

Ouachita Baptist University

Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita

Honors Theses

Carl Goodson Honors Program

1969

A Study of College Theater Publicity

Cynthia Marie Crews

Ouachita Baptist University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/honors_theses



Part of the [Public Relations and Advertising Commons](#), and the [Theatre and Performance Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Crews, Cynthia Marie, "A Study of College Theater Publicity" (1969). *Honors Theses*. 454.
https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/honors_theses/454

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Carl Goodson Honors Program at Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita. For more information, please contact mortensona@obu.edu.

H 792
CRE

Theater, College

A Study of College Theater Publicity

for fulfillment of one hour's credit
for Honors Special Studies

Humanities 491
Mr. Holt

D. Holt

6/13/69

Cynthia Marie Crews

This paper deals with my work as publicity
chairman for BLOOD WEDDING.

181

This study deals basicly with my knowledge through research and practical application of the elements of publicity for Ouachita Theater's production of Blood Wedding. Having no established publicity system at Ouachita, I tried to gather together som basic ideas that could be used and followed in publicizing other productions. It is my feeling that publicity has been an untapped force too long and that our theater needs the thrust of that force. I hope that my beginning in trying to define, select, and educate an audience for the Ouachita Theater through publicity will be an upward surge in the progress toward the theater's becoming a cultural focal point on the campus and in the community. The theater is seeking to give to the camp s and community that part of our culture they can find nowhere else.

Perhaps the major emphasis of good publicity should be a plan and schedule. One should set down in chronological order exactly what he expects to do in his publicity campaign. Then he needs to stick to it. The plan should be flexible so as to add new ideas. Having accomplished this, he knows what he should be doing when and his publicity will work out much more smoothly and effectively.

My own plan want like this:

Posters. 6 weeks needed.

Printed material. at least one month.

Newspaper articles. hopefully every week.

Pictures. 3 weeks.

Letters to Teachers, High School, etc. 1-2 weeks.

Put up Posters. $1\frac{1}{2}$ -2 weeks ahead.

Table stands. Week of Performance.

Pictures to newspaper. 1-2 weeks ahead. (consult editor).

Marquis poster. 1 week ahead.

Bulletin board. Week of Performance.

Student Bulletin. 1 week before.

Radio Announcements. Week of Performance.

Chapel Announcements - one week before.

This is a rough outline of a schedule yet flexible enough to let whoever is in charge of publicity breathe and still accomplish smooth publicity. It is quite necessary to follow a schedule because proper time allotment and proper timing are essentials to good publicity. The posters should not be put up a month in advance for the simple reason that the news will become stale and the public forget or become tired of seeing all the merrising posters. One should be imaginative in publicity and not afraid to try new things.

When thinking of the theater one should consider its aims then the publicity should be planned in accordance with those aims. The primary purpose of publicity is getting an audience, yet one must select and also educate that audience in theater. Obviously a third grade class would not be a proper audience for Tennessee Williams. Publicity for any play should always be in good taste and be as professional, artistic, and imaginative as possible. A loudspeaker on the back of a truck might be an acceptable means for publicizing carnivals but certainly not for Shakespeare or any other type of college theater.

The publicity should symbolize the play which is being publicized. The symbolism can be carried through in color, art, and methods. For instance in a tragedy poster one would seldom if never use pastels but should use dark muted colors suggesting the play itself. Blood Wedding used ^a red and black combination. The art work should also reflect the character of the play. Note the artwork used for Blood Wedding. Newspaper articles, pictures, etc. should help the viewer get a clear idea of what to expect when he walks into the theater to see the performance. Thus the publicity should say more than the five W's. Every confrontation with the publicity for a play by a prospective viewer should give him some insight into the play in order that a viewer does not come into the play "cold".

Energy and enthusiasm are essentials to publicity. One should get excited about a play and seek to spread that excitement. If you are not interested why should the audience be. The play should be talk up but don't let too much leak. Curiosity and mystery do much to "sell" plays and theater.

POSTERS

Printed posters are a necessary element in publicity. The repetition of the same design serves to help imprint the play on the mind of the public. The printing method used in Blood Wedding was silk screening which

is most convenient for the theater because it is done on campus by the art department. Other methods are done at printers who can print them offset, with zinc cuts, or on newspaper presses. Arlyss Friddle and I developed a motif which we decided to use for all our printed publicity. After thinking about what the play represented, the three women motif was developed. This motif idea seems to give a certain unity and basic design to the publicity and could be set as a precedent for future publicity. The motif appeared on the posters, program, and table stands. It could also be used on tickets, marquis posters, and we used the positions of the three women to develop a posed photograph. If this idea is to be used further, the design classes of the art department could make the different layouts to choose from, or the person in charge of publicity could conceive of an idea and ask someone he feels qualified can do the design as I did in the case of Arlyss. It must be a precise and professional layout. Because a single motif was used throughout the campaign, association was possible. Every time someone saw the picture they thought of Blood Wedding.

After the design was made, it was taken to the art department for silk screening. Mr. Raybon was given two weeks time to complete the posters (150).

By using the art department, it is possible to integrate the two departments of drama and art. Extra posters could be made and sold to help pay for the posters and perhaps a small profit can be made. This way the art department would be more willing to help the drama department again. The person in charge of publicity should try to draw as many of the other departments on campus more close to integrate the department on campus.

When the posters are finished wait 1½-2 weeks before the play to put them up. Plan one day and the locations for them then put them up--all of them on that day! Try to put them in strategic locations for a few well placed posters are worth fifty misplaced ones.

NEWSPAPER ARTICLES & PICTURES

It is the goal of the newspaper to inform and this is done in two ways--through straight news stories and feature articles. Both these should be utilized for publicity. The goal of the person in charge of publicity is to get the play he is working on in print as many times as possible in the campus, local and even state newspapers. Thus ideally, one should plan a different story each week. Some ideas for stories are announcement of the cast; interesting anecdotes and incidents in rehearsals or about cast members; interviews with the director, actors, or writer; the play's history; review of the play; brief announcements about its presentation.

presentation. Imagination is the key word in article ideas. A don't, however, is to reveal the whole plot-- why should people come if they know exactly what is going to happen. Generate excitement but don't say too much. An ideal method for theater publicity in newspapers is the picture page. It is very easy for a reader to happen to skip over a long prose story, but seldom will he miss a picture and/or caption. Well planned and photographed pictures are an asset to the theater and its publicity. When planning pictures, one should consider: (1) contrast in color and/or shade; (2) simplicity--it is better to have three large faces than to clutter a pose with many faces; (3) representative poses from the play; (4) many different poses--at least six; (5) try to use as many of the cast members as possible (don't use just three people out of a cast of twenty); (6) be a perfectionist as to makeup and costumes (consult the photographer about the effects you want to achieve) no scraggly ends; (7) try for originality and special effects in the photographs. One should take a complete afternoon or as much time as needed in order to get good pictures (preferably at a studio). These photographs can be used for the newspaper, yearbook, window cards (if extra prints are ordered) and a display board where tickets are sold. The person in charge of publicity should work closely with the newsbureau and

newspaper staff to see if attractive picture layouts can be made. One extremely attractive page incorporating good pictures and a bare minimum of copy is shown in Southern Illinois University's paper Alestle of the play J. B. by Archibald MacLeish. No captions add to the symbolism of the pictures. The idea of giving credit to the photographer would add incentive to his doing the work better. The photographer used for Blood Wedding on her own developed extra prints mounting them on a poster free of charge if we would display them giving her credit for her work. This bit of free publicity was welcomed by us and her.

PROGRAMS

The program is the one item the playgoer takes with him into the performance. Therefore it should be informative. It should help to give him some insight into the play. The program needs to be very attractive. In the case of Blood Wedding the three women motif was used on the cover with a short quote from the play. Inside the title was given then the cast and crew, information about the playwright and the play, credits. Also other information like future performances, details about the cast members could be included as well as the Who, What, When, Where for historical purposes. Programs should be finished at least one week ahead of performance and at least three weeks is needed to complete them and get them absolutely perfect. There should be no

typographical errors. Some of the programs can be mailed out to teachers and newspapers, etc.

TICKETS

As of yet the drama center seats are not numbered making advanced sales of tickets difficult. Yet when they are numbered, advance sales can help publicity. If possible the motif should be reproduced on the tickets. Advance sales can give the cast an idea about the size of their audiences. The tickets should be printed a different color for each night of performance. People should be encouraged to buy advanced tickets by lowering their price to those sold at the door.

SPECIAL LETTERS

In selecting the audience especially in college theater, one should go further than the campus borders, for college theater can offer much to the community around by giving them a taste of stage drama which in all likelihood could not be found anywhere else. Letters to civic groups and high schools can be an effective publicity element. Most impressive are personal appearances, speeches, assemblies about the play and the theater to these groups. Cuttings from children's theater and reader's theater make fine presentations in high school and grade school. Members of the cast could give speeches to high school senior English classes, speech classes, language

classes. College theater should be bigger than just the college campus because it is unique educational theater which can offer something (the great masterpieces live on stage as they were meant to be presented) which the community can find nowhere else.

RADIO & TELEVISION

The local radio and state radio stations should be utilized as very promising publicity elements. Such items as recorded interviews; recorded breaks on or two minutes in length to play between records possibly made by the radio speaking class; daily news clippings could be sent and actual written dialogue sent to the radio announcer could give widespread publicity. Noon T.V. shows often look for talent to put on the air. Especially prepared cuttings from plays or readings can be used if they are well planned for television. Many times announcers will give the university free plugs.

MISCELLANEOUS SUGGESTIONS FOR PUBLICITY

1. One should not forget to put in announcements in the campus bulletin and chapel.
2. A Formal Night at the Theater. This could be planned for an opening night some time when the campus social schedule is at low ebb. The social clubs could be asked

to cooperate with ticket sales and ushering. This should be a formal occasion and a reception should be planned afterwards. This event would help upgrade the theater image on a campus void of formal occasions.

3. Famous Person Attending. Perhaps someone could be invited to attend like the critic who reviewed Archibald MacLeish's J.B. attended the opening of Verser.

4. Display Board. This board should have an attractive display of newspaper clippings, pictures, programs, posters, etc. needed to make a center of interest to those entering the theater.

5. Window Cards. These would consist of a mat of an 8" by 10" glossy print or animated art cartoon advertising the play.

6. Table Stands. These are done at a printer and the play's motif can be used or a miniature of the posters for the tables of the cafeteria. Roughly 100-150 are needed.

7. The social clubs could help the theater publicize the opening nights which are difficult to get audiences. By helping with poster placement, ticket sales and

ushering, they can do a service to the theater and in turn be given a percentage of the house on opening night.