PROJECT SYNERGY

Last winter a coalition of Duke artists was formed under the name "Project Synergy." The result was and is one of the most exciting theatre experiments the North Carolina community has recently seen.

The members of the core group include Larry Tseng (Media Center Audio Group Director), Raymond Simone (Media Center Art Director), Suzanne White and Nancy Powers (Duke and Chamber Dance Groups) and Deborah Pearce.

The purpose of the coalition is the development of experimental arts programs in the state of North Carolina involving practicing artists and scientists in the exploration of new modes and combinations of present media, ideas, skills, and techniques. The basic approach at this stage of development is the exploitation of the multilingual aspects of performing arts: visual, audial, and kinesthetic communication. Eventually, the program hopes to expand knowledge and techniques currently available as well as those being developed by itself and others, melding them into a unified performing arts medium. The final goal is a three-part program which will carry out, 1) investigative activities by artists and scientists to explore, develop, and document new methods and presentations for the performing arts, 2) creative projects seeking to continually arrive at new works by use of these new techniques, as entertainment, as experimentation and as testing procedures, 3) educational programs to disseminate new information to other performers, experimenters, and students to develop and monitor instructional methods in the classroom, studio, and public. A large part of the activities of the program will involve public instruction and participation through the means of lecture-demonstrations, performances, workshops, and exhibitions.

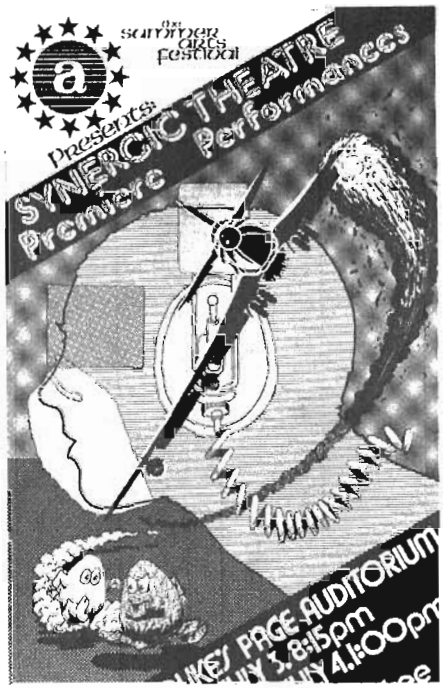
The project unleashed its first public presentation in the form of Synergic Theatre, last July 4 and 5 in conjunction with the US/USSR Track and Field Meet and Arts Festival. The two and one half hour performance was presented in Page Auditorium to a packed house.

Synergic Theatre ran the gamut from austere but highly structured dance to light entertainment, and consisted of three pieces:

1) Synchronisms No. One – An exploration of the individual's time/space framework through the use of radio-controlled blind dancers. The dancers responded independently to cues supplied by FM radio transmissions and headphones.

2) Cartoonik: an Educational Live Cartoon – A spoof of cartoons, flashcards, and comic strips. The background set was rear-projected on a screen and moved behind the actors as they ran in place, drawing a great round of applause from the audience on both nights.

3) Delta Carnival – A seventy-two minute barrage of images consisting of multicolored shadows of dancers moving behind a translucent plastic screen. The images were evidently drawn from an ersatz TV guide listing included in the program notes, and were constructed to follow several overlapped storylines at once. This piece concluded with a three-dimensional soundscape of an airliner crash and an abstract religious ceremony, and drew a standing ovation.



Response to the program was overwhelming, and funds are being sought to set a repeat performance and to convert the third piece to film.

The members of the project are in the process of gathering together interested parties to participate in this years activities and drafting new pieces to be developed over the course of the school year for presentation next spring or summer.