



Wednesday, October 1, 2003

OU to host Dickens Society Symposium

By **Jeff Samoray**, OU Web Writer

Oakland University will be a prime destination for literary scholars from around the world this fall, as OU hosts the eighth annual **Dickens Society Symposium**. The conference, to be held at Meadow Brook Hall Oct. 10-12, will celebrate the life, work and times of Charles Dickens, author of a series of memorable novels of the Victorian age, including "Great Expectations," "Oliver Twist," "Bleak House," "A Tale of Two Cities" and "David Copperfield."

"It's wonderful that Oakland was selected to host this symposium," said Associate Professor of English and symposium chair Natalie Cole. "Previous hosts have been Boston University and Oxford University in England. Among the 60 persons who have registered are some of the very best Dickens scholars and Victorianists. We have scholars coming from Canada, France, Great Britain, New Zealand and across the United States."

Some of the presenters include David Paroissien, editor of "Dickens Quarterly," Malcolm Andrews, editor of the "Dickensian," and eminent Dickens scholar and actor Bert Hornback of Bellarmine College.

Cole explained how Dickens' work remains relevant for today's readers.

"Every novel Dickens wrote warned readers against ignoring the needs of others," Cole said. "Scrooge's conversion in 'A Christmas Carol' is only the most famous example of the need to turn away from a selfish life toward a life of knowing, appreciating and giving practical help to others."

"Dickens wanted economic justice for all, because he had personally experienced homelessness, hunger and emotional disconnection. In his art, he portrays suffering with a hopefulness that his readers will grow more responsible in caring for others."

Other events held in conjunction with the Dickens Symposium include the **Meadow Brook Art Gallery** exhibition of 19th century London photographs, "Dickensian London and the Photographic Imagination," Oct. 10 to Nov. 16, and the **Department of Music, Theatre and Dance** performances of an adaptation of Dickens' "Great Expectations." Evening performances are scheduled for Oct. 9, 10, 16, 17 and 18 at 8 p.m. and Oct. 11 at 8:30 p.m. Matinees are scheduled for Oct. 12 and 19 at 2 p.m. and morning performances are Oct. 14 and 15 at 10 a.m. Admission is \$6 for students and \$12 for the general public.

The Dickens Society Symposium is open to the public. Attendees must pay a \$60 registration fee (\$35 for students and seniors), which includes lunch on Saturday, Oct. 11. For more information, visit the **Dickens Society Symposium** Web page or contact Natalie Cole at (248) 370-2539 or cole@oakland.edu.

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