

Attendance varies for two outstanding performances

A dramatic event is a sellout and another performance should have been this week in the Triangle. All performances are sold out for the Playmakers production of Oscar Wilde's "The Importance of Being Earnest" — an unusual occurrence according to a publicist for the company. Because of this demand, an encore performance has been planned for 7:30 p.m. on Sunday at the Paul Green Theater on the University of North Carolina campus in Chapel Hill.

A Review

Synergic Theater's Sunday performances were not well-attended but deserved every right to be — especially since this Durham dance company performed tributes to two late Durham artists, violinist Giorgio Ciompi and sculptor Frank Smullin. This company has also established a reputation for rich, layered imagery in such theater pieces as "Birthday" performed on Sunday.

Perhaps the ACC basketball tournament explained the lack of a crowd for the afternoon performance. At any rate, it's too bad more people didn't catch one of this company's performances.

Program notes paid tribute to the "ongoing legacy of creative influence" of Ciompi and Smullin. Two dances also proved this point. The

"Lullaby" section from a longer piece, "Private Lives," featured the taped music of the Ciompi Quartet which performed on-stage with Synergic Theater in 1976 when this work premiered in Page Auditorium.

Frank Smullin's voice on tape was used in "Pipe Dreams" as the sculptor explained the complex mathematical formulas he struggled with to make all points meet when the sections for his metal sculptures were cut. It's always fascinating to catch a glimpse of the creative process, the concerns and explorations and plain hard work of the artist whose struggles aren't usually evident in the final work.

All elements of "Pipe Dream" combined to form a portrait of the artist, Smullin, creating one of his sculptures. An analogy might also be made to the composition of a work of dance as Suzanne White Manning's movements explored Rudolf Laban's definitions of the spatial and dynamic aspects of the cube. Builders Bryan Babski and Susan Settergren had the arduous task of taking cut sections of cardboard pipes and figuring out how to combine the pieces to make a cube sculpture. This process became humorous as Anne Deloria and Carol Fike used unusual ways of "bringing" these pieces to the builders.

This dance ended with a

beautifully, chilling, unveiling of Smullin's metal sculpture seen from behind a scrim.

One of the highlights of "Birthday" was Lee Connor as Billy. Connor is the new dance artist in residence at Duke.
