## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theatre Symposium Keynote Roundtable: Saturday, April 12, 2008</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rob Franklin Fox, Scott J. Parker, and Mark R. Sumner; Jay Malarcher, moderator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;No Roof Except the Sky&quot;: The Rise and Fall of Airdomes in American Popular Entertainment</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landis K. Magnuson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rail-izing the Nation along Lake Michigan: The <em>Wheels a-Rolling Pageant</em></td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane Barnett</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mormon Pageants as American Historical Performance</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martha S. LoMonaco</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Look at the Moon&quot;: Hunter Hills Theatre; Outdoor Drama in the Smokies</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte Headrick and Andrew Vorder Bruegge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Promise of Democracy: Imagining National Community in Paul Green's <em>The Lost Colony</em></td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angela Swiegart-Gallagher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Revitalization of Space: Freestyle Parkour and Its Audiences</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeanmarie Higgins</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symposium Response</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theatre Symposium attendees; Jay Malarcher, moderator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributors</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Look at the Moon”

Hunter Hills Theatre; Outdoor Drama in the Smokies

Charlotte Headrick and Andrew Vorder Bruegge

We spent our summers
Singing dancing growing up
Emoting romancing living hard
Spilling our guts dropping our guard
Shaking our butts underneath the stars
Boys and girls together
A little faster in stormy weather


The poem “We Spent Our Summers: An Elegy to Hunter Hills Theatre,” by Jon Lutz, captures something of what it was like to be a part of the remarkable experience that was Hunter Hills Theatre. This summer program left a lasting legacy in the annals of outdoor drama because it was unique. Many colleges have operated summer theatre programs, but few have had a program of the scope, artistic vision, or operational format of Hunter Hills Theatre. It was a fabulous showcase for the talent of the University of Tennessee theatre program. It was also a very ambitious and complicated program to run.

This essay traces the development of the theatre, its place in the history of the University of Tennessee theatre program, and its place in outdoor drama. For seven summers during the twelve years of the theatre’s existence, Charlotte Headrick and Andrew Vorder Bruegge were members of the company.

Hunter Hills Theatre was built in 1955 for Chucky Jack, an outdoor drama about the first governor of Tennessee, John Sevier, who was portrayed in 1957 by John Cullum, a Knoxville native. The Maples family of Gatlinburg had built the theatre hoping to keep tourists on the west side of the Smokies rather than having them go over the mountains to Cherokee, North Carolina, to see Unto These Hills. The outdoor drama limped along for a few years and in 1959 finally closed. Several factors caused its demise. According to Bill Morgan, who worked in the University of Tennessee Development Office during the Hunter Hills Theatre years, the play opened to mixed reviews and at nearly three hours long was simply too long, but Kermit Hunter refused to cut a word.1 Chucky Jack may not have been successful because the story of the show was not strongly linked to “hallowed ground.” At the 2008 Theatre Symposium, Mark R. Sumner, director emeritus of the Institute of Outdoor Drama (IOD), made a convincing argument about the essential link between success of an outdoor drama and its association with “hallowed ground.” Examples of this concept are the two outdoor historic dramas at Snow Camp, North Carolina, Sword of Peace and Pathway to Freedom. Snow Camp is one of the historic Quaker settlements in North Carolina, and the location of the theatre is in the heart of the settlement. That land is in a real sense “hallowed.” Moreover, the historical story of John Sevier certainly was not as well-known to tourists as tales surrounding mythical figures like Daniel Boone or the melodramatic story of the Trail of Tears, for example. Tourists came to Gatlinburg to see the Smoky Mountains in a generic way, without any specific historical motivation. Also, Chucky Jack lacked the surefire religious appeal of The Book of Job in Kentucky or one of the Passion plays.

After Chucky Jack ceased operations, the space was used as a rental venue for music events—one summer the Washington Ballet used the facility, and Union College performed there another summer. It was dark a couple of seasons, and then the Maples family gave the theatre to the University of Tennessee as a tax write-off. In December of 1965 Dr. Edward Boling, vice president of Development for the University of Tennessee, announced the gift of Hunter Hills Theatre to the university by Mr. and Mrs. R. L. Maples. The gift was valued at $300,000.

In 1966 the Department of Speech and Theatre mounted the first productions. From 1966 to 1977 the University of Tennessee produced a variety of plays, from musicals such as The Sound of Music, Oklahoma!, South Pacific, and Annie Get Your Gun, to plays such as Everyman, Dark of the Moon, and Indians, to Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream, and a legendary, one-night stand of Aeschylus’s Agamemnon. The productions of well-known Broadway musicals were intended to appeal to the broad population of tourists. The Smoky Mountains National Park has long been the most visited National Park in the United States, so the artistic director of Hunter Hills Theatre, Fred Fields, was counting on sheer volume of potential audience to carry the operation along to finan-
cial success. Furthermore, the opportunities for night life in the Gatlinburg area were very limited at that time, for the town offered only a few small venues for dancing, bluegrass music, children’s entertainment, and one licensed tavern. The theatre offered a family-oriented evening of entertainment to a vast audience of tourists looking for something to do after a day of exploring the Smokies or strolling along the streets of Gatlinburg. The theatre was also intended to appeal to supporters of the university who lived in the region.

Most years, Hunter Hills Theatre operated with a rolling repertory season with performances Tuesday through Sunday, and the repertory plot called for each show to run at least twice per week. Typically, a season included two musicals and Dark of the Moon. Along with the artistic director’s decision to anchor each summer season with major Broadway musicals, the rolling repertory format was intended to capture the maximum audience from tourists who visited the area for several days to a week. With the rolling repertory format the theatre could turn patrons into “repeat customers” by offering a variety of productions during any tourists’ stay in the Smokies. If they liked Oklahoma!, for example, then they might come back the next night to see Dark of the Moon. Ticket prices were modest. Five dollars purchased a general admission, and there was ample parking on the theatre property.

The University of Tennessee staged thirty-two productions using more than five hundred actors and technicians (most of whom were UT students) during its twelve years of operating Hunter Hills Theatre. Fred Fields was managing director for eleven of those twelve years. He was assisted by many artists and artistic organizations during his tenure—choreographers, music directors, costume and scenic designers. The theatre played to many thousands of tourists over the years.

The facility was perfectly situated in an isolated setting on the fringes of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, with the audience facing a wonderful vista of Mount LeConte out over the stage. Very little ambient light or sound intruded into the space (compared to facilities such as the Harrodsburg, Kentucky, downtown setting for The Legend of Daniel Boone). A buffer of trees surrounded the facility on three sides, and the sawdust stage complemented the setting of many of the productions.

The theatre offered three vertical playing levels (stage, blockhouse, and upper stage) plus a grassy “pit” situated between the audience and the stage that could serve as a possible fourth level. (The productions of A Midsummer Night’s Dream and Agamemnon did use this fourth playing level, for example.) The theatre also featured three horizontal playing areas across the main stage level—the center stage and two turntables left and right. This provided no less than five playing areas at any one time. The two turntables created two or more additional playing areas as needed. Turntables were a popular form of stage machinery in the 1950s. They offered a theatrical flair to productions (e.g., Hello, Dolly!), but, more important, they made the staging of multiple productions in a repertory schedule easier to manage. (Oklahoma! in combination with The Sound of Music and Dark of the Moon).

The amphitheatre seated about sixteen hundred theatregoers—a smaller venue than several of the other Summer/Hunter summer theatres. The rake of the amphitheatre was very low, compared to other outdoor facilities such as Unicoi These Hills or the Black Hills Passion Play, and this presented some acoustical challenges. To compensate, an improvised system of sound amplification and monitors was rigged for the three main playing areas and for the orchestra. The original design of the theatre included two light towers situated on the far left and right sides of the amphitheatre, about two-thirds of the way up the slope. There were wing positions for instruments situated backstage left and right. Two much larger light towers were added in the early 1970s, centered in the amphitheatre. The positioning of these towers, combined with more modern lighting instruments and circuitry, greatly improved the quality of lighting for the productions. These towers did cut off about five hundred seats in the uppermost section of the amphitheatre, seats that were rarely filled during the ten years of performances in the 1960s and 1970s. The loss of these empty seats was more than compensated for by the improved lighting capabilities.

The artistic director assembled his staff and student company primarily from the UT theatre program. This created a cohesion and stability in personnel and artistic vision. Hardly any other outdoor theatre operation has ever used this model. The staff included the artistic director, one costume designer/costumer, one lighting/sound designer, one technical director, one food service manager (reassigned from the university’s on-campus food service), one box office/publicity manager, one music director/conductor, one choreographer, and a resident facilities manager hired by the university’s Physical Plant office on a twelve-month contract. In some years, the artistic staff included one scenic designer and a company manager. Many of these artistic staff positions provided valuable experience for graduate students or recent graduates of the program. The company of performers typically included twenty to twenty-five students, two or three paid professional performers in principal roles, two or three local high school students to handle landscaping and concessions, two cooks, and two or three professional musicians.
The artistic director cast the company during the spring on the university campus in Knoxville. Rehearsal began immediately thereafter and continued through early June on campus. This meant that most of the rehearsal and some production work was completed prior to the summer. The operations moved to Gatlinburg at the conclusion of the spring quarter in early June. The company quickly built the shows and conducted dress rehearsals through mid-June. By the last week of June all the productions for the summer had opened, and the season ran until late August or even Labor Day.

The operation provided all needs to the company—housing, food, wages—so that everyone could focus on the artistic agenda. From 1967 through 1974 all company members received room and board in the Gatlinburg-Pittman High School, conveniently located just beyond the theatre’s parking lot. The company used the school’s locker rooms for showers; the kitchen and cafeteria provided space to prepare and serve four meals per day. Occasionally, a singer or two was hired to perform and did no other work. No students were paid for their performances, but student company members were paid between $1.25 and $1.65 per hour to work during the day on activities such as building scenery and making costumes, conducting publicity activities and serving on box-office shifts, laundering and maintaining wardrobe, rotating sets, and cleaning the theatre facility. Students could earn up to six hours of university credit most years. The facility included storage space for costume stock, scenery stock, company bed frames, mattresses, and wardrobes. Hunter Hills Theatre enjoyed access to a variety of the university’s resources. This included at least two vehicles, access to the Department of Speech and Theatre’s scenic and costume stock and studios, recycled construction materials, tools, bedding, and furniture.

Considering the burgeoning operation that involved rental of housing facilities and the expense of providing board for a large company, it was not surprising that the production budget remained lean over the years. Costumes received the bulk of the production budget, for that element provided the most exciting spectacle onstage. Scenery was sparse but monumental and versatile. Scenic units were reworked and used in many shows over the years. Season selection also played a role in stretching the production budget. Since *Dark of the Moon* was produced nearly every year, for example, there was a stock of costumes and scenery that stood ready to support that show. Musicals such as *Hello, Dolly* or *Oklahoma!* typically ran for two years in order to get a return on the substantial investment in their costumes and scenery.

Although each season would be dominated by productions of large, popular musicals, the artistic director, Fred Fields, made Howard Richardson and Richard Berney’s *Dark of the Moon* the “signature” show of Hunter Hills Theatre. Starting in 1967, it was produced every year including a one-night stand of the play in 1973, performed especially to honor Fields when the show was not included in the regular repertory of productions. Written in 1942 at the University of Iowa, *Dark of the Moon* dramatizes the traditional ballad of Barbara Allen, weaving the ballad with legends of mountain witches, folk drama, and the local color of the Appalachian setting. John, the Witch Boy, has become enamored of the sensual Barbara Allen. Through a spell cast by the Conjurer Woman he is transformed into a human. He will remain human as long as Barbara is true to him for a year. If she is not, he will revert back to a witch, and her death is the price of her unfaithfulness. As a witch he will live three hundred years, and then he will become fog on the mountain.

*Dark of the Moon* has received mixed reviews as a play since its first production in Iowa. Over the years numerous community theatres, high schools, and colleges have produced the piece. In some cases there has been community outrage that a local school was producing a play about witches. There are scenes, characters, and situations in the drama that appear hackneyed, melodramatic, and stereotyped, perhaps giving credence to the legend that Richardson and Berney wrote the play as satire. Fields’s vision of the play, in the magnificent setting at Hunter Hills Theatre, was on the opposite end of the dramatic spectrum from satire and eschewed lowbrow interpretation. For example, Fields set the action at an inexact time in the distant, misty past that gave the production a feeling of folk myth. Where the original text refers to a “social worker,” the line became “school marm.” Fields also deleted the embarrassingly stereotypical dialogue about moonshine. Most significant, he incorporated much traditional and sacred music into the play, an addition that greatly enriched the drama. The Hunter Hills Theatre version of the script began and ended with “Down in the Valley,” and the other music ranged from a rollicking “Wildwood Flower,” “One Morning in May” (accompanied by a country folk dance), to the melancholy “Lesson Too Late for the Learning,” to the cluster of hymns in the emotionally driven revival scene: “Golden Bells,” “Just As I Am,” “No, Never Alone,” “Rock of Ages,” and others. To this day, put a group of cast members together, and we can drop into four-part harmony with these songs. With the magnificence of the Smokies surrounding the theatre, with the authentic sound of Appalachia in most actors’ ears, with melodies of traditional sacred music harmoniously flowing from the actors’ mouths, and with Scots-Irish ancestry running in the blood of many of
the actors, there was a sense of respect and wonder in the cast. If anyone had ever tried to portray a character ironically or satirically, Fred Fields would have stopped that interpretation.

One cannot imagine a more perfect environment for a production of *Dark of the Moon* than Hunter Hills Theatre. Those most ancient of mountains, the Smokies, were in actuality the backdrop for the play. On the nights when the real moon came out from behind the clouds in the final, climactic scene on top of the mountain, the effect seemed indeed miraculous. When these theatrical and natural phenomena converged as if on cue, audible gasps were heard from audience members. The title of this essay is taken from the final moment of *Dark of the Moon*, when John the Witch Boy stands over the dead body of his wife, Barbara Allen. After living as a human with her for a year, he is now transformed back to a witch. During his time as a human, John had not been able to see the moon because of the spell cast on him by the Conjur Woman. Now a witch again, his final words of the play are "Look at the moon!"

If any play came near to capturing Sumner's idea of "hallowed ground," it was *Dark of the Moon*. But unlike the usual template for outdoor dramas that deal with historical characters and are site specific, *Dark of the Moon* was not written for Hunter Hills Theatre and did not deal with any historical characters. The Appalachian setting of the play in the real mountains that the play refers to made the Hunter Hills annual production of *Dark of the Moon* sacred and hallowed. This signature piece, shaped so earnestly by Fields, was much closer to the Appalachian spirit than *Chucky Jack* could ever be.

Mildred Dunnock, the original Linda Loman in the Broadway production of *Death of a Salesman*, was a guest at the Tennessee Theatre Association convention in Gatlinburg in 1969. Fields asked the Hunter Hills Theatre cast to return on a September night following the season to present a special performance of *Dark of the Moon* for Ms. Dunnock and the convention attendees. Afterward, Dunnock spoke to the cast about what a special evening it had been for her and the rest of the audience. Her praise confirmed what we already knew. Many of us have experienced theatre magic in various forms, but the blend of the natural beauty of the setting, all that talent, coupled with that play and Fields's vision for it, expanded with music and dance, was hard to top. For some of us it is still a benchmark of excellence.

Fred Fields provided overarching artistic and executive leadership to the Hunter Hills Theatre venture, and he guided all aspects of the operation to attain that benchmark level of excellence. The opportunity to work in a rolling repertory format was invaluable for the students. It was not unusual to have four plays in one's head, and few undergraduates have ever had this kind of training and the experience of running a play for thirty or more performances. Moreover, virtually all the productions were directed by Fields, and his directorial vision provided an artistic unity to the productions. Rehearsing the productions on campus in a large classroom, he could visualize a plan to transform each theatrical moment to the various playing areas of the Hunter Hills space—main stage, grassy field in front of the stage, two side stages on turntables (four-scene setup), and two raised stages. He also used entrances from the woods surrounding the theatre, especially the stage-right area. Throughout the rehearsal process Fields gave very few notes, but one learned to listen to the notes he gave to others, which really would inform any performance. Lorraine Dowell, a longtime costume-rented for him as the "kid glove director." His gentle style worked well for guiding young performers. He had an uncanny ability to cast well, and he created beautiful stage pictures, using the stage, the actors, movement, music, and, of course, the Smokies to tell the story. A former air force officer, Fields maintained an aura of the military about him that inspired loyalty to his values, respect for his expertise, and confidence in his vision.

While Fred Fields achieved success with his artistic vision and educational mission at Hunter Hills Theatre, he was less successful at making the operation a popular, successful entertainment venue in Gatlinburg. It never attained attendance levels or local support to match its competitor on the other side of the mountains in Cherokee, North Carolina. Attendance at Hunter Hills Theatre peaked at about twelve hundred per night for *The Sound of Music* in 1971. For other productions, houses usually were between four and six hundred on any given night. The theatre's disappointing track record over the years might be explained at least in part by the cool relationship between the theatre and the local Gatlinburg business community. Pat Conroy, in his *Prince of Tides*, describes the difference between mountain people and island people: "mountainers are isolates; islanders are citizens of the world. An islander greets the stranger with a wave; a mountaineer wonders why he came."*

Bill Morgan asserts that the relationship between *Chucky Jack* and the community of Gatlinburg was not strong in the 1950s, and Gatlinburg natives—the old timers—had always been suspicious of the university. Morgan believes that the skepticism generated among Gatlinburg natives by the *Chucky Jack* experience also tainted their attitudes toward the university's venture a decade later. He believes that the lack of wholehearted local support from the very beginning contributed significantly to the ultimate demise of the university's program. Without the direct, active, enthusiastic support of the local business community,
the theatre never was able to generate revenue at a level that could justify its long-term survival to university administrators. A former dean of the College of Liberal Arts (later the College of Arts and Sciences), Lorayne Lester, recounts that “Hunter Hills was funded directly from the Chancellor’s Office, so no one in the Department knew much about their finances. . . . All the department did was pay Fred a summer stipend.”

While the chancellor and other university leaders generously sustained the Hunter Hills Theatre operation for more than a decade, they eventually had to direct always-finite resources elsewhere. In a recent message Tom Cooke, former chair of the theatre program at the University of Tennessee and artistic director of Hunter Hills Theatre for its final season, reflects on the theatre’s financial weaknesses:

No one knows all of the many considerations that went into the decision to close Hunter Hills or who made those decisions. The company of [1977] knew the fate of the theatre had been decided and that we were just doing one more summer to meet obligations the university had made. . . . The rains came, and came, and, in spite of the best efforts of . . . a fantastic company, we lost money and probably confirmed feelings that the theatre would always be a financial drain. There had been complaints for years and I guess cost will always be the bottom line with administrators. But I believe it would have been difficult for them to close it if Fred [Fields] had remained healthy. His tenacity had seen the theatre through some very difficult times.

Indeed, Fred Fields had committed himself passionately to the success of Hunter Hills Theatre for more than a decade. He was Hunter Hills Theatre. When he was no longer able to direct the theatre after 1976, no one remained to speak out on behalf of the theatre to administrators or to the Gatlinburg community. In Knoxville the new chair of the theatre, Ralph Allen, had ambitious goals for the theatre program that were focused on the Clarence Brown Professional Company. Without support from the Gatlinburg community or university support at the department or administrative level, Hunter Hills Theatre was destined to close. Bill Morgan writes of the closing:

Gatlinburg still would not buy into encouraging a continuation of the program, both because it would require money and a final putting aside of deep-set suspicions that remained from the very beginning. . . . And finally, as things came to [a] critical point, the State of Tennessee hit one of its down periods and tax collections and higher education, along with all state programs, had to eat some of the costs that had originally been budgeted. In the end it pretty much came down to money. . . . But no one could find the money.

Those of us fortunate enough to have worked at this theatre recognize that it shaped our lives in very special ways. We were more or less isolated in the beauty of the Great Smoky Mountains. We were housed and fed, and most of us had technical or management assignments, as well as performance duties. We lived together; we are together; we performed together. We had to learn to coexist. The experience at Hunter Hills Theatre propelled alumni on to Broadway, to film and television, and into the teaching profession all over the country. All of us can point to the lessons we learned during those glorious summers—lessons of teamwork, responsibility, endurance, and the meaning of rain pace.

As we researched this essay, we realized how important the Hunter Hills experience was to us as artists. Knowing how significant it was to us, we reached out to other alumni of Hunter Hills, and we received dozens of responses. To conclude, we want to share some of these responses, which capture what the Hunter Hills experience meant to hundreds of company members.

Ginny MacColl was a college freshman in 1969 when she was cast as the Dark Witch in Dark of the Moon. She made the Knoxville papers when in the course of the performance she accidentally scratched her cornea and had to dance blind on top of the upper stage, which was about twenty feet off the ground. Her testimonial affirms the value of the Hunter Hills experience for preparing aspiring professionals to be successful:

I realized I'd have to do it blind! Everyone pitched in to make it work. Everyone was there behind me, helping me, watching out for me. And we pulled it off with just a slight brush across the log on center stage as we leaped across it. There's no limit to what actors will accomplish to get the show on! And speaking of Dark of the Moon, who wouldn't have etched on their memory the sight of the moon coming out behind the clouds just as Ben said, "Look at the Moon" and the audience all let out a collective gasp. Such a haunting show!

I loved being there. And of course, it shaped my whole life, as I went to NYC to continue dancing and broadened out from there. I worked with Bob Fosse in Pippin as a dancer and understudy to Fastrada on B'way. Then branched out to TV commercials and did over 100 National and regional spots.

Richard Stafford, a director and choreographer in New York, shared these thoughts about the Hunter Hills experience, and his words echo Ginny MacColl's:

I count this as my first paid, professional theatre experience and it helped pave the way or at least further my love of musical theatre. I went on to...
study acting at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts, moved to NYC and have continued to have a career, first as a performer and now as a director and choreographer. The seed was planted at Hunter Hills—I learned how to be a professional there—working as a team to get each show up, stitch costumes, set building and cleaning toilets. I also learned a lot about living 24/7 with those that I was working with, which really helped me in my early touring days. It was a tremendous experience that I look back on with great affection.

Also from New York, Stephanie Weems, general manager of the Magic Circle Opera, shares similar thoughts on her time in the mountains:

My life and theatrical experiences at Hunter Hills UT Summer Theater Program during the 1960s were pivotal in the development of my career as an artist. . . . With stars in our eyes and stars in the skies, we sang our hearts into the vast expanse of Hunter Hills amphitheatre and dreamed of becoming professional performers. For many of us, our dreams came true and for all of us, we were part of a “magical” artistic community that taught us virtuosity, discipline and the ability to become unstoppable in all aspects of our lives.

From the long hours of rehearsal in the hot sun to the chill of the evening filled with mosquitoes and unexpected storms, we learned to transform our diverse talents and skills into a competent ensemble capable of creating a “real world” on stage. In every drama—onstage and off—we grew-up kicking and screaming, into stronger individuals. These cherished experiences became invaluable lessons that have assisted me throughout my lifelong professional career as a singer, actor and arts administrator.

From Susan Kempainen, manager of video production of a major hospital, come these comments:

I’d say that one thing I honed at HH was (given my role as PR coordinator) my organizational skills and a realization of nothing ventured nothing gained. At 20, I was far too young to know what I was doing in the world of public relations . . . creating brochures, calculating the number needed to print, talking with businesses to bring in “restaurant runs,” organizing squads of Munchkins to promote The Wizard of Oz on the streets of Gatlinburg, etc. Being short of theatrical talent, I came to know that I was talented in other ways that were just as useful to a theatrical company or any organization for that matter.

Ms. Kempainen’s experience at Hunter Hills Theatre confirms the theatre’s important role in preparing young people for careers in fields such as marketing, video production, and public relations.

And finally, a note from the late Dan Owenby, teacher, director, and actor, who says, “I was such an innocent when I went to HH, but when I left after two summers I had such confidence and such a wealth of friends who loved theatre like I did. It was a paradise, a party, a place to become what you always wanted to be, a real actor. If I had the chance and the health to do it today, I’d look at my wife and say, ‘See ya, honey!’”

As alumni from different summers of Hunter Hills Theatre and as theatre historians, working directors, and academics, we want to ensure that the very special story of Hunter Hills Theatre is preserved. The following is a version of the Hunter Hills Toast, which was composed for the first Hunter Hills Theatre Reunion in 1986. This version is from the most recent reunion in 2006:

With the waters of the Smoky Mountains,
We toast the 50 years of Hunter Hills,
That magical mountain home that first brought us together
And brings us together now.
We toast its memory and our future.
We toast those who cannot be with us,
And those who have gone before us.

Jon Lutz ends his long poem about Hunter Hills with these lines:

We spent our summers learning what makes a friend
We spent our summers not knowing how few here were to spend
We spent our summers like they’d never end
Like no one would ever have to count them
Like none of us would ever be
Just smoke on the mountain.

Notes

2. Lorayne Lester, “Re: Need Your Help,” email to C. Headrick, Feb. 15, 2008. “And whatever else might be said of Hunter Hills, . . . Agamemnon [sic] was a unique theatrical experience: brilliant acting, directing and the visual effects were so powerful they left the audience breathless for that theatre on that night” (Lester).
5. Lester to Headrick, “Re: Need Your Help.”

The Promise of Democracy

Imagining National Community in Paul Green’s The Lost Colony

Angela Sweigart-Gallagher

Outdoor performances were a hallmark of the Federal Theatre Project’s attempt to build a “people’s theatre” that would bring its disparate American audiences together in order to imagine a national community and to create a regionally dispersed, regionally relevant national theatre. Performances in public parks, amphitheaters, and on portable stages brought drama out of traditional theatre buildings and took it directly to the public. Although a variety of different plays and entertainments were produced for outdoor spaces, patriotic pageants and historical plays made up a significant portion of the Federal Theatre’s outdoor offerings. These plays exemplify the Federal Theatre’s impulse to use source material from U.S. history, promote American ideals, and call for a return to the promise of America’s founding in order to construct a national theatre that would forge an “American” national identity. Paul Green’s outdoor historical drama The Lost Colony, which was performed in an outdoor amphitheatre on Roanoke Island near the location of the historical “lost colony,” offers one example of Federal Theatre playwrights’ attempts to use local history as source material and focus in on the lives of average Americans.

S. E. Wilmer contends that the plays and performances by nineteenth and twentieth-century European national theatres were “important sites for expressing new approaches to national identity.” Wilmer observes that in the work of many of these theatres “one can see the attempt to ‘awaken the nation’ to what is professed to be its natural sense of nationhood and to develop a notion of national character.” Like the national theatres in Wilmer’s study, the Federal Theatre also attempted to “awaken” its audience(s) to a national identity or character. Green’s attempts are clear. He is one of the Federal Theatre’s most successful playwrights, and his works are remembered for their stirring performances. His plays are still performed today, and he has become a symbol of American national identity.