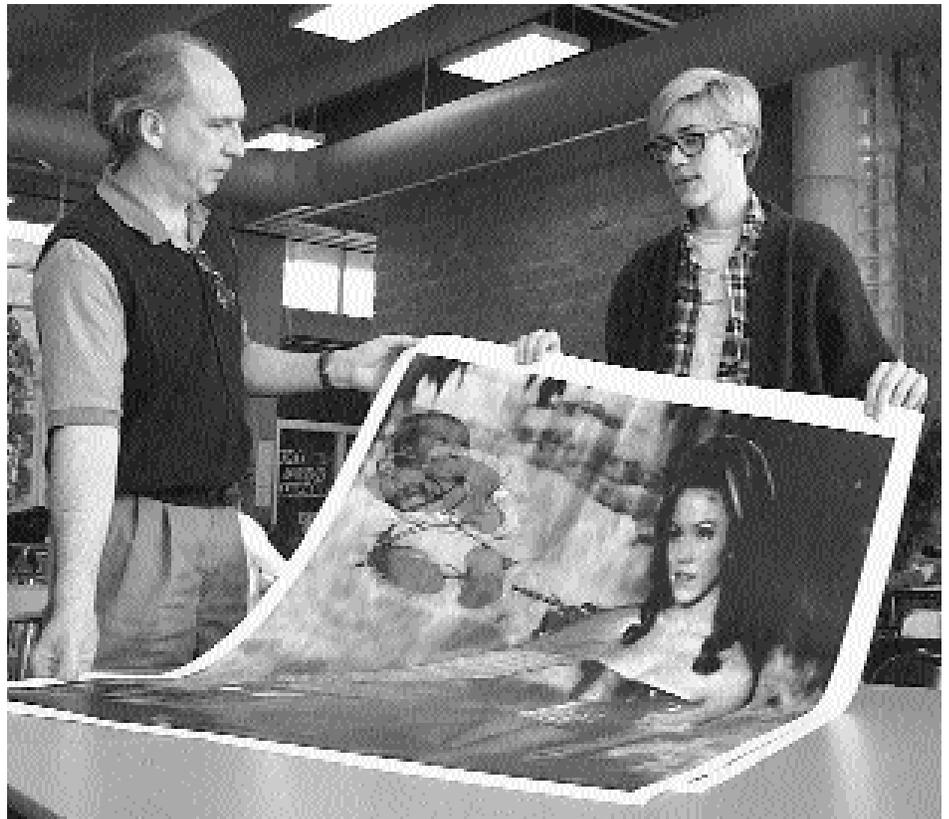
similar to that of the first year at most universities," said Jim Neel, chair of the Visual Arts Department at ASFA for 27 years, and a professional sculptor.

"The relationship between the teacher and the student in our program is different from that in most other schools. The faculty are artists first, and teachers second. Not only do the students learn the formal lessons in class, but they are exposed to people who are teaching art and working with art on a daily basis, both in creative ways." Neel runs his junior and senior level art

classes like a professional studio.

Neel emphasizes that the focus in his department is based on teaching students the concepts and rules associated with color theory, painting and drawing. "We also expose them to critiques, so when they leave here they are well-prepared and sophisticated in that rigorous process," Neel said.

He added that students succeed at ASFA and beyond because they are constantly challenged to explore possibilities outside the status quo. "ASFA is a place where individualism is



Individualized instruction is a hallmark of the visual arts program at the Alabama School of Fine Arts. Visual arts teachers, who are professional artists, work closely with the students to help them develop their individual style.

encouraged, where creativity, uniqueness and eccentricities are extolled," he said.

CONSTANT PRACTICE, AND STARTING YOUNG, ARE KEYS TO EXCELLENCE IN DANCE

A minimum of an hour and a half of exercises and work at the barre is expected each morning of every student in the Dance Department, especially when a performance is being prepared, and there are many performances throughout the school year. In addition to the two main full-length productions, there is the senior choreography performance, in which 12th-graders design a dance and direct their peers in this series of individual

pieces. Additionally, a varied calendar of outreach performances at community schools throughout the year pro-

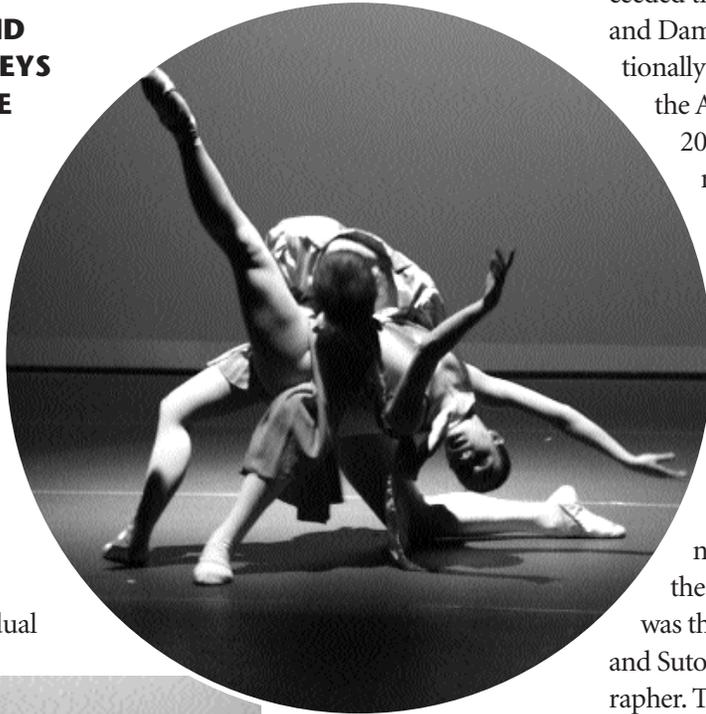
level, as opposed to rote repetition of the repertoire."

Laeger, a graduate of the school, succeeded the dance duo of Thor Sutowski and Dame Sonia Arova, both internationally known performers, who led the ASFA Dance Department for 20 years. Addressing the couples' reputation, Laeger remarked, "Once Sonia and Thor came on board, the Dance Department at ASFA really raised the standard of expectation for dance education in Birmingham, and for the entire dance community as well."

The couple started what is now the state dance company, the Alabama Ballet. Dame Arova was the founding artistic director, and Sutowski was the resident choreographer. The Dance Department at ASFA became a training ground for young dancers, many of whom eventually joined the professional company and toured nationally and internationally.

The School held a tribute for Dame Arova and Sutowski in November 2000, after their retirement. Dame Arova died three months later, but Sutowski returned to ASFA in June of 2001 to teach a week-long master class to students.

"We have carried on their example of excellence by giving students the opportunity to be challenged when they are very young," Laeger said. "Anything less is really cheating them."



Students in the dance department at ASFA study both classical and modern dance. The students participate in at least three major performances each year.

vide opportunities for ASFA students to dance in front of an audience. "We have found that if you challenge them and let them know that they can do it, they will do it," said Therese Laeger, who became chair of the Dance Department in 1996. "They learn to set no limits on what they can do. As a result, you see truly artistic endeavors happening at this age



Students in the math and science department take honors-level mathematics and science courses, beginning in the eighth grade. Many math and science students take advance placement exams in their junior and senior years, which allows them to be exempted from some courses in college.

SCIENCE AND MATH CLASSES ARE CHALLENGING

In the math and science programs, students learn from hands-on experiments and classroom demonstrations. They also learn from teachers who are continuing research in various fields.

“The students here handle large volumes of material at a higher conceptual level than most students elsewhere,” said Jane Ellis, chair of the Math and Science Department since August 2000. Students spend the 8th-grade year studying honors-level algebra and an advanced-level science, where they are introduced to chemistry, biochemistry, cell biology and genetics. By ninth grade, students study geometry, advanced-level chemistry, and introductory physics. By the time they are seniors, students also will have taken advanced algebra, calculus and, in some cases, statistics. The

science track also includes advanced placement or college-preparatory courses in biology, chemistry and physics.

“We are a training ground for young students who are interested in careers in math and science. Because of what they learn here, our stu-

dents’ transitions into college are so much easier,” Ellis said.

Research also plays an active role in the department. Selected junior-level students may participate during the summer recess in research projects with university-level professors. For example, in the summer of 2000, six students participated in a science and technology expo, in which they presented their research at Birmingham’s McWane Center. Also in 2000, the University of Alabama at Birmingham selected ASFA as one of five high schools from the United States and Denmark to conduct field-testing and help develop educational material for a project simulating the exploration of Mars.

“I think the fact that

ASFA was chosen out of literally hundreds of schools implies that, nationally, people appreciate the work we do here,” said ASFA physics instructor Dr. Shawn Wade, who was responsible for coordinating ASFA’s part in the project.

WRITING SKILLS ARE HONED, THEN REWARDED

In Creative Writing, students spend 15 hours each week writing and studying various aspects of writing and authors’ styles to improve their craft. Their intense focus has recently paid off with top awards in six different state, local and national writing contests.

The Princeton Poetry Contest



In the creative writing program, students spend at least three hours each day studying the work of other poets and authors and developing original writings of their own. The students engage in critique sessions with their teachers and peers for feedback on their work.

is one of the nation’s most prestigious contests for high school students, and ASFA junior Natalie Elliott received first place for the 2000-2001 school year. Also distinguished is the Hollins University Poetry Contest, and ASFA senior Page Poe won first place for 2000-2001. Five ASFA students received

honorable mention in the National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts' recent Arts Recognition and Talent Search competition. Judges considered nearly 4,000 students from across the country for the awards.

"This is like the Grammy or Oscar of high school writing," said Creative Writing Department Chair Denise Trimm. "To get even an Honorable Mention in a contest of this magnitude is very significant."

Each year the creative writing students produce a 100-page chapbook containing the students' best work from the school year. Visits by professional poets and authors and lectures from professional writers and teachers on faculty keep the students well-informed about the possibilities of publishing their own work.

THEATRE AND MUSIC CURRICULA DEMAND EQUAL PARTS TALENT AND DISCIPLINE

The work expected of students in Theatre Arts is hands-on, up-close, and professional. Students stage two major productions each year, as well as senior-directed one-act plays, outreach performances in area schools, and a number of minor projects.



The stage comes to life for theatre students each semester as they present a major dramatic performance. Students in the theatre arts program study both dramatic and technical theatre.

Professionalism is learned through interaction with guest artists, who participate with students in coaching and training and, on occasion, in live performance on stage. Opportunities to perform professionally with the Birmingham Summerfest Musical Theatre and Birmingham Festival Theatre are treasured by students.

During the 2000-2001 school year, the Theatre Arts Department presented a two-act play written by theatre arts senior student, Ryan Tittle. The play, "Discordia," a satirical drama based on a Russian play written in 1783, was directed and adapted to the year 3000 by theatre instructor Elizabeth Adkisson. Three senior students with different individual talents designed the futuristic setting, the costumes, and the lighting for the performance.

"What we can do here at ASFA is allow our students to have more independent and creative input than other programs can afford,"

said Jesse Bates, chair of the Theatre Arts Department for twenty years, and artistic director of Birmingham's Summerfest Musical Theatre. "We expect a level of maturity in our students that will allow us to grant individual freedom and creativity; the student must be self-motivated."

That self-motivation shows up in every department at ASFA. In music, students must be motivated to pick up their instruments and practice after spending almost five hours in academic classes and three hours in music theory, history and private lessons. ASFA music students are trained to develop their technical proficiency, artistic ability and intellectual curiosity to the fullest. Upon graduation, the best students are prepared for entry into college-level conservatories and subsequently into the professional music world.

Les Fillmer, chair of the Music Department since 1996 and a



The basic philosophy of the music program at ASFA is to develop a student's technical proficiency, artistic ability, and intellectual curiosity to the fullest. Students in the music program perform in at least one music recital each semester, in addition to community performances by the ASFA Music Department throughout the school year.

member of the faculty for twenty years, said one college recruiter was particularly impressed by ASFA students.

“Kathleen Tesar, director of admissions at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York, once told me that, in terms of ear training, sight singing and written theory, music history, and basic keyboard skills, our students are the best prepared she’s ever seen,” Fillmer reports.

Music students participate in two individual recitals each year, in addition to singing or playing with the school choir, and performing at community outreach opportunities and individual state and local music competitions. At Christmas last year, the Music Department Choir was invited to perform with the Alabama Symphony for its Christmas concert at the Birmingham-Jefferson Concert Hall. Students joined a cast of seasoned professionals, singing and dancing during all of the eight performances, spaced

over two weekends.

“The show’s producer called us at a moment’s notice because they knew the type of music training we offer our students,” Fillmer said.

That type of training also prepared two students to participate during the summer of 2001 at two prestigious music programs for students. Sixteen-year-old Skye Jenkins participated in the Young Artists Piano Program of Boston University’s highly acclaimed Tanglewood Institute and 16-year-old Nadya Meykson, for the second time, spent four weeks in the nation’s capital, studying with some of the country’s best symphony performers at the Kennedy Center Summer Orchestral Institute.

“The students who go there are some of the finest young performers in America,” Fillmer said. “This exposure will, in both cases, enhance their comprehension, interpretive skill, technical proficiency and their under-

standing of music.

“It will be a huge asset to their education, because these are opportunities we can’t replicate here at school. This will offer an opportunity for their growth and development. They will come back more accomplished and more insightful, and they will share that musical richness with their classmates. In such cases, we are music beneficiaries as well.”

ASFA GRADUATES FIND SUBSTANTIVE CAREERS

Every student who walks out of the doors of ASFA as a graduate is the beneficiary of an accomplished academic program, and each is also facing the prospect of a budding professional career. Some have gone on to perform on Broadway, at the Metropolitan Opera, and with dance companies around the world. Others have made their mark in cities across the country and locally, working as teachers, or as artists quietly honing their art.

ASFA Dance graduate Wes Chapman enjoyed a solo career with the American Ballet Theatre in New York and now works as the artistic director of the Alabama Ballet. Theatre graduate Katherine “Effie” Johnson now performs on Broadway, and Music graduate Tom Bagwell performs as a piano accompanist with New York’s Metropolitan Opera and at Carnegie Hall.

But other graduates have

“Simply being exposed to all the performing arts here at ASFA helped me to realize that there was a legitimate possibility for me to have a career in costume design.”

enjoyed successful careers right here in Alabama. Costume designer Jeff Todhunter graduated from ASFA in 1980 and has had a marvelous career designing costumes for the Alabama Ballet, the Alabama Repertory Dance Theatre, Beaux Arts Krewe, Birmingham Children’s Theatre, Birmingham Festival Theatre, Birmingham International Festival, the Birmingham Museum of Art and the Moscow Ballet. Todhunter most recently spent three years as a costume design instructor at ASFA and seven years as a costume coordinator and designer for the Birmingham Summerfest Cabaret.

Todhunter, a visual arts graduate, said his interest in costume design developed while a student at ASFA. “I came to ASFA with the intention of following a career in visual arts, although I had a real interest in the theatre,” he said. “Simply being exposed to all the performing arts here at ASFA helped me to realize that there was a legitimate possibility for me to have a career in costume design.”

ASFA Music Instructor Kim Felder, also a graduate of the school, spent six days in May 2001 performing at an International Festival of Flutists in Lima, Peru. The only American invited to perform at the festival, Felder made music with internationally known artists nearly twice her age. “Just the exposure alone was incredible,” Felder says.

ASFA’S ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE IS WIDELY RECOGNIZED

ASFA graduates and current students have helped the school to make its mark, nationally as well as locally. In addition to completing an accomplished arts and science program, ASFA students earn some of the highest standardized test scores in the state. For example, in 2001, ASFA students scored a 100 percent passing rate on the newly updated Alabama High School Exit Exam. The school also received “straight A’s” on its annual report card from the Alabama Department of Education. The school was the only high school in the Birmingham city area to receive “A’s” on the report, which also considers a school’s Stanford Achievement Test scores, performance on the American College Test, graduation exam results, and dropout rate.

“We have not set, as one of our goals, doing exceptionally well on standardized tests, but those high test scores seem to come with the territory,” said John Northrop, ASFA’s Executive Director. “We have a strong core academic faculty, and our students are solidly motivated to do what it takes to remain enrolled.”

As a result of academic and artistic excellence, students at ASFA have received scholarships and admission into some of the most competitive colleges,

conservatories and universities across the country. The 62 seniors in the Class of 2001 received a total of 179 acceptances from various colleges and universities. They also received scholarships, awards and financial aid packages totaling \$3.6 million, said Pat Taylor, director of Student Support Services, which oversees college advising at the school. That includes senior visual arts student, Kyle Kessler, who received a full scholarship into the Cooper Union School of Art in New York City—one of the top art institutes in the country—and Charlene Hawkins, a math and science senior, who was awarded a four-year, \$136,400 academic scholarship to Amherst College in Amherst, Mass.

As another example of the school’s success, *Newsweek* magazine named ASFA the 10th Best Public High School in the Nation in March 2000; the citation was based on the number of Advanced Placement exams taken by its students. ■

Jaronda Little is the recruitment and media relations specialist at the Alabama School of Fine Arts. She is a former reporter for The Birmingham News and has worked at newspapers in Massachusetts and Georgia.

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE AND THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA: A Unique Educational Partnership

by Edie Barnes

It's a source of great pride to us that the University of Alabama was selected, in 1997, to be the site of the first residential satellite program for the New York City-based American Ballet Theatre. (It was the first partnership ever between the dance company and a university). Having ABT choose Tuscaloosa for a satellite workshop identified the University of Alabama as a premiere place to study and perform the art of dance—ballet, modern, and jazz. This unique alliance brings, every summer, world-class artists to our state, thereby giving international visibility to the UA Dance Program and the members of the college of Arts and Sciences faculty who participate in the workshop. Known as the "ABT Summer Intensive," the purpose of the workshop is to offer promising young dancers a chance to receive, not only the highest level of dance training, but a strong correlating academic curriculum of dance studies.

The American Ballet Theatre is the nation's premiere dance company. Founded in 1940, the company has been the home of many of the world's best dancers, including Natalie Makarova, Mikhail Baryshnikov, and Cynthia Gregory. American Ballet Theatre is known internationally for establishing an American identity for ballet through works choreographed by such artists as Agnes de Mille, George Balanchine, Twyla Tharp, Mark Morris, and Paul Taylor. Today, the American Ballet Theatre continues to be the destination of choice for the world's most accomplished dancers.

The UA Dance Program offers a Bachelor of Arts degree in dance through the Department of Theatre and Dance in the College of Arts and Sciences. The program provides a comprehensive general education while preparing dancers for careers as professional performers, dance educators, and choreographers—graduates of UA's dance program are represented in many of the nations' top graduate programs and professional companies. Acceptance to the program as a dance major is by audition only, and dance majors may also audition for the Alabama Repertory Dance Theatre, the program's pre-professional dance company, which was one of five programs from the United States selected to perform at the International University Biennial Festival in Lyons, France.

"... ABT wanted a Southern presence and the University of Alabama was just perfect for us. It's just an amazing campus," said Michael Kaiser in 1997, who was, at that time, the Executive Director of the American Ballet Theatre. (In 1998, Kaiser left American Ballet Theatre to become Executive Director of the Royal Ballet Covent Garden, where he made great strides in re-shaping the Royal Ballet Company and its school, both artistically and financially. Currently, Kaiser is the Chief Executive Officer for the Kennedy Center, Washington, D.C.)

As to how the University of Alabama fit into ABT's vision, Kaiser said, "The American Ballet Theatre has always been a company whose home is the whole country—not just New York City—so we always think of ourselves as a national company. Having activities outside of New York is something that is part of our mission." In addition to daily technique classes in classical ballet, pointe, pas de deux, men's, modern, and jazz dance, students are exposed to the many different aspects of the art form when they participate in true "hands-on" explanations of acting, sound and light design, dance history, videography, nutrition, aquatic exercise for dancers, and personalized weight training.

The University of Alabama is now one of four outreach programs established by American Ballet Theatre: other locations are the Detroit Opera House, the University of California at Irvine (in the Orange County Performing Arts Center), and the University of Texas at Austin. Auditions for the "Summer Intensives" are held in 24 cities across the country and are open to male and female dancers who have achieved intermediate and advanced levels of ballet training. Auditions are held early each year in New York City, Chicago, Miami, San Francisco, Detroit, Los Angeles, Pittsburgh, Dallas, Kansas City, Atlanta, Winston-Salem, Minneapolis, Concord (NH), Phoenix, Washington, D. C., and Birmingham (AL).

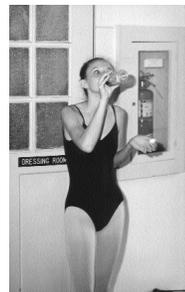
On July 7, 2001, close to 200 exceptionally talented dancers, representing 40 states, Canada, and Bermuda, descended on the University of Alabama campus for the fifth ABT Summer Intensive. All of the participants were housed in the new state-of-the-art Blount Dormitory, complete with computers, conference rooms, and spacious living suites. Serving on the faculty were teachers from the University, from ABT, and guests



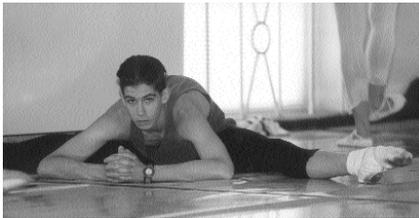
Classes, such as this demonstration of a ballet move by Edie Barnes, are an integral part of the ABT/UA Summer Intensive.



Group work involves the execution of specific ballet positions.



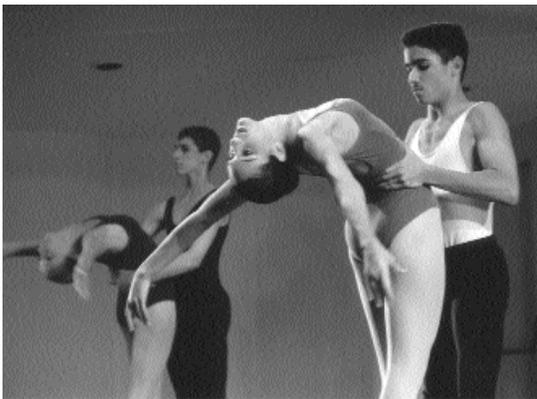
Hard work requires a break every now and then!



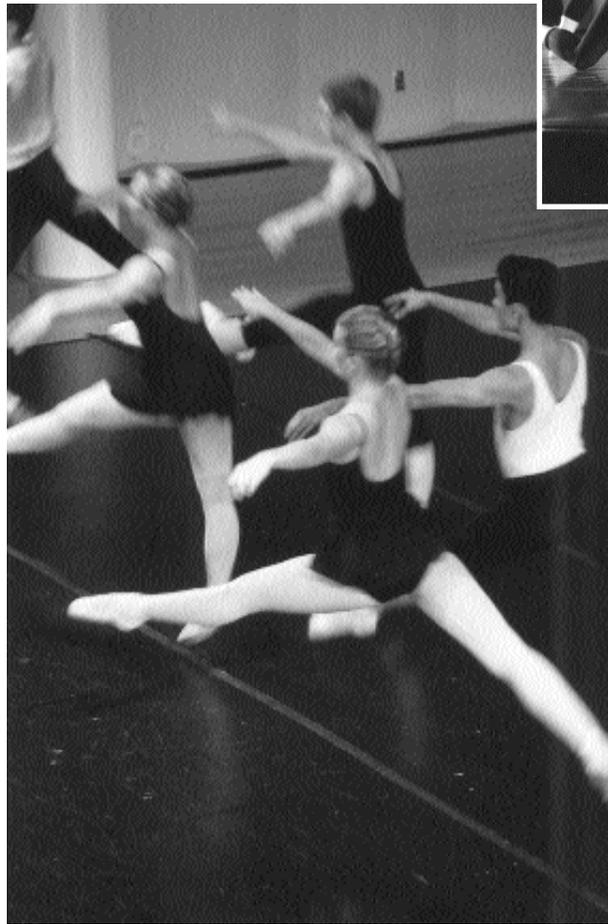
Many positions appear deceptively easy; however, top physical conditioning is a prerequisite for correct form and execution.



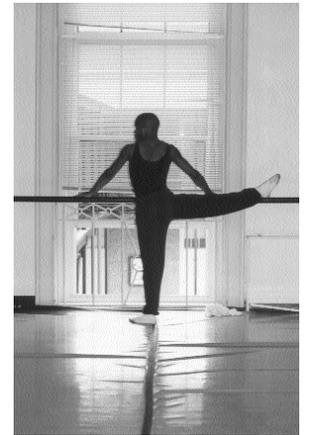
Floor and barre work is a part of each day of the three-week "Intensive."



Partners practice their moves for choreographer Cornelius Carter's "Daydreaming," presented in the 2000 ABT/UA Summer Intensive showcase performance.



A corps de ballet was also part of "Daydreaming."



A showcase performance marks the finale of each ABT/UA Summer Intensive, and they are eagerly anticipated by the state-wide dance audience as a time to see outstanding young dancers at the beginning of their careers, as well as premieres of exciting new works.

Venerable Clark Hall, in the Old Quadrangle on the UA campus, houses the dance studio.

artists: Ron Tire, Charles Maple, Amy Rose, Stephen Hyde, Megali Messac, Melissa Hale, Gage Bush England, Richard Richards, Rita Snyder, Ashlie Solomon, Jonathan Michealsen, Stephanie Wilkins, Amy Eifler, Jeff Weis, and Jill Tappen. Three "Intensive" weeks after their arrival, the dancers performed in the always popular final showcase at the Moody Music Concert Hall on the UA campus. ■

Edie Barnes is director of the UA Dance Program in the Department of Theatre and Dance at the University of Alabama

in Tuscaloosa. She also directs the ABT Summer Intensive on the UA campus. Her background includes training and performance with the San Francisco Ballet, the Washington Ballet, and the Martha Graham Center of Contemporary Dance in New York City; she also holds an MFA from the University of North Carolina. Her choreography has been presented nationally and internationally, on CNN, NBC's "Today Show," and in Lyon, France at the Fifth International University Dance Biennial. She was featured as a guest choreographer at the Sadler's Wells Lilian Baylis Theatre with Dance Continuum during its 1995-96 London season, and in the summer of 2000 she worked with the British World Dance Theatre Workshop in London as a master

Performance—The “Furnace that Refines the Art:” Huntsville’s Ars Nova

by Ginger Beazely

“*Ars Nova was a movement in France and Italy during the late 14th century that required a higher level of complexity and skill for both composers and performers...*”

A dream was realized when the Ars Nova School of the Arts opened in August of 1998. The dream was mine, and the name I chose honored that trend in music history which suggested that if excellence is the standard, greater accomplishments than one thought possible can be attained. That was the standard I had for the school, its students, and its faculty; it became the founding principle of Ars Nova School of the Arts.

But how does one teach excellence? One’s own experiences can be a guide. As I had taught private students in my own studio, I had discovered that my students were very successful when they followed a discipline similar to that of the college in which I taught and the institutions in which I myself had studied, where the curriculum included music theory, music history, and participation in choral groups. For my private students, I added weekly performance classes, in which they performed regularly and were critiqued by their teachers and peers. The students learned presentation and interpretation in front of an audience, rather than in an isolated studio environment. They learned from others how to improve their work—how to pursue a higher standard.

My voice students, both at the college and in the studio, were also required to accomplish a certain amount of reading and research each semester, and they used their discoveries to maintain notebooks with biographical briefs of the composers they studied, character sketches for each song they were assigned, and reviews of articles in professional vocal journals. This reinforcement of academic courses in the curriculum seemed essential if students were to “make sense” of their course and vocal work.

Despite some initial resistance, many

students rose to the challenge of striving for excellence, and fell in love with their craft and the world of art through music.

After forming the Ars Nova Corporation in August, developments proceeded rapidly. We rented space in an 80-year-old building, with walls covered in layers of florescent paint: faculty and family spent the remaining few weeks of the month scraping, painting, mopping, and waxing so we could open on September 1. The original faculty included, in addition to myself, four of my former students: Trent England, MS in music education; Michelle Bauer, MA in vocal performance; Karen Young, BA in vocal performance; and Bethany Parlier, BA in vocal performance. We were supplemented by instructors in strings, winds, brass and piano, outstanding artists all, who agreed to be available to teach students in those areas. A longtime friend and colleague, Frances Schwemmer, offered courses in piano pedagogy and literature.

That first semester, Ars Nova registered thirty students in various disciplines. Three years later, that number has grown to over eighty-five. The number of faculty under contract has grown from five to fourteen. Three years later, we are also in a larger facility. And, although the majority of our student body studies voice, other disciplines continue to develop.

The preparatory/community program offers a private lesson weekly, with a required monthly class covering music theory or anatomy and performance. Students are prepared for end-of-the-year theory testing, performance juries, and public recitals—with awards and receptions. (The preparatory program is oriented toward pre-college students, and the community program is for anyone who has graduated from high school

and is interested in learning about music.) Ars Nova now offers voice classes for children in the community, given by nurturing teachers who are aware of the health needs of these young instruments. The Royal Canadian Conservatory literature is followed; available on many levels, it allows us to provide songs in a comfortable range, with appropriate content, for younger singers. Group activities involve the children in the study of theory, history, and performance. A recent semester included study of the composer Mozart through video and other activities.

Ars Nova also provides, through its preparatory division, a place for children and teens to work with qualified instructors. The range of students includes young people schooled at home and in public and private institutions. Some enroll to experiment in areas that have held some fascination for them, while others come having already performed musically and dramatically at church, school and community theater. But all expect to improve their craft in a short period of time. While that is a short-term goal and possible with good student response to instructions (including, of course, practice), our agenda is to promote long-term goals and the discipline required to reach them. Long-term discipline is particularly important to the small, yet growing, number of our high school students who want to continue their education in a college or university.

There is a conscious intent at Ars Nova, in all musical and dramatic instruction, to blend the student's immediate interest and improvement with their slow but steady development of the craft. We have been rewarded by seeing our students, in highly competitive fields, consistently receive "I," or "Superior" ratings in solo and ensemble, as well as in the Federated Music Clubs junior festival. We have had multiple finalists in state and regional National

Association of Teachers of Singing competitions, including first place winners in the high school division.

One first-place winner, Susanna Phillips, applied for entry to eight colleges and was accepted by all. She chose Julliard School of Music in New York City, and studies with

Cynthia Hoffman, the head of the vocal department. Susanna will return to Huntsville in November 2002 to sing the female lead in Gounod's *Romeo and Juliet*. She is eager to spend time in our schools, speaking to young people of the possibilities available to those who combine their natural gifts with discipline and quality training.

Approximately half the enrollment at Ars Nova is in the community division, which serves adults from an amazing variety of vocations. Joining together in a stimulating rapport each month are teachers, full-time homemakers, medical professionals, engineers, and several musicians—some of whom perform and others who teach, and a few who do both. In addition to the performance classes, offerings have included anatomy for singers, self-conducting for singers, and theatrical improvisation. These adults exhibit great eagerness and desire to learn, because the arts provide an opportunity for many of them to exercise their "right brain," and to enjoy creativity and



Photo by Jeff White.

At Ars Nova, students as young as three years can begin to learn about music in the "Music Magic" program especially designed for ages 3—5. "Magical Voices" is for children who are as young as five years old through those as old as fifth grade.



In a unique combination of the words of Shakespeare and the music of Verdi, Ars Nova presented in January 2001 an original work, *Othello/Otello*, with Glenn Humphrey (at well) as Othello, and John Weber as Iago.

spontaneity in ways not possible in their work environment. Content and established in their professions, many of them study at Ars Nova to glimpse a new world, a glimpse which often increases their interest in and attendance at other arts events in the community.

It was this group of individuals that encouraged Ars Nova, Inc. to begin producing operetta and opera. There was a need to take the vocal craft from the studio to the stage, and we were required to create opportunities other than those currently available within the community. The specific operetta or opera chosen for performance is determined by who, among the advanced students and faculty, are available for principle roles; Ars Nova high school and beginning adult students fill the chorus. The productions have resulted in continued training of our performers, while simultaneously providing the community with outstanding musical entertainment.

The summer of 1998 saw the first production, *The Medium*, by Gian Carlo Menotti, receive favorable notice by the public, especially music professionals. It was closely

followed by a one-act musical theater setting of *The Gift of the Magi*, which played at Renaissance Theatre, a small but exquisite theatre in the area. We moved to the Von Braun Playhouse in January of 2000 with a major production, Franz Lehar's *Merry Widow*, which caused a flurry of interest and appreciation in a community which had not seen operetta for nearly fifteen years. In January of 2001, the company presented an original adaptation of opera and play in *Othello/Otello*—Shakespeare and Verdi. In a two-hour show, Shakespearean readers, on an Art Deco set, led the audience from one operatic scene to another; at the corner of the set, singers, in medieval costumes, provided the musical interpretations of the words.

Most recently, Ars Nova produced *The Mikado*, a popular Gilbert & Sullivan operetta. Presented with traditional Japanese costumes, on a set complete with bridge, pond (including live fish and lily pads) and garden, the show was a wonderful success. Although the vocal prowess of the principles is certainly a signature of all the productions mentioned, the overall presentation of the show has evolved into an exciting and inspiring level of excellence.

In all these shows, the majority of cast has been students at the school. Children appeared in the second act chorus of *Otello* with Desdemona and as tiny Japanese flower girls greeting the Mikado. The chorus of both *Otello* and *Mikado* was sprinkled with outstanding high school singers, many having their first experience in a professional theater setting. And of course, the adult students and faculty of Ars Nova continue working and training throughout the run of the show. The improvement evidenced between opening night to closing is the result of a continual “tweaking” process, which can occur best in a real performing environment. Teachers and students readily agree that a role in a production will bring major leaps in technique and craft. It is the furnace that

refines and sets the art and that is absolutely the reason "it is worth it".

We continue to innovate. Ars Nova held the first High School Musical Theater Summer Camp in the summer of 2001. It was staffed with outstanding faculty, including, from Grissom High School, Gail Rodenhauer in drama and Elizabeth Stephenson in music; from Bob Jones High School, Dwayne Craft, in drama; from Ars Nova, David Herriott, artistic director and instructor at Community Ballet and myself. Grants from the Alabama State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment of the Arts made it possible to offer scholarships to young people on the basis of need and ability.

Ars Nova opened, in Fall 2001, a theater division, in which we teach improvisation and beginning and intermediate acting.

In collaboration with Metropolitan Youth Orchestra, under the leadership of Gary Parks, Ars Nova will present Kapilow's opera, *Green Eggs and Ham*, at the orchestra's fall concert, featuring outstanding high school singers. Afterwards, this 18-minute work, a fun-filled introduction to opera, will be taken into the public elementary schools to entertain the first through third grades.

Artistically gifted individuals are in every community, and those with other talents need the beauty and stimulation our gifts provide to our culture. The possibilities are endless, but all require energy, time and abundance of courage. The Alabama State Council on the Arts constantly promotes and encourages such organizations as Ars Nova. The financial help is invaluable, but of equal value is the contact with other arts groups the Council provides, and the training and information they make available. The contribution of the Alabama State Council on the Arts is often the difference between success and failure. Teaching the arts is an on-going journey, rarely profitable financially, but amazingly fulfilling at the end of every day. ■



Photo by Jeff White.

Senior high school students from the preparatory division of Ars Nova form the chorus in the school's June 2001 production of *The Mikado*



Photo by Jeff Bridges.

The production of opera and operettas was initiated at the insistence of Ars Nova's adult community division, who wanted a venue for performance. Shown in the June 2001 production of Gilbert and Sullivan's *Mikado* are, from left, Elizabeth Stephenson (as Katisha), Jim Zielinski (as KoKo), and Teri Nelson (as YumYum).

Ginger Beazley, founding and current director of the Ars Nova School of the Arts, has been a vital part of the cultural and educational communities of Huntsville for many years as a teacher, performer, and director. Her operatic roles include Lauretta in Gianni Schicci, Nedd in I Paglicci, and Leonora in Il Traviatore. Her recent directing credits include Franz Lehar's The Merry Widow and The Mikado, by Gilbert and Sullivan. She is a candidate for the Doctoral of Musical Arts degree in Vocal Performance at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa.

The MASTER-APPRENTICESHIP SYSTEM: *A Time-Honored Process*

By Joey Brackner

The master-apprentice system is an ancient method for teaching complex skills from one generation to the next. This time-honored process allows for the most advantageous teacher-student ratio and fosters serious instruction. Artistic skills in music and crafts have been taught this way since before the invention of written language. The basic components of this learning process—direct association with the teacher and immersion in a subject—are also at the heart of what defines folk art (the term folk will be used synonymously with traditional art in this article and is not meant for self-taught or idiosyncratic visual art). Art traditions that emerge from the values and aesthetics of a community are folk arts. These communities can be familial, regional, religious, and/or residential, but all offer a context for folk traditions, including certain art forms.

If a student is to become a folk artist, he or she must not only obtain a technical proficiency in that art form, but also must function as an artist within that folk community. This process goes on in hundreds of Alabama communities unaided by forces outside the community. But, occasionally, financial help ensures learning opportunities that would not have otherwise taken place. To take advantage of these opportunities, the Alabama State Council on the Arts has established the Folks Arts Apprenticeship program, which is administered by the Council's Folklife Program. This grant category provides

support for master folk artists that are willing to teach their art form. ASCA began the program in 1984, and for the first ten years depended on grants from the National Endowment for the Arts to maintain a significant level of support. Apprenticeship grants are one of the primary "preservation tools" of the Alabama Folklife Program. They are designed to guarantee the transmission of a diversity of folk skills from Sacred Harp singing to pottery making, using the traditional master-apprenticeship system. Since the 1980's, scores of Alabama traditional artists have been helped through ASCA's Apprenticeship program.

A MASTER POTTER

Jerry Brown, a ninth-generation potter who works in Hamilton, has taught several students as part of the ASCA Apprenticeship Program. Stoneware pottery production is a labor-intensive, technically challenging process that does not lend itself to casual instruction. Jerry believes that his participation in the early period of the Apprenticeship Program assured the success of his fledgling pottery. "If it hadn't been for it, I doubt we would have been in the pottery business now. It was a blessing to us."

The apprenticeship grants provided for paid help who learned the trade while they worked at Brown's Pottery. Jerry's first student, Jeff Wilburn, is "about as good a potter for his age [to be found] anywhere around here." Within the past two years, Jeff's son, Brandon, has also been trained and now works with his father "making balls" (wedging

and preparing clay) for his dad; he also makes small objects of his own.

Jerry Brown teaches students exactly the way his dad, Horace V. "Jug" Brown taught him. "Show them over and over, the process for making a piece..." "Eventually they'll catch on..." "If you stand there and tell them, you might as well be talking to a telephone pole."

Jerry was forced to find other employment—in the logging business—when, as a young man, his father and older brother died within a year of each other. After twenty years, he was able to return to pottery-making and use the knowledge of the craft he had gained in his early training. He worked through some of the natural rustiness he had in the beginning by watching his Uncle Gerald Stewart, a traditional potter from Louisville, Mississippi. Gerald came over to Alabama on several occasions to help Jerry, thereby reminding Jerry of details that he had forgotten and guaranteeing that his repertoire of pottery forms remained traditional.

Soon, Jerry himself was teaching, beginning with his stepchildren, Jeff and Tammy Wilburn, and others who came and worked in the shop. His technique is to tell them to watch him and other experienced potters in the shop, do a little bit in the fundamentals, and let them progress gradually. If you don't bring them along slowly, he says, "they let the clay master them instead of mastering the clay." In 1992, Jerry Brown won a National Heritage Fellowship. Today, he is one of the best known traditional potters in the United States.



This photograph from c. 1950 affords a rare glimpse into the life of a working potter of that time. Horace "Jug" Brown supervises his sons, Jack and Jerry (in opening) in loading the wood-fired kiln in Sulligent, Alabama with "greenware," or unfired pots.

A MASTER OF INDIAN DANCE

Sudha Raghuram, of Montgomery, is a master of Bharatanatyam, a popular classical dance of India "known for its sculptural poses, rhythmic footwork, expressive hand gestures and vivid facial expression." Sudha, also a performer of Indian folk dances, teaches within the Indian community of central Alabama, as this art form provides a symbol of Indian identity to these immigrants and their descendants in their new country.

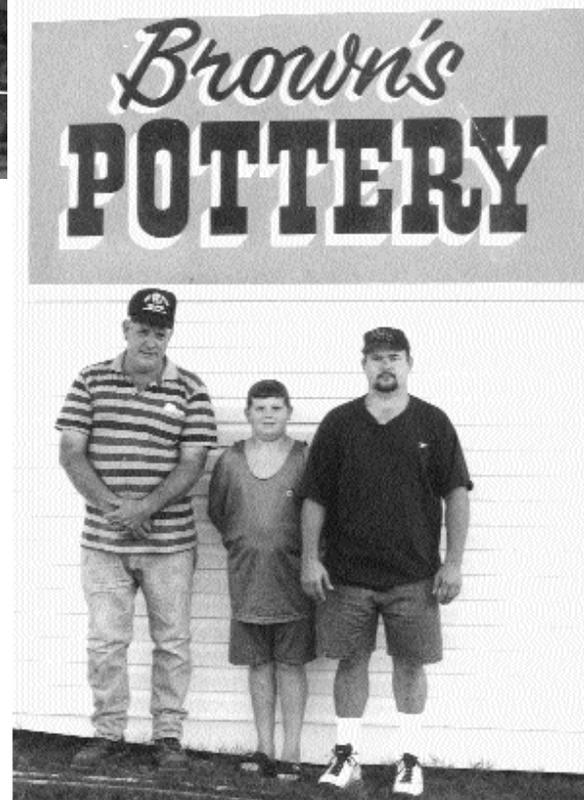
The teaching of Bharatanatyam requires a broad understanding of Indian cultures, because "the dances usually describe the virtues of gods and

goddesses or stories from Hindu mythology. Some deal with universal themes like nature or love." Most are related to religion, and Sudha's students regularly perform at Hindu temples in Montgomery and Birmingham during various religious festivals. (There are two other Bharatanatyam dance troupes in Birmingham.)

The learning of the dance is not for the impatient. Sudha believes that it takes at least

five years to become proficient. She teaches a one-hour class per week: first-year students work on basic footwork, hand gestures, and posture. Only when these are mastered can students begin to learn specific dances. Although men can dance Bharatanatyam, it is more popular with girls and women. Specific costumes with accompanying jewelry are required; because they must be imported from India, they are expensive.

Although the dance serves as a symbol of Indian identity in America, it also offers a point of contact with non-Indians. It provides an opportunity,



Jerry Brown, at left, shown with his apprentice Jeff Wilburn and Wilburn's son, Brandon, continues the pottery tradition he learned from his father in Hamilton, Alabama.

Photo by Jocy Brachner.

through festivals and other venues, for the dancers to share an art form previously unknown in the state. According to Sudha, the main difference between dancing here and in India is that dancers in India have more opportunities to perform. She hopes that will change as Alabamians become more familiar with Indian culture. Sudha has benefited from the apprenticeship program in that it has allowed her to procure audiotapes and videotapes from India that help in her teaching. Through the program, she has also been able to host workshops with visiting dancers from India.



Sudha Raghuram in a Bharatanatyam dance pose.

MASTERS OF NATIVE AMERICAN TRADITIONS

The Poarch community of Creek Indians, near Atmore, is Alabama's only federally recognized American Indian group. They hold tenaciously to their traditions, and consult regularly with Creek tribal elders from other communities in order to re-learn and re-introduce traditions that have died out. ASCA has helped in this effort with a series of apprenticeship grants.

Cheryl and William Bailey have taken a lead in bringing in Creek culture-bearers to Poarch. The Baileys have visited the Creek community in

Oklahoma and invited tribal elders, such as Sam Proctor and George Bunny, to work with young Alabama Creeks in the area of language arts. These men have also advised about other cultural traditions, such as dance. For example, they teach that the "stomp dance" is both a dance and a dance step, and that stomp dances are held as a part of many traditional Creek celebrations. Ceremonial dress, including the turtle shell rattles worn by Creek women dancers, is an important part of these rituals.

William Bailey is grateful for apprenticeship grants. "It's helped the whole culture, not just the

language... I wouldn't have gotten to go to Oklahoma, without the state arts council's help."

A MASTER OLD-TIME FIDDLER

Jerry Rogers, a fiddler from Eastaboga, is an advocate of the old-time traditional string music of his section of Alabama, having learned fiddle-playing from his grandfather, Benny Rogers. He explains, "I like the fiddle (as an instrument), (it)... takes the whole tune, carries the whole load." He was intrigued how much quantity and variety of sound could come out of such a small instrument.

During the 1960's and '70's, Jerry was alarmed by the rapid decline of old-time music. He became determined to help preserve this heritage, immersing himself in the tradition. Consequently, he prefers the regional old-time fiddle tunes to the newer sound of bluegrass, although he respects good practitioners of any style of music. With the help of a grant from ASCA, he has begun to take in a few students interested in the form. His most serious student, Natalie Couch, had never picked up a violin or fiddle in her life. She took to fiddle playing "like a duck to water," explains Jerry. One reason for this, in his opinion, is that she had never taken violin lessons.

When asked the difference between violin and fiddle, Rogers explains, laughing, "Violins have strings and fiddles have 'strangs.'" But his joke has some truth to it—traditional tunes played in a traditional style are like a regional dialect. He further explains that the bowing style of a fiddle playing, using short strokes, and sometimes intentionally playing two strings at once, contrasts with the long



Apprentice Natalie Couch and her teacher, Jerry Rogers, give a recital of old-time fiddle music in May of 2001.



Japheth Jackson (left) and Ed Snell teach a class in shape-note singing in Ozark Alabama.

precise bowing and use of vibrato of the violinist. Rather than reading notes, a traditional fiddler grabs a tune and plays it a “gut level.”

Rogers first teaches bowing to his students, then lets them play scales. As soon as possible, he introduces some tunes to them, so that they are actually playing music. Jerry maintains that a traditional repertoire of tunes is as important as style to his idea of traditional fiddle music. Thanks to him there will be new crop of old-time fiddlers in northeast Alabama.

MASTER OF A DYING ART

Not all folk art forms will endure for eternity. One such Alabama tradition that seems to be in decline is a regional

style of shape-note singing from the African-American community of Southeast Alabama. One of the leaders of this tradition is Japheth Jackson of Ozark. Mr. Jackson is a recipient of the Alabama Folk Heritage Award and the son of Judge Jackson, who authored *The Colored Sacred Harp* in 1934.

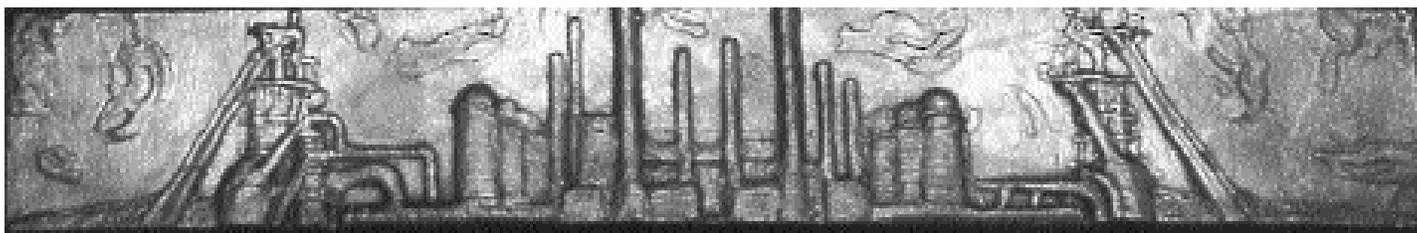
Shape-note singing requires training, in the form of singing schools, that were usually held in the summer to take advantage of school being out. In the past, young people flocked to these singing schools as an exciting social occasion and as an opportunity to learn music. With all of the options and distractions of the modern world, going to school in the summer to learn a com-

plex system of singing has lost its appeal to many youngsters. And even though there is currently a national revival of interest in shape-note singing in general, its popularity in the black community seems to be declining rapidly.

CONCLUSION

The Alabama State Council on the Arts is dedicated to helping Alabamians preserve their cultural traditions. The goal of the Council’s Alabama Folklife Program is to help preserve and present Alabama folk culture and to further an understanding of this cultural heritage. Individuals can apply for a Folk Art Apprenticeship grant by using the ASCA Folk Arts Apprenticeship form, and are encouraged to contact Joey Brackner prior to application. Prospective students who have entered into an agreement with a master folk artist may also apply for an Apprenticeship grant. Information on this and other ASCA programs can be found at: www.arts.state.al.us ■

Joey Brackner is the folklorist for the Alabama State Council on the Arts. As director of the Council’s Folklife Program, he manages a grants program and other special projects. His research interests include Alabama folk pottery, traditional graveyard decoration, and southern horticultural traditions. A native of Fairfield, Alabama, he received a B.A. in Anthropology from the University of Alabama and a M.A. in Anthropology from the University of Texas. He was Humanities Scholar-in-Residence at the Birmingham Museum of Art prior to being hired as state folklorist in 1985.

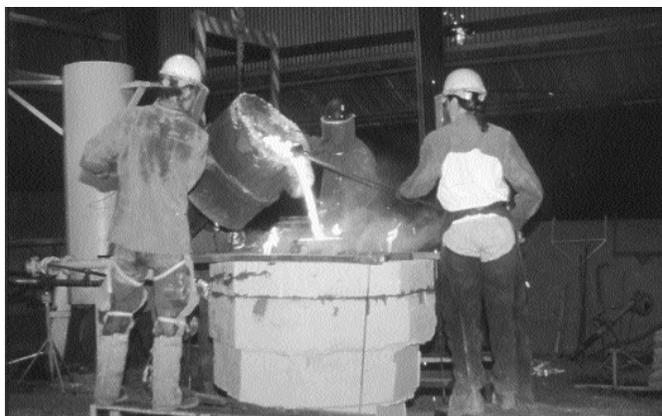


Sloss Furnaces National Historic Landmark in Birmingham sponsors a dynamic Metal Arts program for the production of metal sculpture.

FINE ART FLOWS at Sloss Metal Arts by Paige Wainwright

Sloss Furnaces National Historic Landmark in Birmingham is a 32-acre blast furnace plant where iron was made from 1882 to 1971, when the plant was closed due to obsolescence. Re-opened as a museum of history and technology in 1983, Sloss preserves the old ironmaking furnaces and chronicles the rise of Birmingham to industrial prominence. Although the iron-making industry and the processing companies that grew up around it are no longer the dominant forces they once were, they are still an important part of the city's economic life and a tremendous resource for the production of metal sculpture, the artistic expression of Birmingham's industrial heritage.

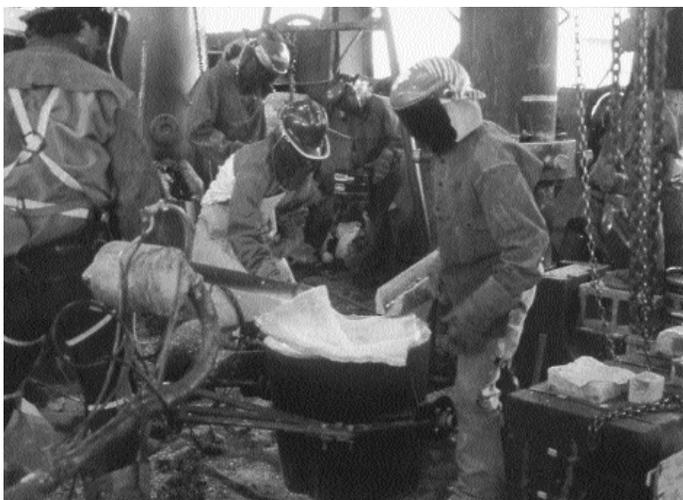
Sloss sponsors an active Metal Arts program that focuses on cast and formed metal sculpture. Since its humble beginnings in 1983, as simple workspace for a local artist blacksmith, Sloss Metal Arts has grown into an internationally-known teaching and learning facility, where artists come from all over the country to cast their work. The Metal Arts staff has



Sloss can cast up to 2000 pounds of iron an hour, making it possible for artists to produce large-scale work.

grown to include a curator and three resident artists. There is, in addition, an important crew of local artists who cast regularly at Sloss and who provide expertise and technical help in organizing public programs. Metal arts facilities have also grown. From a single 15-foot-by-15-foot studio, the facilities have expanded to encompass a 20,000-square-foot foundry and fabricating area, wax and ceramic shell studios, a wood-pattern shop, and four artist studios. The foundry has five cupolas for casting iron, two bronze furnaces, kilns, forges, assorted welders, a forklift and lifting equipment, and a large collection of power hand tools.

These resources support a variety of education programs. Primary among them are the monthly open studios, which provide casting facilities and technical expertise to any artist interested in casting his or her own work. Last year, Sloss served artists from eleven Alabama cities and nine southern states and from as far away as Pennsylvania and New Mexico. There are also monthly classes on welding, forging and fabricating, and quarterly workshops on ceramic shell and rubber molding. For non-artists, or artists with no foundry experi-



Artists come from all over the South to cast their work at Sloss.

ence, there is a beginning level casting workshop that covers the entire sculpture-making process, from the creation of patterns and molds to the final casting and finishing. The cost for all of these programs is modest—in most cases, just a small registration fee plus the cost of materials. The site is also available for monthly fee-based residencies. Artists receive 24-hour-a-day access to the physical facilities and technical assistance needed to make sculpture on a scale they otherwise could not achieve. The cost is again modest—application fee, monthly site fee plus project expenses.

At the heart of these and all other Metal Arts programs are long- and short-term residencies for professional and emerging artists. Sloss artists-in-residence essentially function as staff, with lead artists working as foundry coordinator and community programs director. Another position—foundry assistant—has evolved into a residency for emerging artists. Emerging artist residencies are aimed at graduating art students or graduate students looking for casting experience and a transition to graduate school or the professional world. All staff artists work full-time organizing and implementing Metal Arts programs and, in return, get a monthly stipend, a studio, and access to all sculpture facilities for creation of their own art. This intensive on-the-job training in all aspects of the foundry process, coupled with the opportunity to interact meaningfully with the general public and to create work in a stimulating environment, is an experience available nowhere else in the country.

Much of the success of the residency program is due to strong support from and close ties to southern universities with foundry programs. George Beasley at Georgia State University in Atlanta sent us Vaughn Randall, foundry coordinator 1997-98, and emerging artists Matt Wicker and Matt Eaton, while David Jones and Elizabeth Kronfield, both emerging artists, came to us from the University of Georgia. Erik Johnson was educated at East Carolina and taught part time at Tulane before coming to Sloss in 1998 to lead the foundry program. Allen Peterson, an Alabama native and graduate of Birmingham Southern, started at Sloss in 1997 as an apprentice to Vaughn Randall and ran the program in 2001. Sloss is fortunate to have had these talented and energetic young artists building the program, and it's rewarding that all of them have successfully moved on to new ventures. Erik is now a full-time faculty member at Ole Miss while Matt

Wicker and Elizabeth Kronfield teach at Bowling Green in Ohio. Vaughn went off to graduate school in Seattle where he got an MFA in 2000, but he's back at Sloss now as director of community programs. Allen Peterson and David Jones entered graduate school in the fall, Allen at the University of Minnesota, David at LSU. In the upcoming year, the artists leading the program will be new, but their faces are familiar: Matt Eaton returns to Sloss with a new MFA and heads up the foundry. He'll be assisted by Julie Ward, a graduate of Georgia Southern College and longtime program participant, and John Stewart Jackson, a Birmingham native and graduate of Birmingham Southern College, who was one of our first interns.

The artist residencies support a variety of other programs, many with a statewide audience. In 2000 we began collaborating with colleges and universities to provide student internships. Using metal arts workshops and public programs as the laboratory, students work with resident artists 16 hours a week for the duration of the term and receive the instruction and materials to complete a sculpture project. The internship supplements the student's formal education, providing hands-on experience in a professional work environment and allowing the student to apply the training toward credit at his/her sponsoring institution. In the past year nine students have completed the program—eight from UAB, one from Birmingham Southern. Our first intern from the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa is scheduled for the fall. Although travel and lodging issues currently hinder outreach to schools farther away, we're already investigating possible solutions.

Perhaps Sloss's most visible education programs are the public casting performances we do at community art festivals and schools throughout the state. They involve a hands-on activity in which people of all ages design and create their own cast iron tiles, using simple sand molds. Sloss artists melt scrap iron in a small furnace and fill the completed molds with molten metal while the participants watch. As the metal cools, it hardens into a cast iron tile, and each person takes home an original work of art. At Sloss the tile-making and iron-casting activities are combined with tours of the historic site and curriculum-based resource materials for lessons in science, math and history as well as art. Pre-and post-visit activities prepare the children for their visit, and reinforce the lessons learned.

Other programs that take Sloss artists out of the city are



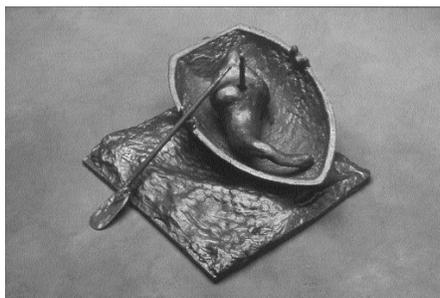
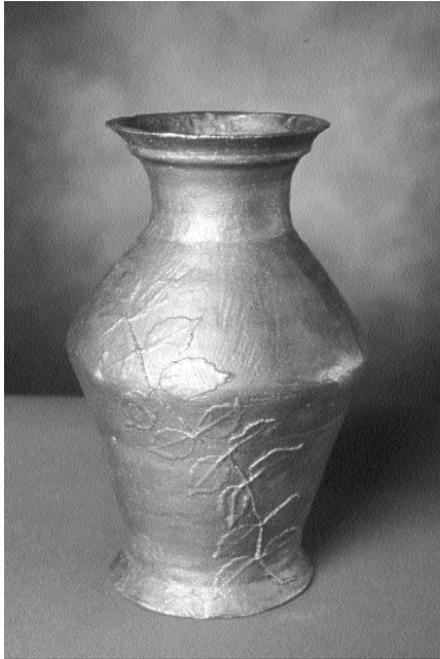
Sloss takes a small furnace on the road—this is at Langan Park in Mobile—for casting activities and demonstrations around the state.

based on short-term residencies in schools or communities seeking technical and aesthetic guidance and help in producing a large-scale art project. David Jones, for example, recently worked with Wanda Shipp and art students at Arab Junior High School to create an outdoor piece for the school. An upcoming project will take Vaughn Randall and John Stewart Jackson to Heritage Hall in Talledega to help students design and build a permanent trailhead marker for the Pinhote Trail at Mt. Cheaha. While we don't have nearly enough personnel to respond to every request, our ability to take on such projects has increased over the last two years because funding from the Alabama State Council on the Arts has helped expand the residency program.

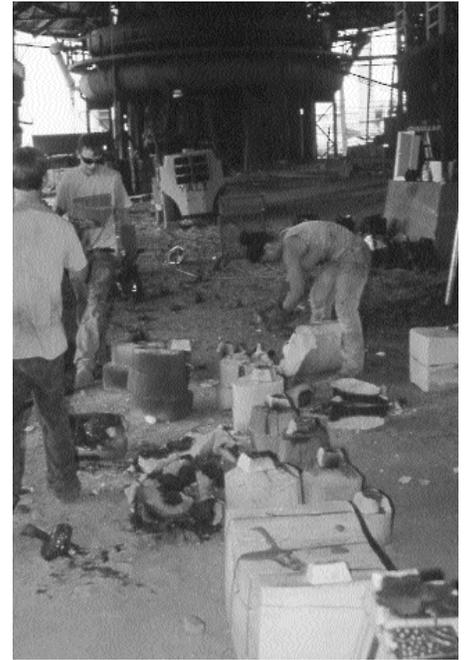
In addition to programs for professional artists and college students, Sloss has created three programs that specifically target young people. One of these is an annual arts-based apprenticeship. For eight weeks last summer, high school students with an interest in the arts worked 30 hours per week at minimum wage with program director Vaughn Randall, emerging artist John Stewart Jackson, and UAB intern Elizabeth Atkinson. Their task was to learn the complex series of steps used to cast and fabricate metal sculpture, then use them to create a range cast iron art. Some of the works were decorative items designed by the apprentices and



Students, both children and adults, make their own cast iron tiles, which they can take home.



Summer apprentices have the opportunity to produce work of their own design. From top: cast iron vessel by Stephanie Luter, Hoover HS; cast iron trivet by Jesie West, Pelham HS; cast iron and bronze sculpture by Garrett Millsap, Homewood HS.



Summer apprentice Sarah Farmer inspects castings.

produced by them for sale in the Sloss Museum Store and local galleries. Other works—a tree surround and a large-scale vessel—were collaborative efforts in which several apprentice “teams” focus on accomplishing a specific aspect of each piece. And finally, the apprentices had an opportunity to create individual works of art. All of the work produced during program will be included in two culminating exhibitions. The first was in September/October at the Birmingham Museum of Art, in the SONAT Gallery. In November, the exhibition travels to Montgomery and the Gallery of the Alabama State Council on the Arts, which provided crucial funding for the program.

While the apprenticeship is first an education program, it also aims to develop social and vocational skills and to promote understanding among young people of different racial and socioeconomic backgrounds. In learning to make cast iron art, the apprentices learn basic woodworking and metalworking skills, such as cutting, sanding, and welding, which can serve as a foundation for jobs in industry. At the same time they learn to value



Edward Lane, from Wenonah High School, worked in the summer youth apprenticeship program. In addition to learning artistic skills, apprentices gain basic woodworking and metalworking skills that are transferable to the workplace.



Apprentices also learn foundry processes and have the opportunity to cast their own work. This is Calvin Hawkins, from Parker High School, pouring molds. Jesie West, of Pelham High School, is the "skimmer."

excellence and hard work. And because casting iron requires cooperation and teamwork as well as personal initiative, there is a real opportunity to overcome barriers of individual differences and work together. The nine students selected to participate in last summer's pilot apprenticeship were a diverse group, representing eight schools and every section of the city. Three were African-American and three were female; two came from economically disadvantaged neighborhoods, two from the wealthiest neighborhoods.

A parallel program to the apprenticeship involves a partnership with Space One Eleven, a visual arts organization located in Birmingham's central city. Initiated in 1997, the partnership first provided participatory art programs for residents of Metropolitan Gardens, the largest public housing project in the state. These programs were intended to broaden access of low-income residents to art and arts education while contributing to the revitalization of the neighborhood. A subsequent cultural plan for neighborhood enhancement identified community-based art projects that not only beautified the neighborhood, but that also engaged neighborhood youth in the creative process. The first two projects—a cast iron and clay doorframe for the Tenants' Association offices and a prototype for a gazebo—were completed in August 1999. Not long after that, the city of Birmingham received a \$36 million Hope VI grant from the federal government to demolish and rebuild Metropolitan Gardens as a mixed income neighborhood.



Apprentices add detail to a wax pattern for a 1000-pound garden urn designed by resident artist Vaughn Randall. From left: Calvin Hawkins, Parker HS; Stephanie Luter, Hoover HS; Sarah Farmer, Mortimer Jordan HS; and Jesie West, Pelham HS.

Since then, Sloss and Space One Eleven have been working to establish a long-term partnership that will design a variety of cast iron and clay products. Central to this vision is development of a long-term, arts-based employment program for youth and adult residents of downtown Birmingham. Vaughn Randall, who is not only an accomplished artist but also a trained industrial patternmaker, is lead artist for this project as well. Vaughn will work closely with neighborhood young people selected from Space One Eleven's City Center Art program, involving them in the creative process and teaching them the skills needed to make products that reflect the unique industrial heritage of Birmingham and that can be used in redeveloping the neighborhood under Hope VI. The manufacture of products designed by the partnership has the potential to become a cottage industry that provides jobs and job training for residents.



Sloss resident artist Vaughn Randall directed a collaborative project with Space One Eleven to build a prototype for a cast iron and clay gazebo.

The final program responds to requests from teachers in other cities for a statewide summer sculpture camp for high school students similar to those Sloss organized in 1999 and 2000. With the Alabama School of Fine Arts as a partner, we're planning for such a camp in 2003. The format will follow the one developed for the summer apprenticeship, that is, students will learn to make metal sculpture, but the process will be compressed to one or two weeks. Information and application materials should go out in the late fall or early spring. ■

Paige Wainwright has been on the staff of Sloss since 1983, serving as assistant director until 1997. During that time, she was also director of the Metal Arts program, with responsibility for overall planning and development, as well as organization of numerous sculpture workshops, exhibitions, and conferences. In 1994, she was co-director of the International Conference on Contemporary Cast Iron Art. She became curator of Metal Arts in 1997 in order to devote her energies to developing the program. Since then, she has spearheaded expansion of Sloss's casting program, organizing regional conferences on contemporary cast iron sculpture in 1997 and 1999, and developing artist residency programs and a variety of educational programs. She was awarded the Alabama State Council on the Arts' Fellowship for Arts Administration in 2000. Currently, she is working on a community collaboration involving Sloss and Space One Eleven.



A completed gazebo arch, half-scale. This project was funded in part by the National Endowment for the Arts.

From Classroom to Community:

The Rural Studio Experience

by Karen H. Seale

Photographs courtesy of Auburn University's Rural Studio

The mission of Auburn University's Rural Studio is to enable each participating student to cross the threshold of misconceived opinions to create/design/build and to allow students to put their educational values to work as citizens of the community. The Rural Studio seeks solutions to the needs of the community within the community's own context, not from outside it. Abstract ideas based upon knowledge and study are transformed into workable solutions forged by real human contact, personal realization, and gained appreciation for the culture.

In 1993 professors Samuel Mockbee and Dennis K. Ruth developed a context-based design program known as the Rural Studio. An extension of the design program at Auburn University's College of Architecture, Design and Construction, the Rural Studio gives architectural students the opportunity to expand their design knowledge through the experience of building what he or she has designed. Simultaneously, the opportunity is offered for an expansion of their social conscience, through their interaction with the communities of Hale County, one of the poorest regions in the nation. "This is the only program of its kind in all architectural education," Mockbee says. "It's an educational experience for students to move from the classroom of the university to the classroom of the community."

It is an experience that students like Amy Holtz find invaluable. "You learn how to make things simple, and to not over-design," she says.

Through a partnership between the Rural Studio and the Hale County Department of Human Resources, the students are exposed to "hands-on" learning during a semester of their sophomore year. Working as a team,

these fledgling architects design and build a house for a family in Hale County. Unusual, innovative, and inexpensive materials like hay bales, corrugated cardboard and, most recently, rammed earth (a mixture of red clay, cement and water) give the students the opportunity to experiment with new ideas as well as teaching them the value of interaction, both among themselves and with the community.

This second-year experience often leads students to return as thesis students. James Kirkpatrick, Jay Sanders and Marnie Bettridge were interviewed during their final year of study. "During our second year of architecture school, we came for one quarter to the Rural Studio. In that time, we began to learn about and appreciate the culture of the rural south. One of our most meaningful experiences was attending a sandlot baseball game. We saw a community there that really had a lot going for it—a large circle of family and friends with a wonderful reason to come together on summer days. Three years later, we timidly proposed to them that we build them a backstop, and, luckily for us, they accepted."

The Newbern baseball club's acceptance signaled the beginning of a year-

long project, the result of which is a spectacular new backstop for the ball-field. In addition, the students built the Bodark Theatre, an amphitheatre, for the community. As with all thesis projects, the students chose the projects, found the financing for them, designed and built them. Unlike every thesis project, this one had no water or electricity at the sites. Despite such difficulties, the students agreed upon the valuable lessons they learned during that year.

"Everybody says that this program is so fantastic," Kirkpatrick remarks. "I think it is a good transition [from college to the business world] because you have to be independent. You have a lot more responsibility than in a studio where, if you make a poor design judgment, it's only going to be evident on paper and cardboard. Out here, if you make a poor design judgment, people have to live with it. It makes you grow up quick, and you realize you're influencing people's lives, so you have to study every step and how it impacts other people very seriously."

Looking back on his experience building the Yancey Chapel, an open-air sanctuary made from recycled tires, Auburn alumni Ruard Veltman considers his year at the Rural Studio a milestone in his life. Even though the houses he designs now for the Montgomery firm McAlpine Tankersley Architecture are vastly different from the work he did in Hale County, he feels the principles are the same. "You gain the ability to have forethought toward the end result, and experience the space as if

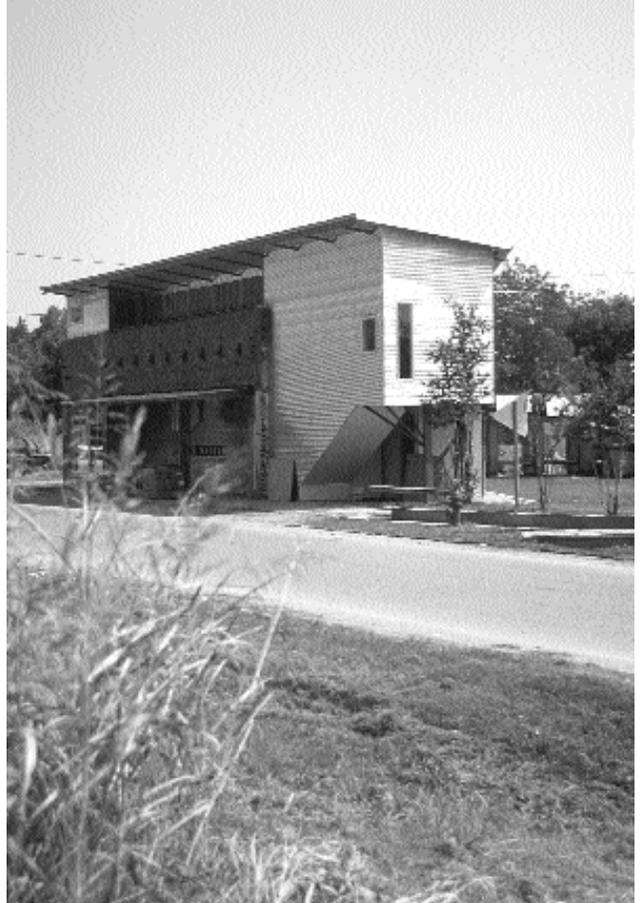
you were building it, rather than just designing on paper. You also learn how to communicate with the client and the importance of gaining his/her trust and respect.” An example of environmental ingenuity and cost-efficiency, the Yancey Chapel has become one of the Rural Studio’s most recognized projects. Recently, a model of the chapel was purchased for an exhibit at the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The business community is also recognizing the value of the student’s work at the Rural Studio. At a recent Neo-Con Conference, the world’s largest interior design show, environmental leader Interface Carpets featured the Rural Studio. “The exhibit included models and photos of all of the Rural Studio projects,” explained Professor Mockbee, “And the exhibit walls were constructed from recycled carpet yarn.” (Mockbee also gave a lecture on the program entitled Hales Bales—the Social and Physical Ecology of Building.)

By physically moving students from the classroom into the heart of a community, the Rural Studio prepares future architects for the big step into the real world. It teaches them the realities of building what they design and the value of giving back to the community that supports them. The results are a lasting gift to the citizens of Hale County and rural Alabama.

For those who would like to enjoy the Rural Studio experience, the Birmingham Museum has planned a traveling exhibit for later this year. ■

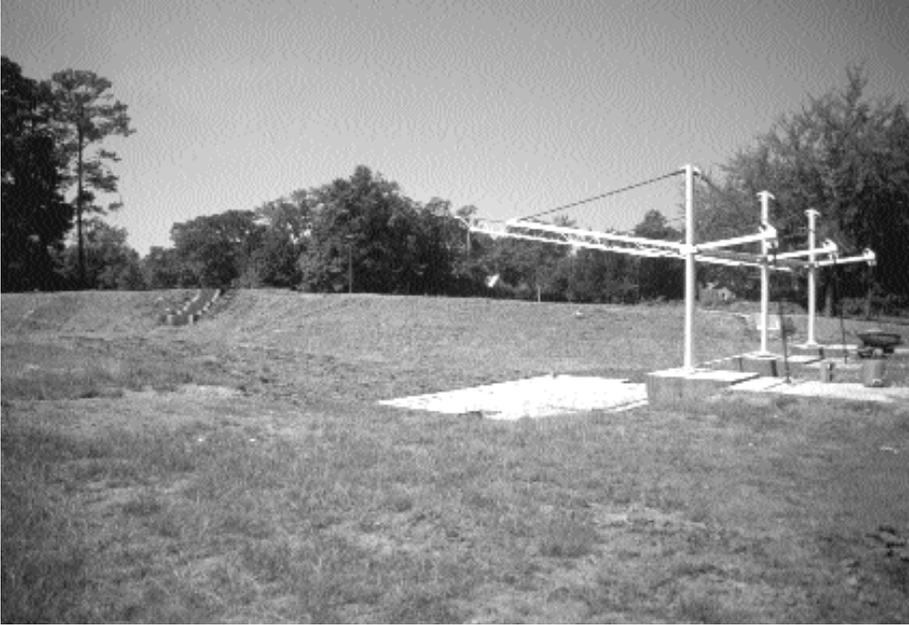
Karen Seale is the Executive Director for DesignAlabama, Inc., a partnership with the Alabama State Council on the Arts that promotes public awareness and value of the design arts in Alabama. She is responsible for the administration and general operation of the organization, as well as management of their programs and initiatives. Mrs. Seale developed her appreciation of good design through a close relationship with the architectural community while serving as marketing director for the commercial roofing division of a Montgomery industry. She received her B.S. in English and Dramatic Arts from Troy State University in Troy, Alabama, and was the first recipient of the Karen Kapelanski Adkison Scholarship from the Alabama Shakespeare Festival, where she interned in costume design.



Designed and built by fifth-year thesis students Patrick Ryan, Brad Shelton, and Craig Peavy, the Akron [Alabama] Boys and Girls Club gave new life to a renovated market building located at the hub of the Akron community. This community center also includes a plaza and play area, constructed from cardboard, that was designed by Amy Holtz, Andrew Olds, and Gabe Comstock.



Marnie Bettridge, James Kirkpatrick, and Jay Sanders spent their final year of study revitalizing the Newbern Baseball Club, a fifty-year-old baseball field that is a vital part of the Newbern community. Their project includes this new backstop, which makes a unique addition to this already beautiful area.



The Bodark Theatre, an amphitheatre designed by thesis students Lee Cooper and Trinity Davis, is a welcome addition to the many community facilities the Rural Studio has built for Newbern and its neighboring communities. The design utilizes the natural hillside for seating and an adjacent wooded area for dressing rooms and staging.



At the Rural Studio, the students expand their knowledge by actually building what they design.



The Shannon Sanders-Dudley House is the fifth house to be constructed by sophomore students from the Rural Studio. Rammed earth is the material used for all exterior walls. To make rammed earth, a cement-and-soil mixture is compacted into forms; as it dries, the material hardens into a rock-like surface.

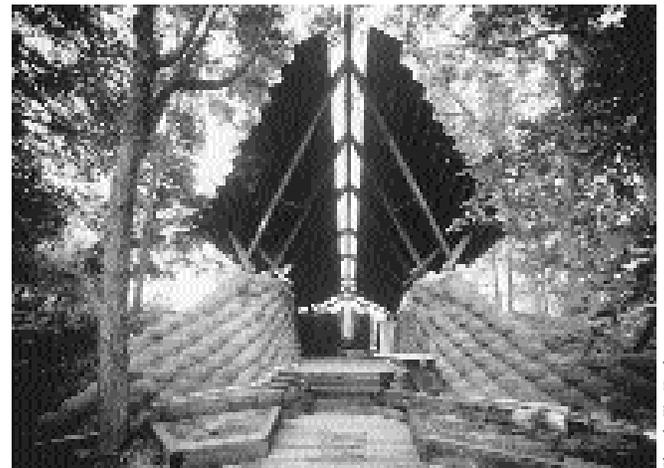


Photo by Tim Hursley.

The Yancey Chapel, located on Morrison Farm in Hale County, has become perhaps the most recognized project of the Rural Studio. Because they were concerned with the environmental aspects of building, as well as keeping costs to a minimum, the design team of Ruard Veltman, Thomas Tretheway and Steven Durden chose to build the chapel out of recycled automobile tires. The tires were filled with dirt, packed down, and covered over with stucco. The roof of the structure is constructed of tin, with beams salvaged from a barn. The rocks used for the chapel's floor were taken from a nearby riverbed.

In Our Own Words: YOUNG WRITER'S RETREAT

by Jay Lamar

*I don't write true poetry
I write what comes to mind
And when God gave me a pencil
I took it as a sign.*

Eva Harmon
Montgomery Catholic High

Some will tell you that writing can't be taught. But where there is commitment and help from gifted teaching writers, anyone with a yen for it can tell you that instruction is an invaluable aspect of becoming a writer. Workshops like the "In Our Own Words Creative Writing Retreat for High School Students" offered by Huntingdon College during the summer of 2001 are rich experiences for young writers who want to hone their craft and experiment with new forms.

Led by poet Jeanie Thompson and fiction writer Marlin Barton, the Huntingdon workshop participants were helped "tons," according to Eva Harmon, a tenth-grade student at Montgomery's Catholic High who attended the six-day residency program. She and the eleven other workshop participants worked full days on both poetry and fiction. They concentrated on finding a voice, learning poetic form, creating powerful images, and developing character and plot. "It caused me to explore poetry more than I used to," notes William Blackerby, a ninth-grader from Indian Springs in Birmingham.

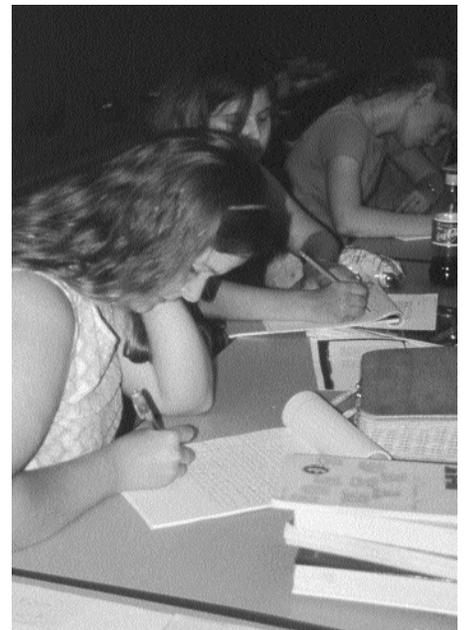
"Students who attend workshops can get a concentrated and highly intense look at the craft of writing," says faculty member Barton. "They can learn in a short period of time what might take years to learn on their own. They come away with a sense of the basic elements of writing, which can then allow the student to write with more direction and confidence."

Thompson says she wonders how her own poetry would've been different if she had attended a summer creative writing workshop when she was in high school. "I wrote in a vacuum as a teenager and received very little constructive feedback. Now when I work with young writers, I have the sensation

that I am talking to myself at that age. If I can help one young person understand how to feel better about him or herself as a writer, then I've succeeded. So much of learning to write well is about gaining confidence in one's own instincts. If I teach them something about writing technique on top of that, then I've hit two homeruns!"

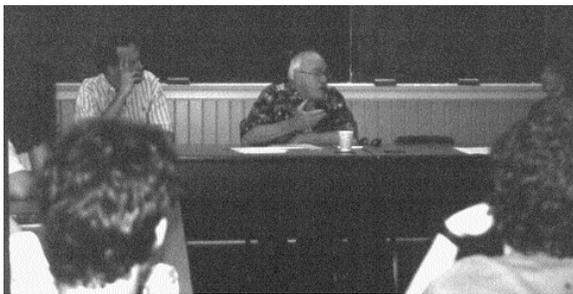
A workshop day can be intense. At their tables by nine a.m., the "In Our Own Words" participants spent their mornings with faculty in focused discussion and practice of such selected topics as point of view or character. Next came more than an hour of directed writing. Lunch and some time for computer work and individual writing were followed by another two-hour class. With another couple of hours set aside for dinner and individual writing time, participants capped the day with readings or short workshops with guest writers.

For many participants, quality time with the guest writers was a real treat. As one participant noted, "They were big-timers who treated us with respect." Poet Honorée Fannone



Directed exercises in writing are vital components of the workshop.

Jeffers, author of the award-winning collection, *The Gospel of Barbecue* (Kent State University Press, 2000), was “the best!” according to one student. Fiction and non-fiction writer Wayne Greenhaw, whose thirteen-plus books include *Beyond the Night: A Remembrance* and *King of Country*; and Jim Murphy, poet and faculty member at the University of



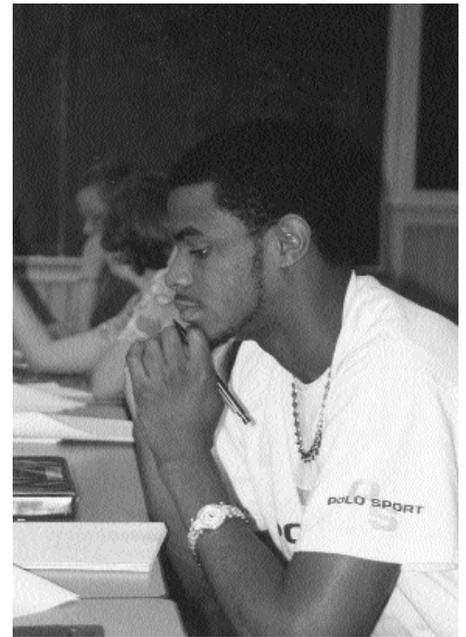
Alabama author of fiction and non-fiction Wayne Greenhaw describes his life as a writer to attentive students while faculty members Bart Barton and Jeanie Thompson also enjoy his comments.

Montevallo, whose first book, *The Memphis Sun* (Kent State University Press, 1999), won the Stan and Tom Wick prize, talked in detail about their work and their lives as writers. Their humor and willingness to share experience as well as expertise made a powerful impression on the young writers. Screenwriter Michael Ritz offered a mini-workshop on writing for the movies and added lots of inside information on life in Hollywood and among the “greats” of the movie industry.

Together, the visiting writers supplemented the daily fare of classes with a wealth of experience and information for the young writers. “I felt both inspired and renewed by each of them,” said one participant. Thompson says she believes it’s important to expose young writers to a variety of styles and tastes by having an array of visiting writers. “Out of five writers they hear, maybe one

writer will really stir them, but that’s okay. Young writers must discern what they like, what draws them to the language, not just what the teacher likes.”

Another attractive feature of the Huntingdon workshop was the fact that it was a residency program. For many participants still a couple or more years away from leaving home for college, it afforded a taste of university life. Participants had their own dorm rooms and ate in the college cafeteria. Besides getting high marks for its good food, Huntingdon showed the young writers independence and treated the participants as serious artists intent on an experience that should make them better writers. “It boosted my



Many of the participants in the Huntingdon workshop have been writing for years, and have attended previous workshops to hone their skills.

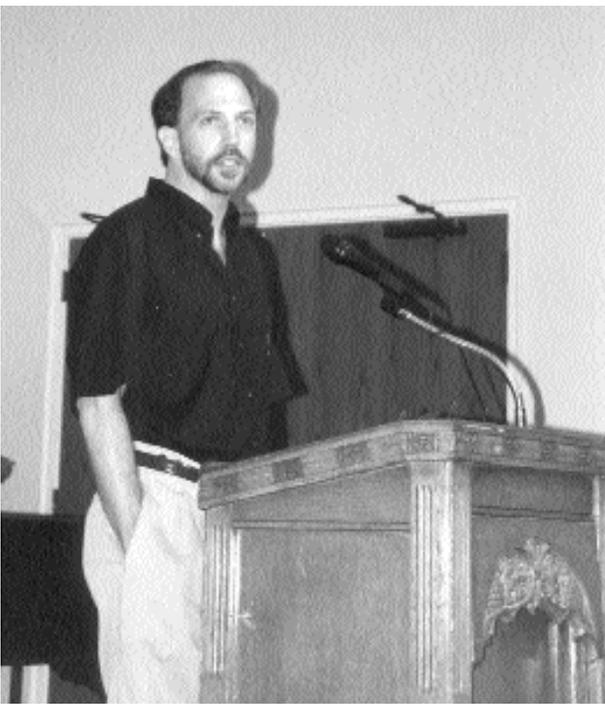
confidence in myself as a writer,” said fiction writer Blackerby, who has been writing since the third grade.

Representing schools from many areas of the state, including the Alabama School of Fine Arts in Birmingham, LaFayette High School in Chambers County, and Montgomery Catholic High, most of the Huntingdon workshop participants have been writing for a number of years. In some cases, they have had the benefit of previous creative writing classes, and faculty member Barton comments that “their knowledge of art and music and literature was amazing.”

But, Barton also points out, it behooves anyone teaching young writers to remember what it was like when they were starting out—“how confusing a point of view can be, how frustrating it is to hear that a story doesn’t work.” A teaching writer also needs to remember “their on-going, present



The six-day program yielded a colony of writers, who support one another while growing individually.



Fiction writer and teacher Marlin ("Bart") Barton (*The Dry Well*, Abingdon Press, 2001) encourages workshop participants to "become students of human nature."



Poet and teacher Jeanie Thompson (*White for Harvest*, River City Press, 2001) leads a round-table discussion with future poets.

struggles" with writing so they can "convey to students that all writers, even experienced ones, have to push the limits of their abilities." All writers, Barton notes, "struggle to become better at telling stories and examining human nature."

For Barton and Thompson, team teaching was a "great" experience. Being able to blend poetry and fiction reminded

Barton how "clearly connected poetry and fiction really are, and that all stories are really about language and how language helps us to see ourselves and our world."

"There really is a difference in how one approaches writing poems and composing stories," Thompson says. "Sometimes people are temperamentally suited more toward prose or toward poetry. Working in both genres side-by-side, like we did for one week, let these young writers feel the difference and similarities in fiction and poetry, and see which one fits best. The lucky ones can write both!"

What is the best part about being in a workshop? For one "In Our Own Words" participant, it was that it "offered a place for high school writers to pretty much become something better, to learn, 'the ropes' at least, of writing in general." Residencies and workshops offer young writers time to concentrate on their art, without the usual distractions and commitments that make up a school day. And they don't simply develop skills and practice techniques. With their fellow participants, they also become members of a supportive writing community and have access to the knowledge and experience of established writers. Urged to stretch their limits in an environment in which they can safely experiment and explore, they also discover gifts and gain the confidence to use them.

"Even though we were only together for six days, we became a community of writers," Thompson observes. "I was so impressed with how the more experienced writers in the class helped those with less experience. They cared for each other, and they shared each others successes easily. What I value most as a writer is the fact that I know I will always have a community. Helping young writers enter that community is a privilege for me."

For further information about Huntingdon College's workshops for young writers, contact Pam Stein, Director of Continuing Education, 334-833-4522. ■

Jay Lamar is associate director of the Auburn University Center for the Arts & Humanities, the outreach office of the AU College of Liberal Arts, and coordinator of the Alabama Center for the Book, a National Center for the Book/Library of Congress affiliate. She is editor of First Draft, the journal of the Alabama Writer's Forum, and co-editor of the forthcoming The Remembered Gate: Memoirs by Alabama Writers (University of Alabama Press).

Selections from

**IN OUR OWN WORDS: The Collected Writings of
the 2001 Huntingdon College Writers' Workshop**

Work by participants in the "In Our Own Words" Huntingdon Summer Writers' Program included an astonishing variety of fiction and poetry. In formal rhyme schemes, short fiction, or the singsong of rap verse, they wrote about grandparents, great jazz, and first love, among many other subjects.

MILES

You're on stage, kind of blue
Trane next to you
Offering support and thanking you
As I do.
Miles brought me to jazz, to music
To art, to life.
Blue-gold notes float through
The smoky air.

Where would I be without
The short man with dim light
Bouncing off his golden horn,
The sounds enchanting us as a charmer
Charms his snakes?

—William Blackerby,
Indian Springs, Birmingham

**AIRPLANES: AGE FIVE
A MEMORY**

I knew and saw nothing
out of those windows,
but gigantic white clouds
that seemed to fuse
with the sky, create
a bouquet of cornflower
and dogwood blossoms.

I left translucent streaks
on the thick window panes
as I tried to reach out to them,
clutch a piece of the cloud
bursting open like a lily
and shove it into the front pocket
of my red overalls.

—Terry Rice

CONSTRUCTIONS

Like painted palm prints
I left indelibly on the covers
for Mother's Day cards, the scar still
makes its way down my face,
a stream of skin, breaking into a tributary.
Now that I'm older, she traces
her fingers inside my tear, says it can be fixed.

I found the snapshots the doctors took
of my seven-year-old frame,
the softness of a little Shepard.
The day of the accident, the car was crumpled
drawing paper. Someone balled us up,
left us wrinkled with injury. The blood was warm
and thick on the side of my face, a crust
of paint against me, water of my veins, thick, sticky.

Now it is a dry canal of stitches.
It's the portrait she checks
for her son, now ripened, my skin submissive
to her hands, small and wispy like a child's pulling
the picture together, connecting sheer skin
—Cedric Rudolph, *Alabama School
of Fine Arts, Birmingham*

**SWEET GRASS SONG
(for my grandmamma)**

You grab me by my armpits
And place me on your lap
You push my head on your large shoulder

My legs hang longer than the thinned out
Flowered gown you often wear
And to avoid the necklace of sweat you're wearing
I close my eyes to enjoy the scent of the tall red sweet grass
That grows near the rugged mailbox
Coming through the open screen of the door.

Just as you begin to sing...
Sing my song
Though I'm not a baby or sleepy
I love this time.

The wind continues to blow
The warm wind in and you continue
To sing... Don't say a word...
Until there are no more words
Just a soft hum and I'm asleep.
—Rachel Ware
LaFayette High School, LaFayette

UNSEEN ANTS

My sneakers left footprints
In the plush grass leading to your front door.
I was never worried about you noticing,
Your attention placed fully in the trampled
Pansies you planted on both sides of your walkway.

Your feebleness had left you
With egg white hair and scrawniness
That was only hidden by button-up
Plaid shirts and tapered pants.
Bony fingers would always shake my hand.

I think you mistook me
For someone else, never getting my name,
Opening the door and greeting
Me with a "How are you today, Susie?"
And sometimes you would change
It by adding Charlotte or Beth.
I wasn't sure if you ever knew me.

Whenever I came through,
You offered me milk
And would cut a flower from your garden,
Hand it to me. They usually had ants
In-between the petals, but I would brush them off
Before you saw the moving black on pink
—Juliana Morgado,
*Alabama School of Fine Arts,
Birmingham.*

MAKING THE ARTS AVAILABLE —

Theatre Management & *Arts Administration*

by Deborah Martin

We, as Alabamians, can be proud of the many significant contributions our state makes to the visual, music, dance and theatre arts across the country, in all sorts of creative endeavors. And, we can also be proud of the numbers of arts administrators and stage managers we train and prepare. Although they are not usually seen by an audience attending a theatre performance, the role of arts administrators and stage managers is extremely vital. They are charged with making sure the arts are well supported, that attendance continues to grow, and that outreach programs endure in reaching a greater number of children and at-risk adults. They also make sure our productions run smoothly and safely for both audience and performer. The preparation of these essential behind-the-scenes professionals is the mission of the MFA Theatre Management/Arts Administration and Stage Management programs at the University of Alabama (UA). The programs are different from similar graduate management programs in that they are linked to the cultural gem of Alabama—the Alabama Shakespeare Festival (ASF).

THEATRE MANAGEMENT/ARTS ADMINISTRATION

Created in 1989 by Jim Volz, then Managing Director of the Alabama Shakespeare Theatre, and Kevin

Marshall, Director of the Theatre Management Program at the University of Alabama, the theatre management/arts administration program quickly gained a strong, competitive, national reputation, and began attracting some of the best and brightest students from all corners of the world. The origination of the program followed on the heels of a successful Professional Actor Training program established at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival. There, students would engage in intensive study in acting, voice and movement while pursuing a Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of Alabama. There was every reason to believe that a similar graduate program in theatre management/arts administration would be equally successful. ASF could utilize the trained students as interns within their administrative functions, and the University gained national recognition as it recruited for this unique graduate program.

“The program was established following months of discussion and negotiation,” says Kevin Marshall. “Its creation and the shared residency enabled the University right away to compete with the best programs in the country.”

The theatre management program is designed to include a combination of theoretical study and practical application. Three students are selected each fall and are enrolled for two calendar years. These students receive a competi-

tive stipend and all tuition and fees are paid. "The competitive assistantships were provided so that students would not incur enormous debt while in school," offers Kevin Marshall.

This design differs from many three-year programs of similar nature. Two reasons justify the two-calendar-year program. The first is the goal to train and graduate professionally trained arts administrators fast, so that those students can begin their administrative careers sooner. "Indeed, past graduates were quickly absorbed into positions ranging from Managing Directors of Shakespeare festivals, to Executive Directors of professional theatres, to a recent appointment of a UA graduate as head of his own MFA program in Arts Administration (Robert Fass, class of 1996)," says Jim Volz.

The second reason for the intensive two-year program is that enrollment during the summer months coincides with the repertory season at ASF. Students are provided an incredible opportunity to gain key experience during this highly productive time.

The first year of study is spent in Tuscaloosa on the University of Alabama campus. There, students take a variety of classes, both in the Department of Theatre and Dance and in the College of Business. Classes include emphasis on marketing the arts, fundraising, public relations, advocacy, business and legal issues in the arts, as well as human resource management, management communication and small business consulting. "The environment at UA helped me to learn the

theory and strategy on which to base important decisions, as well as how to find available resources for that decision-making process," says Jeff Gibson, class of 2001. Additionally, students publicize and market the Department and its season of productions, as well as performing box office, telemarketing, web design and house management duties.

The second year is spent in Montgomery at ASF. There, students rotate within the various professional divisions: fundraising, general management, education, and marketing. They continue to take classes from the executive staff of the Festival and to engage in practical, daily activities that serve to demonstrate how certain management principles are applied within a producing environment. This environment, says Jim Volz, provided "an exciting blend of professional educators with the valuable resources of an existing professional company that could mentor and train students while building one of America's best theatre companies and the fifth largest Shakespeare Festival in the world."

Just who are these students that compete for only three openings each year in this program? The program tends to attract students who have been out of undergraduate school for a while and who are working in the arts field, usually within an administrative capacity: some have previously worked as performers, directors, or designers.



First-year MFA student Sherry Ward works with an undergraduate in the UA theatre box office.

These students possess a language and understanding of the art they seek to manage, as well as a broad understanding of general non-profit management.

"The program attracts students with a wide variety of backgrounds, which adds to the already unique mix of academics and practicum," says Steven Morrison, a graduate of the program (class of 1993) and now General Manager of the Alabama Shakespeare Festival. "As I work with students, I have come to believe that the students' backgrounds are one of the program's greatest assets. Whether in the classroom or on the job, I find that their past experience adds to the overall learning experience, not only for them, but for me as well. The students bring a certain objectivity that enables them to think 'outside the box,' often coming up with creative and practical solutions to the challenges facing ASF."

The three most recent graduates (August 2001), Adam Miller, Jeremy Thompson and Jeff Gibson, brought to the program a diverse background as performers, directors and administrators. Adam was a marketing coordinator with the Bijou Theatre Center in

“Working at a professional theatre, seeing the day-in and day-out operations, and encountering all the problems real theatres face, was invaluable.”

Knoxville as well as a performer and instructor; Jeff was the Technical Services Manager and Director of Public Relations and Audience Development for Middle Tennessee State University; Jeremy Thompson had been an advertising manager and an arts management consultant for Western Michigan University as well as a cultural events coordinator for the City of Portage. All three had jobs waiting for them: Jeff will be the assistant to the president of Watkins College of Arts and Design in Nashville, Tennessee and Adam will be the director of marketing for Swine Palace Productions, Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge; Jeremy has accepted the position of marketing director with the University of Vermont. It is not uncommon that students from this program have jobs waiting for them immediately following graduation.

Last year’s class of MFA students in Theatre Management/Arts Administration are also working in some very reputable positions. Melaine Bennett is the senior marketing manager with the Alabama Shakespeare Festival. “You learn that you can do an amazing amount of work with creativity, drive and commitment,” says Bennett. “The program gave me an opportunity to take all the philosophies I have for managing a theatre and try them out.”

Becky Dodd is an agent assistant for the talent agency Sutton, Barth and Vennari in Los Angeles. “With the assistance of some fabulous mentors and teachers, my time at UA/ASF truly helped me define my own strengths

and interests, leading to a clear set of professional goals for my future.”

Laura Jansen is working as a development associate for Urban Gateways Center for Arts Education in Chicago. In speaking about the ASF portion of the program, she says, “Working at a professional theatre, seeing the day-in and day-out operations, and encountering all the problems real theatres face, was invaluable.”

Other past graduates are: Wendy Riggs (class of 1996), assistant general manager of The Fox Theatre in Atlanta; Francois McGillicuddy (class of 1994), director of strategic planning for Madison Square Garden; Gip Gibson (class of 1999), managing director of the Utah Musical Theatre; and Michael Trout (class of 1999), founder of Genesis Productions Worldwide, LLC.

STAGE MANAGEMENT

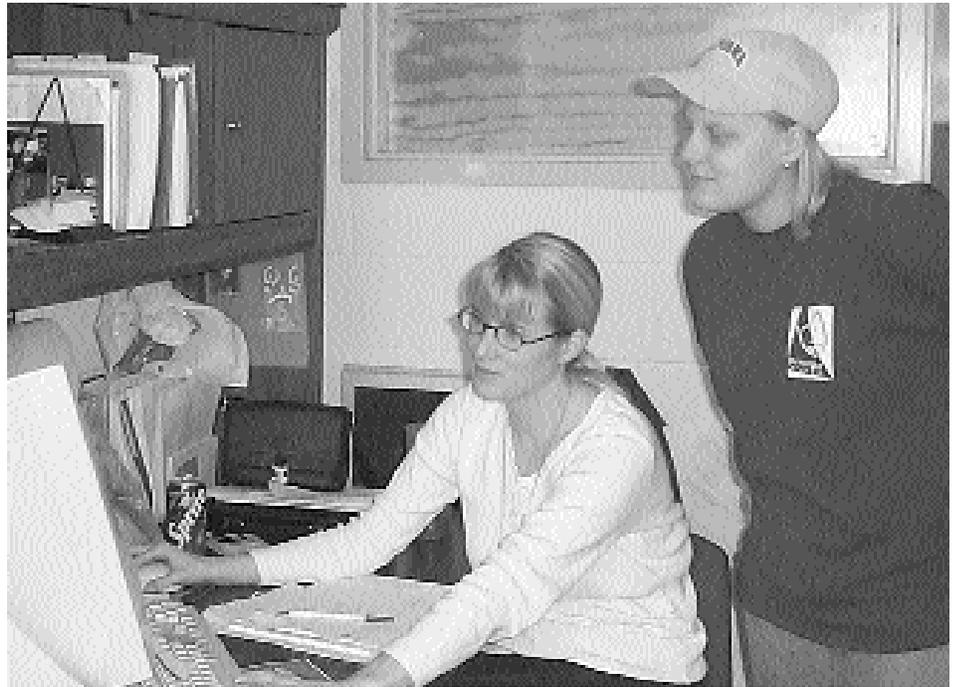
“What is stage management? I get that all the time!” says second year MFA Stage Management student Mary Fran Crook (Class of 2002). “People are knowledgeable about performers; they can see the design elements when they attend the theatre, but they really don’t know what goes on behind the sets and costumes. They don’t stop to ask themselves just how those people got on that stage, and how it all fits together for that performance.”

The MFA in stage management program was created in 1989, along with the graduate program in theatre management/arts administration. Like its sister graduate program, it is shared between Tuscaloosa and Montgomery. Stage managers assure that the

director's vision is maintained once the production opens to the public. They also establish and maintain order and safety, and they coordinate all the creative and technical elements of a performance. Students in stage management programs must be knowledgeable of all areas of theatre production, from directing, design, management, and personnel relations. Carrie Johnson (Class of 2002) offers this about stage management, "At many times it feels as if the stage manager needs to be everything to everyone. In part this is true. But at the heart of it is the production and the ability to see the big picture."

While in Tuscaloosa, the students take a variety of classes ranging from directing to design, and from history to theatre administration. They also stage-manage the Gallaway productions and serve as mentors to budding undergraduate students considering graduate programs and careers in stage management. Most will also teach classes in Introduction to Theatre. The next fifteen months are spent in Montgomery at ASF, where they will work as production assistants under some of the most experienced and knowledgeable professional stage managers in the regional theatre. They will continue to take classes from the professional staff there.

Sara Howell, Stage Manager for the Alabama Shakespeare Festival, also serves as an instructor/mentor for the stage management graduate students. "The stage management students are an integral part of our productions," she says. "We do spend time in classes and in discussion of our jobs and the skills



Kim Cunningham and Corinne Gabrielson, both first-year MFA students in theatre management/arts administration, work on marketing the first productions of the season from the UA theatre.

needed, but most of their time here at ASF is spent in the practical application of such skills. Learning by doing, and doing it with a wide range of stage managers, directors, designer and actors is the goal. Our students are an essential part of making our season happen."

Each fall, only two students are selected from an increasingly large pool of applicants. "Every year, the quality and number of applicants for this graduate program increase," says Ed Williams, Chair of the Department of Theatre and Dance and head of the Stage Management graduate program. "We are able to select from among our nation's most talented and experienced young stage managers. Their contribution to the production needs of both institutions is incredible." Kevin Marshall echoes the competition for this program. "The stage management program has always been the most competitive. There are very few such gradu-

ate programs in this field in the country: this increases UA's recruiting opportunities."

Jennifer Nelson, August 2001 graduate and new instructor of stage management at Cornell University, considered many graduate programs in stage management before selecting the University of Alabama. "UA/ASF was, without a doubt the most impressive program I found. It offered a little bit of everything I was looking for in a masters program: a year of teaching, the opportunity to stage manage, and fifteen months as a production assistant at an Equity theatre. My time in the program has been extremely rewarding and I have grown more than I could have ever thought possible."

Like the theatre management program, the graduates of the stage management graduate program are serving in some impressive professional environments. Suzanne Pruetter (class of

1991) is working as the company manager for the national tour of Disney's *Aida*; Stephanie McCormick Traina (class of 1991) is the stage manager for What Exit Theatre Company's 2001 season in Maplewood, New Jersey; Tanya Searle (class of 1993) is one of the professional stage managers at ASF; Jennifer Carl (Class of 1996) is the head stage manager at the Birmingham Children's Theatre; Christine Fisichella (class of 2000) is on tour with *Theatreworks/USA* as the stage manager for the musical *Gold Rush*; and Nina Shockley (class of 2000) is the mainstage stage manager for the Center of Puppetry in Atlanta.

"Regional theatres, such as ASF, have a long-standing tradition of training stage managers by using apprentice or intern positions," says Sara Howell. "So it was a logical progression to combine the training grounds of ASF and UA. Graduates of our program can be found working as stage managers, as college level teachers, and sometimes they can find a way to do both. It is always a pleasure to be able to hire some of our own to come back and to reap some of the rewards of their training."

There is no doubt that the theatre management/arts administration and stage management programs have served Alabama's arts organizations well. While some leave to pursue opportunities elsewhere, many graduates remain in the state and in the Southeast. "The presence of the University of Alabama is greater nationally as our students are hired in some of the best arts organizations in the coun-

try. Also, people from all walks of life are attracted to, and remain, in Alabama to serve the cultural organizations here," says Kevin Marshall.

Certainly Alabama can be proud of these valuable education programs. The collaboration between the University of Alabama and the Alabama Shakespeare Festival produces quality arts managers and stage managers who will continue to make sure our rich cultural heritage is supported and is accessible to all. Jeremy Thompson (class of 2001) says it best: "As a graduate of the University of Alabama and Alabama Shakespeare Festival theatre management/arts administration program, I am now prepared to discover new ways of bringing together art and audience—to provide art a means of communication so that it may address humanity and achieve its purpose." ■

Deborah G. Martin was the director of the theatre management program at the University of Alabama until recently, when she moved back to Kentucky to her new position as assistant professor of theatre at Berea College. She holds a Ph.D. from Texas Tech University, with a specialization in theatre administration. Prior to teaching, Deborah served as development and financial manager for a variety of regional, community, and educational theatres and programs. She consults regionally in the areas of board and staff development, strategic planning and fundraising, and is particularly interested in grass-roots arts development. Originally from Kentucky, Deborah holds a B.A. in theatre from the University of Kentucky and a Master's degree in arts administration from American University in Washington, D.C.