Panelists (left to right): Rick Davis, moderator; Karen Zacarias, Mary Hall Surface, Heather McDonald, and Mark Bly

From Outline to Opening Night:

Bringing the Written Word to Life

On Wednesday, October 4, the George Mason University Libraries, Theater of the First Amendment, and the Fall for the Book Festival cohosted a distinguished panel of playwrights and dramaturgs. Following the discussion, the University Libraries presented an exhibit of archival materials from its Arena Stage Collection (see page 6). Panelists discussed their influences and inspirations in producing a script, which was followed by readings from each playwright’s discussed work. Panelists included Mark Bly, Senior Dramaturg, Arena Stage, Washington, D.C.; Heather McDonald, director, playwright, and Mason theater associate professor; Mary Hall Surface, director and playwright; and Karen Zacarias, playwright and founder of the Young Playwrights’ Theater. The discussion was moderated by Rick Davis, Associate Dean, College of the Visual and Performing Arts, and Artistic Director, Center for the Arts and Theater of the First Amendment.

The Arena Stage Exhibit will be on display on the second floor of Fenwick Library until the end of January. For hours, please visit library.gmu.edu/libinfo/hours.html.
Message from the University Librarian

Dear Friends:

The 2006–07 academic year is in full swing, and the University Libraries are once again busy with students, faculty, and visiting scholars who come to the Libraries with a myriad of educational and research needs. Our ability to provide scholarly resources is made possible, in part, by the generous support we receive from our friends and donors.

In this issue of Full Text, I am pleased to share with you our annual report of donors who make a vital difference in our programs and services. During the past fiscal year, private support allowed us to undertake digitization projects of unique holdings in our special collections. In addition, Mason parents contributed generously, and their support will help strengthen our foreign language collections, which are so critically important to many of our academic programs.

I hope you enjoy this issue of Full Text, which shines a spotlight on the University Libraries’ wide-ranging theater holdings. These holdings, or course, comprise an excellent complement to Mason’s outstanding performing arts. And on behalf of all of us in the University Libraries, thank you for your support for the academic community we serve.

—John G. Zenelis
University Librarian

Spotlight on the University Libraries’ Theater Holdings

The Federal Theatre Project Collection

Among the millions of the unemployed during the Great Depression were writers, actors, designers, musicians, and others involved in the dramatic arts. The Federal Theatre Project (FTP) was founded to employ these theater professionals, and at the same time present theatrical performances in parts of the country where they would otherwise not be seen.

FTP was part of the Works Progress Administration and operated from August 1935 to June 1939. The project employed more than 12,000 people and delivered 2,745 individual performances in 145 American cities during its brief four-year existence. Actors Will Geer, John Huston, and Burt Lancaster; and directors John Houseman and Orson Welles were among the notables who honed their craft on FTP productions. Playwrights Arthur Miller, Norman Rosten, and Arnold Sundgaard were also on FTP employee rolls. Familiar plays such as Macbeth and Romeo and Juliet, as well as new, experimental, and controversial productions, such as Triple-A Plowed Under, Revolt of the Beavers, and The Cradle Will Rock, graced the stages of not only major American cities such as New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago, but also Peoria, Chapel Hill, and Oklahoma City.

The George Mason University Libraries’ Special Collections and Archives (SC&A) has been gathering FTP materials since 1974, when Mason English professor Lorraine Brown discovered a collection of administrative papers, play scripts, costume and set designs, photographs, and posters from the project in an old government airplane hangar. Placed on loan to Fenwick Library by the Library of Congress. The collection was then processed, arranged, stabilized, preserved, and made available to researchers.

Though the original collection was recalled by the Library of Congress in August 1994, SC&A, with Brown’s help, has obtained numerous other unique materials relating to FTP. These items include oral histories of former project participants and their personal mementos, scrapbooks, and other items. In addition, some duplicate items from the original collection, such as photographs, musical scores, playbills, and scripts were retained by SC&A as part of the negotiated agreement with the Library of Congress. The total volume of the FTP collection is 238 cubic feet or 357 linear feet.

For more information on the Federal Theatre Project Collection, visit www.gmu.edu/library/specialcollections/federal.html or www.aladin.wrlc.org/gsdl/collect/ftpp/ftpp.shtml.

—Robert Vay

Poster announcing the Miami Federal Theater’s October 4, 1937, presentation of Boy Meets Girl
**A Short Note from the Performing Arts Librarian**

*The Infinite Variety of Performing Arts Librarianship*

George Mason University’s Departments of Music, Theater, and Dance provide students with superb instruction in the theory, history, and practice of their crafts. As the liaison librarian to these programs, I found my first year of supporting this process exciting.

Liaison librarians establish faculty connections to inform collection development, enhance student research skills, and promote use of the University Libraries’ resources. My counterparts—Howard Kurtz (Theater), Tom Owens (Music), and Dan Joyce (Dance)—were very helpful in orienting me to the scope and pace of departmental activities and the concerns of their colleagues. Faculty recommendations resulted in the acquisition of hundreds of resources, ranging from important 20th-century symphonic band scores and rare monographs on costume iconography to primary-source dance-history DVDs, as well as major items of retrospective music collecting. I customized instructional sessions on the use of research tools and knowledge-management resources for specific courses in dance and music. I also led a dozen graduate students on a behind-the-scenes visit to the Library of Congress.

Rapport with the departments is enhanced not only by attendance at performance events, but also by direct participation. In this regard, I audited a dance history course (expanding my knowledge and deepening my appreciation for our dance majors) and joined the viola section of Mason’s symphony orchestra.

My first year as the performing arts librarian was a shifting kaleidoscope of liaison activity, and the year ahead promises to be just as lively, with more acquaintances to make, interests to pursue, and projects to develop.

—Steven Gerber
Robert and Wilva Breen Theater Collection

In 1946, Robert Breen, an actor, director, and Army Air Corps veteran, became the executive secretary of the American National Theatre and Academy (ANTA). According to its charter, ANTA was “a people’s project” dedicated to bringing “a heritage of the great drama of the past and the best of the present” to the American people.

The Robert and Wilva Breen Theater Collection focuses on the touring productions supported by ANTA. Under Breen’s leadership, ANTA’s theater, ballet, and opera productions continued to tour in the United States as well as Europe, South America, the Middle East, and the Soviet Union. The collection includes Robert Breen’s personal papers and correspondence, reviews of the internationally touring shows (many translated into English), and photographs and slides from the ANTA and Breen productions.

One of the more notable ANTA productions was the folk opera *Porgy and Bess*. Beginning in fall 1952, Robert Breen and Blevins Davis presented *Porgy and Bess* nationally and internationally. The opera toured 29 countries in four years, including Germany, Austria, France, Yugoslavia, Spain, Italy, Switzerland, Belgium, Brazil, Peru, Egypt, and the Soviet Union.

Over those four years, the remarkable cast of *Porgy and Bess* included Leslie Scott, Cab Calloway, Leontyne Price, LeVern Hutcherson, and Maya Angelou. Although Angelou was a chorus member for only eight months of the European and Middle Eastern leg of the tour (September 1954 to June 1955), the experience had a profound effect on her, and she wrote extensively about her travels with the troupe in her book, *Singin’ and Swingin’ and Gettin’ Merry Like Christmas* (Random House, 1976).

The company’s tour of the Soviet Union in December 1955 marked the first cultural exchange between the United States and the Soviet Union since World War II. Nikita Khrushchev, Nikolai Bulganin, and Vyacheslav Molotov attended the second performance in Moscow. Author Truman Capote also tagged along during the tour of the Soviet Union and wrote about his impressions and observations of both the troupe and the Soviet Union in his book *The Muses Are Heard* (Random House, 1956).

For more information about the Robert and Wilva Breen Theater Collection, visit www.gmu.edu/library/specialcollections/anta.html or www.aladin.wrlc.org/gsdl/collection/bren/bren.shtml.

—Rebecca Forrest

---

*Porgy and Bess* was to be the first American opera sung at La Scala. Famous white sopranos, tenors, and baritones from the United States had soloed at Milan’s renowned opera house; now an entire cast of Negro singers were nervously rehearsing on the legendary stage.

We were told that La Scala audiences reacted to singers in the same way patrons of the Apollo in Harlem responded to the acts. That warning did not need to be spelled out. The Apollo audiences were famous for shouting mediocre performers out of the theater or joining the entertainers on the stage to show them how a dance should be danced and how a song should be sung.

On opening night the backstage silence was unusual and ominous.

—Maya Angelou

*Singin’ and Swingin’ and Gettin’ Merry Like Christmas*

Cast list (shown above) from the program of *Porgy and Bess* at La Scala in 1955.
Spotlight on the University Libraries’ Theater Holdings

John C. Becher Playscript Collection

When one thinks of the U.S. Army’s role during the 1940s and 1950s, images of soldiers acting, singing, and dancing rarely come to mind. But those activities were exactly what the Army Special Services Division (ASSD) encouraged soldiers to do to boost the morale of the military personnel stationed the world over.

A wide range of materials relating to ASSD programs are housed in the George Mason University Libraries’ John C. Becher Playscript Collection. The University Libraries acquired the collection in 1979 through a gift from Harold Arburg, a former director of Arts and Humanities at the U.S. Office of Education.

The collection contains primarily scripts of Soldier Shows, a highlight of ASSD’s Entertainment Division, which were sent to units stationed around the world. Soldier Shows were plays and variety shows written by and for soldiers, which drew on the acting, singing, dancing, costume design, set design, and carpentry skills of soldiers. Many of the Soldier Show scripts were produced in ASSD’s Special Services School in Lexington, Virginia.

Along with the Soldier Show scripts, the collection contains parodies of popular songs, comedy routines, humor pieces, and instructions for other morale-boosting activities. These included showing soldiers in the field how to create costumes, sets, stages, and holiday decorations using the barest of materials, such as old light bulbs, discarded newspaper, and other scrap and salvage material.

The John C. Becher Playscript Collection is housed in the University Libraries’ Special Collections and Archives. For more information about the Becher Collection, visit www.gmu.edu/library/specialcollections/becher.htm.

—Rebecca Forrest

A parody of the Al Jolson song “You Made Me Love You,” music by James V. Monaco and original lyrics by Joseph McCarthy.

Instructions for making holiday decorations out of scrap and salvage material. This page has instructions for making ornaments out of burned-out light bulbs.
The Arena Stage Collection

The Arena Stage Collection, one of the Special Collections and Archives’ (SC&A’s) preeminent collections, documents the rich 56-year history of the critically acclaimed Arena Stage in Washington, D.C. The collection contains original production books, cast photographs, set and costume designs, playbills, videotaped interviews, and scrapbooks. These materials document every aspect of theatrical production at Arena Stage.

Acquired by Mason in fall 2000, the ever-growing collection currently measures more than 300 cubic feet and receives additional materials from Arena Stage at the conclusion of every theatrical season. As an institutional archive, the Arena Stage Collection clearly highlights the history of a highly successful regional theater house.

The collection also includes handwritten correspondence, financial records, and personal papers of Arena Stage founders, Zelda Fichandler, Thomas C. Fichandler, and Edward Mangum. Zelda Fichandler’s determination and enthusiasm for Arena Stage is particularly evident within her papers. There are more than 25 cubic feet of material pertaining to her role as founder and long-time artistic director of Arena Stage.

The Arena Stage Collection supports a wide variety of scholarly research and is consequently one of SC&A’s most frequently researched collections. In 2005, the Arena Stage Collection web site received more than a thousand hits, and 22 national and international scholars from California, New York, Missouri, and Greece came to Fenwick Library to conduct research.

For more information about the Arena Stage Collection, visit www.gmu.edu/library/specialcollections/arena.htm.

—Veronica Fletcher

Cover from program of 2000 production of Blue, starring Phylicia Rashad

Arena Stage scale model

1972 Arena Stage production of Moonchildren. Actors from left to right: Kevin Conway (Invincible), Maureen Anderman (One Life to Live), Christopher Guest (This Is Spinal Tap), Stephen Collins (7th Heaven), and Edward Herrmann (Gilmore Girls). The production of Moonchildren moved to Broadway shortly after its run at Arena Stage.

Photo of Ann Meashaw in the 1957 production of Agatha Christie’s Witness for the Prosecution

The front of Arena Stage’s first home in the Hippodrome
The George Mason University Libraries gratefully acknowledge the following donors and friends who made gifts to the Libraries from July 1, 2005, to June 30, 2006.
Every effort has been made to accurately reflect in this listing all gifts made to the University Libraries during the previous fiscal year. If an error or omission has occurred, please contact the University Libraries’ development office at 703-993-3389.
Upcoming Events and Exhibits

Visit library.gmu.edu for updated information.

Jamestown 400
1607–2007
Panel Discussion and Special Collections and Archives Exhibit
March 6, 2007, 4:30 p.m.
Johnson Center Cinema, Fairfax Campus
Panel Discussion focusing on the history of Jamestown and recent archeological finds. The discussion will be followed by an exhibit of select rare maps of Virginia from the C. Harrison Mann, Jr. Collection and rare books from the Hershel H. Helm Collection.

Currently

Arena Stage Exhibit
Select items from the Arena Stage Collection, including documents, awards, congratulatory letters, and photos of now famous celebrities who appeared at Arena Stage early in their careers, are on display on the second floor of Fenwick Library through the end of January 2007. For hours, please visit library.gmu.edu/libinfo/hours.html.

Contributors
Editor
Adriana Ercolano
Contributors
Veronica Fletcher
Rebecca Forrest
Robert Vay
Steven Gerber
Design and Production
George Mason University Creative Services
Distribution
ITU Administrative Services

Full Text is published semi-annually for donors and friends of the George Mason University Libraries. Comments and suggestions are welcome and should be directed to:
Office of the University Librarian
George Mason University
4400 University Drive, MS 2FL
Fairfax, VA 22030
aercolan@gmu.edu