



By Clyde Hoover

With the close of the spring musical, *Kismet*, Mercer has cause to mourn the departure of a great theatrical artist. Although much can be said in praise of the present production, one can hardly call *Kismet* the crowning touch to William J. Layne's artistic endeavors. In view of Mr. Layne's leaving it seems only proper that a few long overdue words of support and praise should be directed to him.

Mr. Layne has to his credit at Mercer at least three superb productions; *Media*, *Once Upon a Mattress* and *The Great God Brown*. It is a source of continuing amazement and admiration how, handicapped by a limited budget and even more limited facilities, that this director, producer, designer, common laborer and friend could produce plays of the previous quality. If one could only examine a bit of the back-stage workings he would appreciate the finished product so much more. There is in each of Mr. Layne's productions (and especially in the three listed above) such remarkable ingenuity and finished craftsmanship that many professional companies would be pleased and proud to claim them as their own (and indeed they would be fortunate.)

One example of this ingenuity may be seen in the *Kismet* production. If anyone took the trouble or interest to inspect the set for *Kismet*, no doubt he was impressed, as this reviewer was, at the amazingly diverse functions that each section performed. It was through this ease of planning and diversity of function that the unusually short scene changes were made possible. As always, Mr. Layne saw fit to take advantage of every possible asset that the all too inadequate stage of Willingham Chapel provided.

As for the performance ledger itself, both debits and credits are to be found. In the debit column there is the orchestra, in spite of the competent and faithful direction of Jack Jones. This deficit is primarily due to a scarcity of both numbers and talent, neither of which Mr. Jones could control under his direction. Their performance was adequate, but hardly more.

Next on the list is a general criticism which is evidenced by the progress improvement of the calibre of performance from Wednesday night through Friday. There simply was not ample rehearsal time. The result was a somewhat shaky performance marred by specific lulls and faltering.

As for specific criticisms, there are none which are overly severe. Susan Wiseman as Marsinah showed a rather distracting detachment from the rest of the cast. Although exhibiting a lovely voice and appearance, she did not illustrate the involvement necessary to portray convincingly her character.

Somewhat the same might be said of Beverly Williams except for the fact that hers was an over-involvement. For the type of romantic comedy that *Kismet* is meant to be, her character of Lalume seemed strangely lewd, coarse, and menacing rather than seductive and graceful.

Firmly established on the credit side there is Stephen Belew. His "Was I Wazir" was undoubtedly the highlight of the evening. His character was both well developed and accurately defined to present a delightfully mercenary and wicked individual.

Gary Sikes abounded with spontaneity and fine voice. His role of Hajj (the Poet) demanded a great deal which he met with polish and commitment.

Charles Russell as the Caliph performed well vocally, although his characterization was at times ineffectual and bland.

Hugh Dukas added able support in both the acting and dancing areas, as did James Newsome. Daniel Sheffield and Thomas Michael added also to the overall performance.

After this enumeration it is evident that the assets outweigh the deficits in *Kismet*. Certainly judging from the reaction of the audience, the flaws and faults of the production may be overlooked.

Once again this reviewer would like to extend to Mr. Layne a final word of praise and appreciation. Since superlatives are often considered vulgar (and to be sure their quota has already been exhausted) let it suffice to convey a very simple but her sincere "Thank You" to this gentleman who has done so much for Mercer's stage.



NBMT Club

Do not forget the NBMT Club. The original point of poor food and poor food choices has been made. Less than fifteen per cent of the Mercer students eat in the meal ticket cafeteria line this quarter. Support the SGA in its efforts to secure basic changes in the cafeteria.

No longer does one see the long lines of fall and winter quarters pictured at the left. No longer are Mercer students willing to pay more for poor food. No longer will the cafeteria serve as a social hour. No longer can the conditions remain stagnant. Please reply to the Cluster office if you believe a change to a food service would improve conditions. We have information on several food services and need to sound student opinion on this matter.

Join the munch for lunch bunch, join the NBMT Club.

Report Of The Curriculum Committee

The Curriculum Committee has met on a regular schedule and has dealt with a variety of matters brought to its attention by Departments of the College, the Dean's office and individual members of the faculty.

The three major matters before the Committee this year were (1) a consideration of the Journalism program (2) a proposal for granting academic credit for Advanced ROTC courses (3) the program for training prospective elementary teachers.

The Committee, after lengthy discussion, determined to recommend that Mercer keep the Journalism minor but that it be restricted to include some specific courses from other departments that would strengthen the background of a prospective journalist. The Committee recommended that Mercer give 5 hours credit for a year's work in advanced ROTC. Thus a student could earn a maximum of 10 hours credit toward graduation requirements by participating in ROTC during his junior and senior year. These recommendations have been adopted by the faculty.

The problem with respect to the elementary education program arose because Georgia's state department of education has only given Mercer temporary accreditation for its present program. The Curriculum Committee has devised a revision of the group of courses in the subject matter areas that prospective elementary teachers take. This revision would increase the number of courses from six to eight, but some of the courses would be reduced from 5 hours to 3 hours. The Committee honestly feels that they have written a program that satisfies the requirements of the state department of education for such programs. The Committee has not presented this for formal adoption since it is awaiting the opinion of the state department of education.

The Curriculum Committee has recommended and the faculty has adopted changes in the curriculum of the following departments this year: Art, Chemistry, Christianity, Economics, English, History, Modern Foreign Languages. Also, at the recommendation of the Committee, the faculty adopted a more liberal policy concerning advanced placement for entering students. The new policy allows courses in any discipline to be substituted for a course from which a student is excused.

The Curriculum Committee has recently received from an individual faculty member a proposal that good students in their junior and senior year be given the opportunity of taking some courses on a pass-fail basis. The Committee declined to act on this for the present but would like to receive responses from the faculty. They would be particularly interested in discovering if this would encourage students to take courses they might not take under Mercer's usual system of competitive grading. The Committee intends to raise the question with some groups of students.

ERROR NOTICE

In last week's Cluster, my article on Mercer politics referred to the great turn-of-the-century Georgia politician Tom Watson as a justice on the state supreme court. A student more knowledgeable about Tom Watson than I has pointed out that Watson (who never graduated from Mercer because he refused to take final exams) was never on the Georgia Supreme Court. He was senator and congressman as well as Populist presidential candidate, but the part about the supreme court was my error.

Bill Dayton



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