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### From the "Ouachitonian": Eric Phillips

Mallory Wallace

*Ouachita Baptist University*

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OUACHITA  
BAPTIST UNIVERSITY



NEWS

From the "Ouachitonian": Eric Phillips



By Mallory Wallace

December 22, 2021

For more information, contact OBU's news bureau at [newsbureau@obu.edu](mailto:newsbureau@obu.edu) or (870) 245-5208.

ARKADELPHIA, Ark. – *Previously published in the 2021 Ouachitonian yearbook*

When going home in the Spring 2020 semester became a reality for students, staff and faculty at Ouachita, one of the greatest challenges became how to continue to feel motivated and inspired while in isolation. For Eric Phillips, chair of the Department of Theatre Arts, specializing in light, stage, costume and prop design, this reality was one he felt he could help bring some inspiration and encouragement to. Luckily for Phillips, roughly a year before being sent home due to the COVID-19 outbreak, he decided to take a season on sabbatical.

"I had some time to pull back and refocus and try to build up other interests and things. You get so focused on teaching, or in my case, creating and teaching," Phillips said.

During his time on sabbatical, Phillips began giving himself some projects he could work on at home. This included water coloring, music, sketches and even building furniture, all interests that he previously did not have enough time for. The period of quarantine for Phillips became an opportunity for him to encourage his current and past students, which was primarily achieved by posting on Facebook.

“The majority of my Facebook friends are past and current students, so as a way to encourage them to continue pushing their creative process I began sharing what I was working on,” Phillips said.

Phillips’ posts consisted of videos of him playing in different spots around Verser Theatre, some videos of him water-coloring, and different updates on the furniture he was crafting. Phillips mentioned how the interactions with these posts were not only encouraging but provided a sense of community for those who were feeling frustrated or had a lack of creative motivation.

One way he was able to connect with students was over an event called “Couch Cabaret.” This was a virtual event where past and current students could showcase their work, and audience members could donate if they would like.

“I am very much a collaborative artist, so I got in contact with those who would be performing on the same day as me,” he said. “We ended up choosing the song ‘Here Comes the Sun’ by The Beatles because we figured it would be a nice reminder during these hard and frustrating times that everything was going to be okay.”

Phillips continued to challenge and encourage his students in the classroom throughout the tough seasons. Sharing different videos and stories with them on a regular basis was his go-to. Phillips strived to instill the knowledge that circumstances are unpredictable and sometimes intimidating, but each person can push themselves to better their craft and know that their talents were still being used to make an impact.

*Photo by Abby Blankenship*