



Monday, April 15, 2002

## Professor of dance delivers last lecture

By **Jeff Samoray**, *OU Web Writer*

Carol Halsted, professor of Dance at Oakland University and former chair of the **Department of Music, Theatre and Dance**, will retire from the university in August. In honor of her contributions to OU over the past 32 years, the **Center for Student Activities** held a "Last Lecture" for Halsted on April 12 in the Oakland Center Fireside Lounge.

Halsted received her Ed.D at Wayne State University and joined OU as a part-time instructor in 1970. She has been president of the American College Dance Festival Association, Michigan Dance Teacher of the Year, editor of the Detroit Dance News, grant reviewer for the Michigan Council for the Arts and Cultural Affairs, recipient of the OU Faculty Recognition Award and the Wayne State Alumni Achievement Award. Currently, she is exhibiting the Carol Halsted Dance Photography Collection at universities and museums across the country and serving as Dance Coordinator for the Detroit Opera House.

Halsted began her last lecture by doing what she does best – choreographing a dance. Lecture attendees got a kick out of the short, three-step improvised dance that rotated among the gathering.

Thereafter, Halsted reflected on her career by describing many of the productions she coordinated with OU students, supplementing her lecture with videos of some performances dating as far back as 1972.

"We had a burgeoning group of very expressive people when I started here," Halsted said. "I team taught a course called 'Creative Expressions' along with a musician and sculptor. You have to remember that the process was seen as the most important thing then and not the product. My job was to teach dance. I recall we got about 500 pink plastic bags and filled them with leaves, then set it out at the entrance to OU as a sculpture. Of course, we didn't get any permission to do this and we saw it was being dismantled. So the students protested and we were allowed to move the bags in front of Vandenberg Hall. There it stood – 500 marvelous pink plastic bags. It was a very exciting time."

Halsted also spoke of a children's dance group her students formed called Other Things and Company, which performed at elementary schools in the early 1980's.

"It lasted about 12 years and was very successful," Halsted said. "The students really enjoyed singing and dancing in the elementary schools. That was something that really helped them later in their careers."

Along with her remembrances of her students, Halsted spoke fondly of her OU co-workers.

"The faculty and my colleagues in the administration have been very supportive," Halsted said. "They've all been wonderful people and have been motivators for starting various projects. It was always for the greater good of the students and for the department."

Halsted closed her remarks by taking questions from the audience. She was asked to describe her dream for the future of OU and to describe the changes she's seen in her students over the years.

"All of the arts have always had a place at OU," Halsted said. "I hope some day all of the arts are put under one umbrella, and hopefully in one building."

"There have been stages with my students, which also went along with my maturity as a teacher. There was always a feeling of wanting to express. That feeling became more serious during the recessions. The art students of today are serious and creatively serious. At the professional level, you see excellent work and choreography. I think we've reached a point where technically things are unbelievable. We're raising the bar and a lot of that comes from today's students."

Beth Thibault, publicist for the **Department of Music, Theatre and Dance**, said Halsted will be greatly missed by her students and colleagues.

"It's very hard to sum up a career in a half-hour lecture," Thibault said. "She has such a strong vision for what our department and the arts at Oakland could be. Even though she's stepped down, she's still our greatest supporter. I miss her already."

**SUMMARY**

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