

Arch
Newspapers

Center for Contemporary Arts and Letters Collects Art Materials, Entertains Campus

Igor Stravinsky, Viveca Lindfors, Russian poet Andrei Voznesensky, opera director Walter Felsenstein and many more luminaries of the creative world — the roster of a cavalcade of stars production?

Not really; just a list of those people who have appeared at Stony Brook under the auspices of the University's Center for Contemporary Arts and Letters, an organization which has developed into a major cultural impetus on campus.

The Center, which is almost totally financed by State funds, and is therefore suffering somewhat because of austerity cutbacks, has three main responsibilities, according to Acting Director Lewis Lusardi.

"First," Mr. Lusardi explains, "the Center is in the process of acquiring scholarly materials in 20th century arts and letters which will be useful for graduate students writing theses and dissertations, and for scholarly research by Stony Brook faculty as well as the total academic community."

"Second," he says, "the Center presents outstanding artists and men of letters to campus and community audiences." This is the most immediately visible of the Center's functions, and one which has delighted many Stony Brook audiences in recent months.

"Third, we are trying to develop a working relationship with other institutions on all levels of education, which we hope will result in cooperative ventures such as sharing of facilities, faculty and students. We're also investigating the possibility of placing college student teaching interns in the public schools for training in arts administration, and bringing artists in residence into the schools."

Although this third phase of the Center's work is in the developmental stage, the Center has already co-sponsored a recent performance by the Orchestra and Chorus of Long Island at Ward Melville High School in neighboring East Setauket. The other sponsors were the Three Village School District and the Music Performance Fund.

The concert was conducted by Maestro Laszlo Halasz, founder of the Orchestra and Chorus of Long Island and a visiting professor of education at Stony Brook. Maestro Halasz is perhaps best known as a co-founder and conductor of the New York City Opera Company, which he directed for many years.

"The Center has already obtained from Maestro Halasz what is probably the most comprehensive collection of 20th century original opera scores in the world," Mr. Lusardi says, and adds that the Center is negotiating for the collections of the papers of other well-known musicians and writers.

The Center for Contemporary Arts and Letters was formed in 1967, and has a

ten-man steering committee appointed by Academic Vice President Sidney Gelber. The committee presently includes Lawrence Alloway, professor of art; Leonard Auerbach, chairman of the department of theatre arts; Dr. Justus Buchler, Distinguished Professor of Philosophy; Dr. Gelber; Alfred Kazin, Distinguished Professor of English; Dr. Billy Jim Layton, chairman of the department of music; Mr. Lusardi; Dr. Herbert Weisinger, Dean of the Graduate School; and Dr. C. N. Yang, Einstein Professor of Physics and director of the Institute for Theoretical Physics.

The committee, which represents a rich and diversified background in arts and letters, chooses the programs the Center will present on campus each year. Next year, says Mr. Lusardi, one of the themes under consideration is: "Is New York City Still a Cultural Metropolis?" "We could have comments from artists and critics on the effect of urban disintegration in transportation, industry and civic life on cultural communications in the city," Mr. Lusardi says.

Typical of the Center's presentations on campus this year was the appearance of Russian poet Voznesensky, who attracted an overflow audience for his reading.

The Center also brought to the campus this year Swedish-born actress Viveca Lindfors, who showed a film depicting her preparation for a role in Euripedes' "The Trojan Women," and discussed her work in a long question-and-answer period with her audience.

A Center-sponsored panel of women writers included prominent poets Muriel Rukeyser and June Jordan (who has written extensively on city planning and Afro-American topics), novelist Sue Kaufman (who wrote *Diary of a Mad Housewife*), former *Life* magazine writer Jane Howard (author of *Please Touch*, about the human potential movement), and Ann Birstein, a novelist and magazine writer who led the free-wheeling discussion.

Michael Ponti, a young pianist who had been well-known in the United States only through his recordings, performed his first concert in this country in 18 years, under the auspices of the Center. He presented the Stony Brook audience with a preview of his Lincoln Center debut scheduled for the week after his appearance on campus.

Sculptor and artist Gyorgy Kepes also visited the campus under the assistance of the Center, as did world-renowned opera director Walter Felsenstein of East Berlin's Komische Opera.

In previous years, the Center has sponsored "Homage to Stravinsky," which was the last major public appearance of Igor Stravinsky before his death, and an International Poetry Festival with poets from around the globe.

In addition to activities of which the

Center is the sole sponsor, departments such as English, Romance languages, music and theatre arts, and other campus bodies such as the Center for Continuing Education, have cooperated with the Center in bringing to the campus and community audience, usually at no charge, a host of other speakers

and artists of more specialized interest.

As the University and surrounding community continue to grow, the Center for Contemporary Arts and Letters should remain a major force in the development of Stony Brook as an important cultural center for eastern Long Island. □

stony brook review

Education Expert Promotes Learning In Day-Care Centers

At 2 a.m., Dr. Francis Palmer left a recent meeting of the Suffolk County Human Rights Commission after delivering an exhaustive report. He had been appearing as an expert on child care, and had furnished some helpful statistics—5000 Suffolk children in day-care centers, 34,000 aided by welfare funds, a one-to-six-year-old population of 166,000 with 210,000 projected by 1980. But Dr. Palmer, Stony Brook's provost for educational research and development, has spent a decade studying how children learn; and his talk with the commissioners went well beyond statistics to the range of practical, educational and philosophical questions associated with child care.

Growing public and government attention to child care, and the likelihood of a huge federal subsidy for preschool programs, has created great demand for Dr. Palmer's counsel at lay and professional meetings. But beyond giving such groups a survey course in child-care theory, Dr. Palmer also champions a cause. As a psychologist who is a national expert on learning processes in preschool children, he urges that future childcare programs consider the educational approach his own research has led him to advocate.

His "educational" approach is distinguished from a custodial approach, which construes child care as a baby-sitting service. Dr. Palmer believes that if child care includes a few hours a week of professionally planned and administered instruction—whether in a day-care center, local play group or even in the child's own home — the effort can significantly enhance the child's intellectual capacities.

Though Dr. Palmer's inquiry into learning processes dates to his doctoral study 25 years ago, his present thesis about child care grew largely from studies made between 1966-71 at the Harlem Research Center. During most of that time, he was the Center's director. As a result of those studies, Dr. Palmer was asked by the Office of Child Development (OCD) of the Department of Health, Education and

Welfare to make his concept training curriculum available to the general public. The five-volume work, concerning the education of children from two to five, has been distributed with the encouragement of OCD, and soon will be published independently.

As recognition of his expertise in the field, Dr. Palmer has won membership on the President's Science Advisory Committee Ad Hoc Panel on Child Care, the OCD's Committee on Evaluation of Child Care Programs, the Social Science Research Council's Committee on Learning and Education Process and the Suffolk Day Care Council's Board of Directors.

He was recently named principal investigator under a childcare model development grant from the Association for the Aid of Crippled Children. The \$50,000 planning grant is to develop a comprehensive regional model for child care so that, as day-care programs proliferate, interested citizens, educators, professionals and government workers will have mutual access to information. Connie Kelsey, a childcare educator formerly at the University of Minnesota and Cornell University, has been appointed to work on the one-year project starting in July.

The major, general finding of Dr. Palmer's Harlem research — involving 310 black children, 120 whites and 120 New York City Puerto Ricans — was that children given eight months' exposure to the Palmer curriculum, involving only two hours a week of individual instruction, outperformed an unexposed control group in 17 intellectual measures and those differences continued to exist one and two years after the training program terminated. "We like to think," Dr. Palmer says, "that if the curriculum were employed continuously from age two or three until the child entered school, even more favorable results would be obtained."

Dr. Palmer's approach rejects both the ideas of fitting preschool children into academic drill teams and of dropping them in a rich, comfortable environment where they may explore at their own pace with adult intervention only to supply affection and occasional first aid. His studies also led him to

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reject what he calls the "ultra-humanistic approach" — one that may not be permissive but that opposes the setting of learning goals for children.

"Sure kids need love and affection and a climate of trust between adult and child," Dr. Palmer says. "These provide the setting for learning. But some structure is required, too; there should be an idea of what Johnny should learn and how to teach him.

"But there's an even more important consideration. If you measured the time during which a child has undivided attention at an average day-care center, my guess would be it's incredibly low — five or ten minutes per kid per week. Yet the prime motive to learn develops within the one-to-one relationship with an adult. If a child has two hours a week that he knows are his time, if he likes the instructor and the instructor knows what he's doing, the child will learn more in those two hours than in 30 at an average center."

A typical concept-training lesson in Dr. Palmer's 581-page book suggests that the teacher bring a child into a training room where a few props — toy refrigerator, stove, table, dishes, sink — have been arranged to simulate a kitchen. By casually asking, "Do you ever help your mommy dry the dishes?" or, "Do you like to sweep the floor?" and then saying, "Let's pretend that this is our kitchen," the teacher leads the child into a play situation. The teacher, however, is carefully prepared: in that day's brief one-to-one session, he or she plans to teach the "concepts" of top, bottom, wet, dry, empty, full, next to, into, and out of; and the curriculum also suggests the means of illustration with the kitchen props.

Dr. Palmer, who has raised five children of his own, advocates his approach while still stressing that every child is unique in his biological endowment and life experience. This, he says, "is one of the most fascinating and important aspects of human life, and it presents any parent or teacher with a distinct challenge." It also makes the one-to-one teaching session that much more important, he says, whether the child is one who adapts well to a day-care center or prefers his preschool education at home.

Where such education should take place — at home, in a center or in a small neighborhood group — is, indeed, one of the much discussed questions concerning child care. Another is whether the federal government should promote preschool education at all, and a third is how much money the government can or should invest.

Addressing these and other tactical questions does take some of the many hours Dr. Palmer devotes these days to public discussions of child care. But his prime effort remains educational: to convince the diverse advocates of child-care services that the children will benefit most from programs with a strong educational component. □

The Legend of Bull Smythe

If some Long Islanders seem possessed of an insatiable yearning for the bartering of real estate, it is in the genes of their ancestors. Take Richard Bull Smythe, for example.

He was the source of one of the Stony Brook area's best known legends, that of the Smithtown bull, a legend that's the object of healthy professional skepticism these days on the part of the University's Colonial Studies Institute.

But whether the legend is historically accurate or not, the bull and other landmarks in the vicinity can make for an enjoyable summer outing.

Smythe seems to have been part of the original band of settlers from Lynn, Massachusetts, who founded Southampton in 1640, purchasing the land from the Shinnecock Indians for 16 coats, 60 bushels of corn and a guarantee of protection from enemy tribes. Three years later Smythe was listed as one of the town's proprietors in the patent of 1643.

In 1655 a group of settlers from Boston landed at Setauket and began moving east and south making small purchases of land from Setalcot Indians and later from the Pochogh or Patchogue Indians. Shortly after the Setauket settlement was established, Richard Smythe arrived on the scene from Southampton.

A close friend of his was Lion Gardiner, one of the first of the really great landowners. Gardiner made a double killing in real estate through a friend of his named Wyandance, who was the chief of the Nesequake Indians. Wyandance's beautiful daughter was abducted by another tribe and Gardiner was able to get her returned, presumably intact, to her father. The grateful Chief Wyandance gave Gardiner an island in Peconic Bay which now bears his name and also the tract of land which is now called Smithtown. Gardiner kept the island but sold the tract to his Setauket friend, Smythe.

The Smithtown tract had earlier been sold by the Indians to a group of six men. But when they failed to do anything with the property, it reverted to the ownership of the Nesequake Indians. Smythe took precautions against any loss of title to the newly acquired lands. He subdivided and developed the region. In addition he obtained a patent from Governor Nicholls in 1665, and in 1677 he took out a kind of primitive title insurance called the Second or Andros Patent.

There are a couple of legends and more than one theory on how Smythe got his nickname of "Bull." One legend has it that a dispute over the boundary line between Huntington and Smithtown was settled by a court ruling that Smythe was entitled to all the land he could cover riding on the back of a bull in one day. Another legend has it that the Indians bet Smythe that he couldn't cover the perimeters of the territory on the back of a bull, a bet he accepted and supposedly won.

Dr. Keith Kavenagh, curator of the Colonial Institute at Stony Brook and a leading authority on colonial land patents, finds both legends unbelievable. "Riding a bull was not an exceptional feat in colonial days," he says. "In fact, horses were very scarce on Long Island and the bull was the ordinary means of transportation in Smythe's time." Dr. Kavenagh adds that it is probable that Smythe took about three days on the back of his bull to cover the perimeters of his land, possibly in company with the Indians, to mark off the boundary lines.

At any rate, the legendary ride of Bull Smythe became fixed in the popular imagination. It has been memorialized in the bull which is part of the Smithtown coat of arms and in a 15-foot high bronze statue of a bull on Route 25A in Smithtown.

The statue of the bull and a handful of other local sites connected with the early Smythes can provide a short-run tour for those visitors on the third day of their stay with you this summer or even for a mini-outing by the family. Here are a few such places.

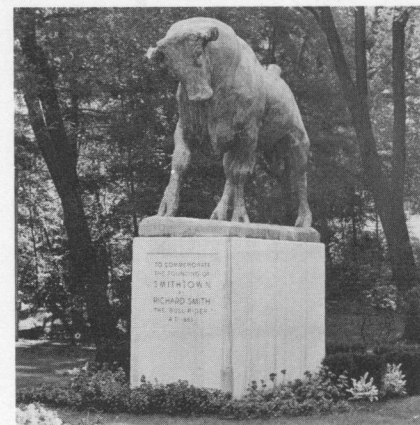
—The Stony Brook Grist Mill was built by Bull's son Adam who obtained a grant for its construction in 1699. The present mill structure dates from 1755 but contains some of the original stones.

—The Wing of Old Smith House is believed to be part of the home which Bull Smythe built for himself around 1664 in Nissequoque, north of Smithtown, on Long Beach Road.

—The graves of Bull and his wife Elizabeth are nearby on Boney Lane and Long Beach Road in Nissequoque. (Many of Smythe's contemporaries are buried in the old graveyard of the Presbyterian Church on the Village Green in Setauket.)

—Caleb Smith House located now in the Smithtown Village Green was originally built in 1819 in Commack by Caleb Smith II, great great grandson of Bull. When it was threatened with destruction by developers in 1955, Caleb's great granddaughter, the late Miss Anna Blydenburgh, had it moved to its present location where it also serves as the headquarters of the Smithtown Historical Society.

—Finally, one might want to wind up at old Epinetus Smith's Inn on Hauppauge Road in Hauppauge, which was used as a stopping place for the Brooklyn — Sag Harbor stagecoach run in the 1770's. — Patrick Hunt □



Is the story of the Smithtown Bull fact or bull-oney?

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