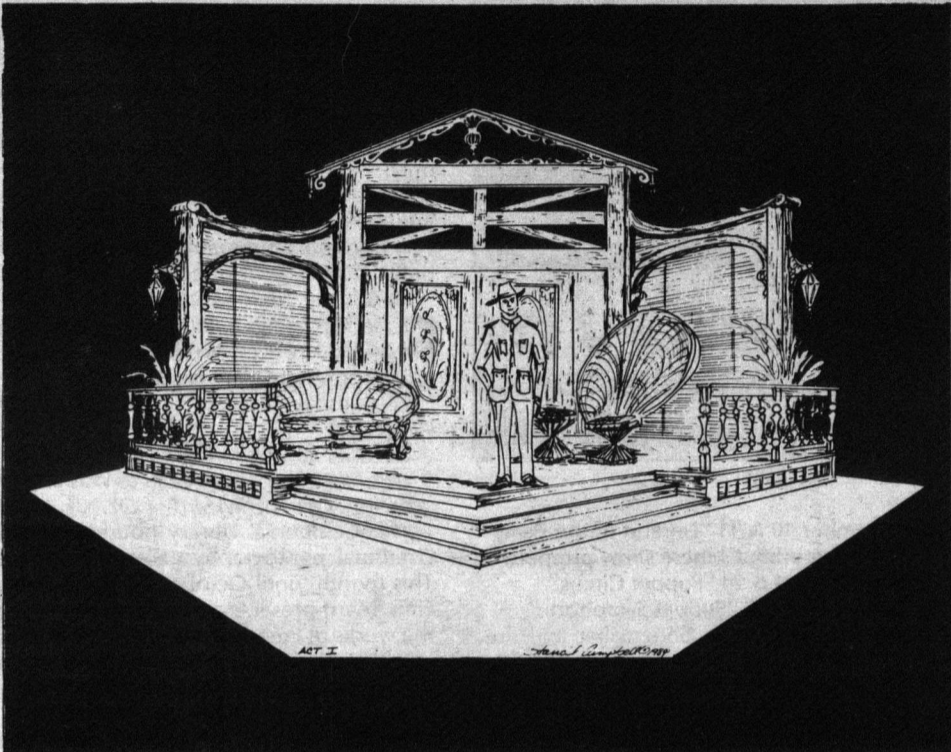


ENTERTAINMENT

A look behind the scenes



Original stage design for *Cloud 9* by Stancil Campbell

story by Anna Borowiecki

Last May University professor Stancil Campbell was appointed Resident Designer for Phoenix Theatre. Tomorrow evening the Phoenix opens with its first production of the season, *Cloud 9*, at the Kaasa Theatre with Campbell's work as set and lighting designer.

Cloud 9, written by Caryl Churchill, is an adult comedy that mocks and shatters conventionalism, including day-to-day sexual politics. While the first act takes the audience

to Colonial South Africa in the late 1800's, the second act jumps ahead to the 1980's in a park in England.

Campbell describes the job of a designer as "problem Solving." One of a designer's functions is to establish a mood, a time and a location where the action takes place. But the designer must also give the actors room to play without dominating their actions. This requires strong artistic concepts combined with the flexibility to change or refine

ideas.

For Campbell, "the biggest key to *Cloud 9* is finding something that will work for both the first act and the second act. With a budget of approximately \$3,000 for sets and props, Campbell has solved the problem by using a basic unit and changing the smaller pieces from act to act.

Colonial South Africa of the first act is visualized with a strong British influence of the Union Jacks built into the sides. "It has a rattan wicker look to it with bamboo type blinds, wicker furniture and lattice work.

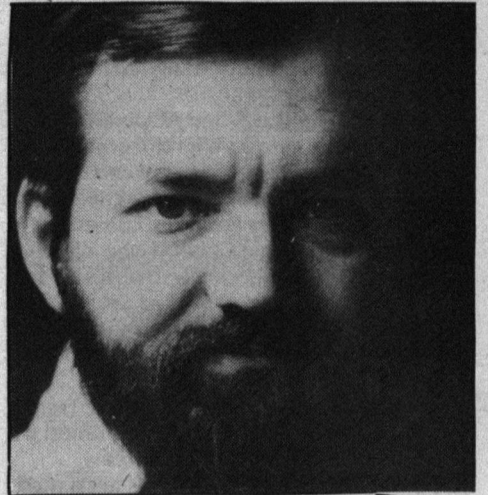
"It (the set) has to be outdoors sometimes and sometimes it has to look like it's indoors, so it's neither one. It's neutral so you can pretend it's one or the other by using the imagination.

"In the second act some of the pieces go away. Some of the railing goes away. The shades go, the furniture completely disappears to park furniture. The whole set rolls upstage so it's more in the background," explained Campbell.

Asked to describe his personal style as a theatre designer, Campbell flatly replied, "I would hope that I don't have one. Because if you have your own style and you do shows a certain way, then what you're putting on stage is yourself and not the play. I think the play is always foremost. The set should look like you don't have anything to do with it."

As a design professor in the drama department, Campbell finds that teaching and designing help each other. Working with students "pushes you into experimenting a bit more, playing around with things. You're daily seeing the students just learning an experimenting with things they've never tried before and you get some ideas from that.

"The other way, you can go out and design a show. You can bring that back to the stu-



Stancil Campbell, resident designer

dents and are better able to tell them what will and won't work on stage.

"You can give them rough ideas. If you put a purple light and a green light together, it's not apt to look very romantic. Now some student will go out and prove me wrong," Campbell chuckles.

Although the multi-talented people and often temperamental personalities of theatre can be wearing, there are definite compensations. "If the people you work with are nice and pleasant to be around and you enjoy working with them, then that makes it a good job. More specifically there's a nice feeling when you see your finished production on the stage knowing you designed the set and lighting and the people are enjoying what you put on stage. It gives you a sense of accomplishment," explained Campbell.

Cloud 9 opens October 5 and runs through to October 21.

The Bear strikes back



Man in funny hat: The original

The Bear PanCanadian

review by John Charles

Finally - a movie Billy Graham can go for! The life of football coach Paul W. Bryant makes for mighty inspirational viewing, and if you're a born-again pigskin fan you may enjoy it. But it's hard to think of anyone else who will.

The Bear is the visual equivalent of sitting down with coach "Bear" Bryant himself and looking through his scrapbook. There's no plot, there's no drama, just anecdotes acted out exactly the way Bryant told them. It's like a two-hour testimonial dinner, with no food the story of Bryant (played with total, lika-

ble conviction by Gary Busey) is the story of an Alabama football player in the 1930's who decided to forego a career as a pro because he wanted to coach. When his coach (Harry Dean Stanton) offers him a full-time position right at home, at 'Bama, he's delighted.

Then the Second World War comes along, and he coaches for the Navy, then U. of Maryland, turning them into winners. Then he moves on the U. of Kentucky, where he turns that team into winners also. But at Kentucky, basketball is really king, and at the campus sports awards, the basketball coach is given a white Cadillac, while Bryant only gets a lighter. So Bryant resigns and goes to Texas A & M, where he turns the team into winners...

I'll bet you want to know what happens next. Well sir, the same thing keeps happening, but the locations change, and finally after going back to Alabama, Bryant retires in 1982, winning his last game. (He died in 1983).

Bryant was, by all the evidence shown here, a fine, upstanding, God-fearing man who inspired almost half-a-century's worth of all-Americans and college football players into hard work and perseverance. He was also an entirely straightforward, uncomplicated, confident man, with no trace of an interior life. Admirable traits in a neighbor or colleague perhaps. But such a person lacks any resonance whatever as the protagonist of a story.

The movie is about Bryant as a coach, so we see squads of football players - hundreds of young men, but all they ever say to him is, "Yes sir." The one player singled out is Joe Namath, and that's because he's in a Bryant anecdote. Bryant had to suspend him from the team, and we're shown Bryant saying to him: "This is the hardest thing I've ever had

to do." You wonder - is that true? Did Bryant never have to do a harder thing? What kind of man was Bryant really, if it is true?

There aren't any other human beings in this movie. In the classic sports movie biographies - The Lou Gehrig Story, The Stratton Story, Pride of the Yankees - the hero had a woman and a friend who got star treatment, even if the events were fictitious.

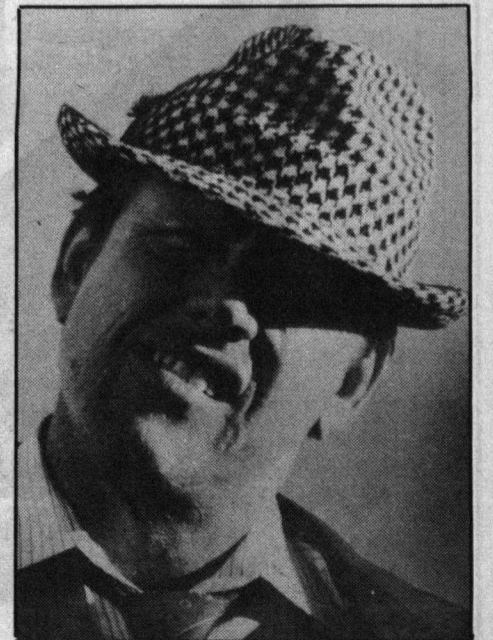
But Cynthia Leake plays Bryant's wife, and we only see her three times. There's a courting scene which is totally generalized, then a scene in 1942, five years after they're married, in which she hands him cookies as he drives off. Then there's a third scene sometime around 1956, when a college student come to take Bryant's daughter on a date. The only reason we're shown this is because it's a Bryant anecdote. He tries to make the young man feel relaxed, the man sits down on a table instead of a chair, and breaks it. The daughter comes downstairs, and goes on her date, and Mom and Pop pick up the pieces. We don't see the guy again - or the daughter, or the wife.

What a hilarious incident! It's like something that might be edited out of *Gomer Pyle*, but because it was Bryant's idea of something interesting and colorful in his life, it's right up there on the screen, along with a whole pack of similar non-events.

The longest scenes show us Bryant's solemn pep talks to his players, and director Richard C. Sarafian must find them really profound, since there are so many of them. We get quiet talk after quiet talk, about how this game will still be a part of you 20 years from now, about the difference between winners and quitters (losing is OK, because that just makes you mad enough to prove you're not a quitter), about the constant connection between football and life.

It's not the positive thinking or the well-scrubbed language that makes you grind your teeth. Those elements are part of many people's real lives. It's the sense that we're being sold Bryant's philosophy. Football in Bryant's view is a religion. "Some people never get to play football," He says to his team, during training-camp workout at night in the pouring rain. "I feel sorry for them."

Such thinking is clearly effective for sports. And it's probably helpful in fighting a war, which is why the movie is reminiscent of recruitment films for Marines. But hearing so many simplistic speeches in a movie which has such a totally false feeling for life, makes *The Bear*, finally a pretty creepy movie.



Man in funny hat #2 (Gary Busey)