

Ear before the eye in Eisenhower

Director Crocken keeps the sound from going sour

By KAREN M. MOORE
Daily Collegian Staff Writer

People are seated, the lights go out and the curtain goes up. Sounds simple. Certainly not for William Crocken, director of Eisenhower Auditorium. The night of a performance is the product of many hours of careful preparation.

Crocken said Eisenhower is a multi-purpose hall; therefore, it must satisfy the acoustical needs for a variety of events.

"This type of hall produces the preferred climate for ballet, opera, theatre, symphonic music—the entire gamut of the performing arts," Crocken said.

For example, when the Penn State Symphony performed, 10 sections of the symphony shell were positioned to create an enclosed area on the stage. Also, the ceiling pieces were lowered to prevent any loss of sound to the audience. Since this event did not use amplification, Crocken and his staff had to take all precautions to preserve the natural sound.

On the other hand, Crocken said, if Al Jarreau had been scheduled the day after the Penn State Symphony, rapid changes would be implemented, reversing the stage to accommodate an amplified jazz concert. The symphonic shell would be put away and the ceiling pieces raised up into the fly tower for storage.

For the jazz concert, velvet curtains would be dropped. These sound-absorbing curtains are located under wire mesh along the walls of the auditorium. Also, black curtains would be situated to surround the band; this effect, called stage masking, hides the backstage.

Since the sound output is extremely high when amplification is used, these sound-absorbing curtains prevent loss of hearing.

Another feature of the acoustics in Eisenhower is the design of the seats. They are shaped as if someone were sitting in them at all times; therefore, the quality of sound is not affected if the whole auditorium is not filled.

The sound unit is the decibel (db). The range of sound intensity varies from the high level of 130 db, the threshold of pain, to the low level of 0 db, the approximate threshold of hearing.

The number of decibels or the noise constant (NC) measures the sound in the auditorium. The optimal NC for an auditorium is below 30 db.

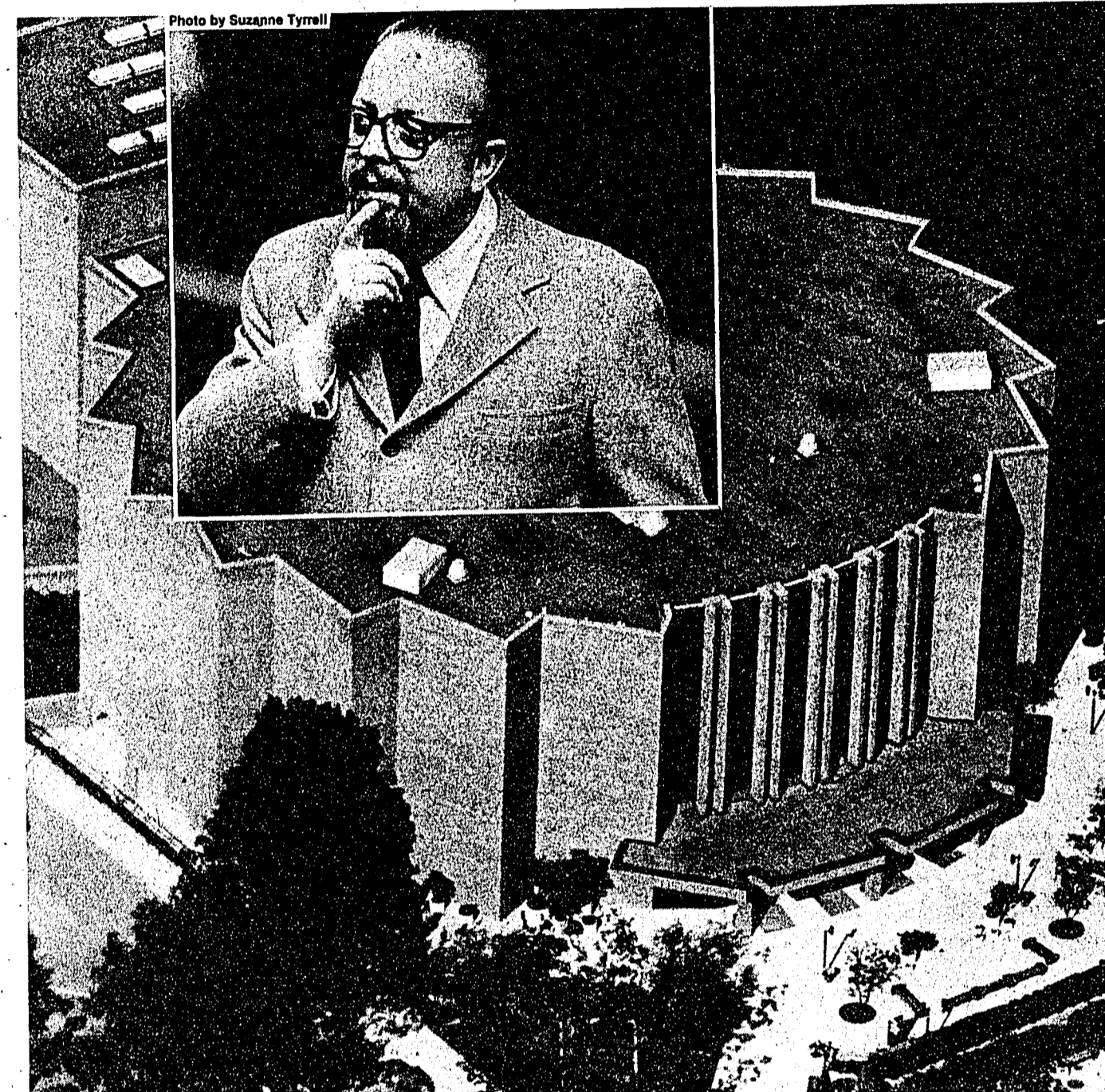
"When Eisenhower first opened, the NC was close to 50 db," Crocken said. Due to a successful period of trial and error, under Crocken direction, the NC is now 25 db.

The loss of hearing is an irreversible process. "If you lose the capacity of one decibel of sound, you've lost it for the rest of your life," Crocken said.

At Rec Hall, a rock concert can sometimes produce an output reaching 130 db, the threshold of pain.

"If you are sitting four to five feet away from the stage, you are willingly subjecting yourself to a tremendous sound output," Crocken said. "Maybe a warning should be printed on each ticket: 'Concerts can be hazardous to your health,'" said Crocken.

Getting Eisenhower ready for the wide variety of performances is a difficult job involving precise judgement. But Crocken and his staff know the quality of their facility and handle it well.



William Crocken and Eisenhower Auditorium

the daily arts

Students get a chance to dance for Orchesis

By MARC WATREL
Daily Collegian Staff Writer

Orchesis, the student dance company of Penn State, will open its 25th season this Sunday with performances at 1:30 and 4:00 p.m. in the White Hall Dance Theatre in 132 White Building.

Under the direction of Pat Heigel-Tanner, the members have choreographed a wide variety of vibrant and exciting dances.

The dancers will perform three pieces to songs by The Manhattan Transfer including "Big Band Birds," "Twilight Zone" and "Spies in the Night" before moving into a classical piece, "Clair de Lune," by Debussy. Other pieces include Handel's "Allegro in G" and the Vince Guaraldi Trio's "Peanut's Theme."

Vice-president of the Orchesis Dance Company, Jan Macut, said this year's fall performance is "a very light and entertaining concert. The majority of music we are dancing to is more upbeat than usual."

"I feel that we have a very good concert for the time we had to put it together. It's hard to coordinate an entire concert in a term," said Macut.

Heigel-Tanner, faculty adviser, said Orchesis gives dancers at Penn State a chance to "achieve an excellence, an artistic quality of performance in the art of dance."

"Orchesis provides students who come to Penn State with the opportunity to dance, for there is no dance major on campus," she said.

"The value of Orchesis to the student is not only in the value of performance, but in the chance to choreograph the pieces performed and the opportunity to teach what they have learned."

Heigel-Tanner said the company is a professional program funded by the College of Physical Education and auditions for membership were open to all Penn State students.

Macut said Orchesis will be organizing workshops that will be open to students on a limited basis in January.

"We want to open up dance to students who would like to dabble in it... we're trying to develop an interest in dance at Penn State," she said.

One of the major goals of Orchesis, said Heigel-Tanner, is to "service the student body at Penn State."

Artists Series presents dancers and Simon show

As part of the Theatre/Dance Series, the Artists Series presents the Pilobolus Dance Theatre—a group of artists known for their energy, originality and humor—this weekend in Eisenhower Auditorium. Tonight's performance is sold out by subscription; however, tickets are available for the 8:30 performance tomorrow night.

This 1981-82 season marks the Pilobolus Dance Theatre's 10th anniversary. Founded by Moses Pendleton and Jonathan Wolten who were soon joined by Robby Barnett and Lee Harris, Pilobolus evolved in its first year into a completely self-sufficient organization—its programs choreographed, danced, managed and publicized by the four men.

Pilobolus, an unusual name taken from a phototrophic fungi, is based in Washington, Conn. The company has received the Scotsman Award in 1973 for performances at the Edinburgh Festival and the New England Theatre Conference Prize in 1977. In 1980, Pilobolus was commissioned by the Fine Arts Committee of the 1980 Winter Olympics to choreograph and perform a new work at the Olympics in Lake Placid, N.Y.

Tickets for Neil Simon's hit Broadway musical comedy, "They're Playing Our Song" go on sale Monday at 9 a.m. at the Eisenhower Auditorium box office, a spokesman for the Artists Series announced today. "They're Playing Our Song" plays at 8:30 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 12 in Eisenhower Auditorium. There are a limited number of tickets available.

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