



Tuesday, October 14, 2003

## Renowned researchers attend Dickens symposium

By **Jeff Samoray**, OU Web Writer

Reflective of the dedication of Oakland University's faculty to research, scholarship and creative endeavors, the university hosted the eighth annual Charles Dickens Symposium. The conference, which draws some of the world's foremost authorities on the 19th-century author, was held Oct. 10-12 on the main campus and at **Meadow Brook Hall**.

Scholarly presentations dealt with many aspects surrounding the author, his work and Victorian literature. Malcolm Andrews, editor of the "Dickensian," presented "Dickens and Impersonation;" and Philip Allingham of Lakeland University in Thunder Bay, Ontario, presented "Three Representative Illustrations for Dickens' 'Hard Times' for These Hard Times." Gareth Cordery, a professor from the University of Canterbury in New Zealand, traveled 26 hours to OU to present "Harry Furniss and the Boom in Boz." Among the other noteworthy scholars who presented were David Paroissien, editor of "Dickens Quarterly," and eminent Dickens scholar and actor Bert Hornback of Bellarmine College in Louisville.

"A big reason I attended (the symposium) was because it was being held at my alma mater," said Alisa Clapp-Itnyre, an assistant professor of English at Indiana University East. "But I also have been working on a Dickens project (Dickens' use of music) and this seemed like a wonderful opportunity to present some of this research. The conference was incredibly helpful to my research in giving me excellent ideas for my paper, and knowing what are some 'hot topics' in Dickens studies to take back to my Victorian literature students. And just to meet some big names in the field was inspiring."

A few OU students also were present. John Martin, a senior English major and university research scholar, attended the symposium and contributed an essay to the catalog for the current **Meadow Brook Art Gallery** (MBAG) exhibition "Dickensian London and the Photographic Imagination."

"Being a student of Dickens, the symposium is a great opportunity to hear presentations from other scholars in the field and to ask questions," Martin said.

In addition to the presentations, symposium attendees received a private walk-through of the art gallery exhibition, which was curated by OU Assistant Professor of Art and Art History Claude Baillargeon. The exhibit featured more than 50 rare 19th-century images of London on loan from the George Eastman House International Museum of Photography and Film, the Library Company of Philadelphia, and the collection of William B. Becker. Attendees also were treated to a staging of Dickens' "Great Expectations," performed by students from OU's **Department of Music, Theatre and Dance**.

"Many kudos to (OU associate professor of English and symposium chair) Natalie Cole, who organized such a well-planned and stimulating weekend," Clapp-Itnyre said. "Not all conferences that I have been to have run as smoothly or have had as much to offer the participants, attesting to her creativity and foresight. She especially showed off Oakland University to its best advantage by meeting at Meadow Brook Hall, integrating in the Art Gallery exhibit, and including a student performance of Dickens. International scholars should be impressed with OU after this conference."

Performances of "Great Expectations" run through Sunday, Oct. 19, and the MBAG exhibition continues through Sunday, Nov. 16. For more information, visit the **Meadow Brook Art Gallery** and **Department of Music, Theatre and Dance** Web sites.

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