

Actress gets ready for 'Arcadia' opening night

BY MACKENZIE CRAVEN
ASSISTANT ETCETERA EDITOR

At 8 p.m. tonight in Drayton Hall, Mardi Sykes will join Benjamin Fitch to open the final USC Theatre spring production, "Arcadia."

"Arcadia" is a comedy written by Tom Stoppard, who also wrote "Shakespeare in Love." The show will be one of the first major roles at USC for Sykes, who will play Thomasina.

Sykes is a theater junior from Charleston, S.C., and she has been acting since elementary school. She first thought she wanted to be an actress at the age of 9 after seeing Ingrid Bergman in "Casablanca."

She auditioned for the role of Thomasina at the end of last semester. All actors go to Longstreet Theatre to see the dates of the auditions. All participants must choose two monologues to learn, and each piece must be slightly different.

For the first two acts, Thomasina, a child prodigy, is 13 years old. She is the smartest character in the play. In the final act, Thomasina is 16 years old. Sykes said the main difference between acting out a character who's 13 and one who's 16 is the body movements.

"I've been working on everything I say - how does that make me feel, what am I feeling at this moment - and getting it in my body," Sykes said.

In the second act, Sykes will be showing how 16-year-old Thomasina tries to hold back her emotions.

Sykes had to learn a British accent for this role. Vocal coach Erica Tobolski has worked with her since the first rehearsal.

She plans on using the accent after the play with friends, just for fun.

"I think I could fool somebody," Sykes said.

She said the cast has learned to work well together, too.

"You develop a support system. You have those days when you are just not getting it," Sykes said.

Sykes admits that acting isn't easy. "It's not just about memorizing lines and running around on stage," she said. "For every step forward, there are three steps back."

She said she has no doubt that by opening night, the play will come together. She believes that everyone's role is equally important.



Mardi Sykes as Thomasina and Ben Fitch as Septimus Hodge are in "Arcadia," which will be performed at 8 p.m. tonight in Drayton Hall.

"Everyone has a twist and turn in the story, in a certain way. It's just that some have more lines than others," Sykes said.

Fitch plays Thomasina's tutor. During one of the scenes, they kiss. It is Sykes' first onstage kiss, but it isn't anything she can't handle.

"It's wonderful at the point of the play it happens. It's sweet, it's touching, it's a nice moment when it happens," Sykes said.

She said she has a good relationship with everyone on cast. Sykes believes the relationships are established so things run smoothly on stage.

"It's not TV. You can't go 'cut.' It's happening right there, right in front of your eyes."

According to Sykes, the director plays a crucial role in the production of the show.

"He directs you, he lets us make our own decisions in regards to the story and everything," Sykes said.

"But he'll encourage us to try different ways (of acting)," Sykes said. "He has an idea of what the story should be for the audience."

Sykes sometimes gets frustrated during rehearsal. "About two or three nights ago, I was working on this scene. I had this little speech I was giving, and he was trying to hint at what he wanted me to inflect," Sykes said.

"I pretty much had it, but I kept inflecting on the wrong word," Sykes said.

"Some things you just can't get from doing it so much. They [the lines] are engraved in you a certain way. You just need to take time outside of rehearsal to go over the speech again and again until you get it the way it's supposed to be," Sykes said.

Overall, Sykes thinks this show is a success.

"I feel like this has been a real successful show for me because I feel like I've learned a ton from the fellow actors in the show, from the coaches, from the director, especially," Sykes said.

Sykes has learned a lot from being a part of the theater department at USC.

"I think since I have come here, I have learned more in my two years here than I have learned since I have started my career," Sykes said.

Integrated worship gaining popularity

BY DEB RICHARDSON-MOORE
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

As cliches go, it's been a true one: The most segregated hour in America is 11 a.m. Sunday morning.

But integrated worship opportunities and interracial pulpit switches are cropping up, and if they're not taking place on routine Sunday mornings, they're occurring on Sunday nights and Easter dawns, Friday evenings and steamy summer nights.

"We're seeing an increase in the form of true integration within our worship services," said Dr. Luonne Rouse, the pioneer African-American minister who took over the 99-percent white Disciples United Methodist Church in 1994.

"We're no longer looking at the whiteness, the blackness, the redness or yellowness of it, but pretty much looking at one another as brothers and sisters in Christ."

Recent gatherings include: — Greenville First Baptist and Springfield Baptist celebrated their 25th anniversary of annual joint services, 133 years after black Springfield broke away from its white mother church.

— Upstate AJive, an evangelistic outreach founded in 1995, has avidly encouraged interracial participation and will do so again in its March for Jesus in 1996.

— The integrated Judson community has seen interracial tent revivals and women's conferences, thanks to two of its clergy sharing a vision of biracial worship.

— And in Columbia, two large congregations — one black, one white — are sponsoring an Easter sunrise service at Williams-Brice Stadium.

Against the backdrop of these and dozens of other quiet connections, the interdenominational Faith Communities United is launching its Coalition on Racial Reconciliation with a brown

bag lunch at noon today at Fourth Presbyterian Church.

Clergy of both races have been meeting since January, growing in number from five to 20.

Now they're ready for laity to join them, with the hope of establishing one-on-one fellowships between black and white church bodies.

The model, said Rabbi Marc Wilson of Beth Israel Synagogue, was Jerry Falwell's dialogue last year with members of the gay community.

The dialogue probably changed no one's beliefs, he said, but it created a tone of civility and ratcheted down the stridency of the debate.

Spurred by the similar divisiveness of the Confederate flag issue, Faith Communities is seeking to foster understanding through simple human contact.

"When we can recognize the image of God in people we toss off as adversaries," Wilson said, "the better we will be."

During Hanukkah, the Rev. Vincent L. Thomas of predominantly black Tabernacle Baptist Church preached in Wilson's synagogue.

His text ran from Moses to Jesus, and was so well received, said Wilson, "he could put me out of a job in no time."

On Palm Sunday, Thomas' 600-member congregation will welcome the rabbi.

In this most sacred of Christian seasons, Thomas expects it to go well.

"The rabbi," he said, "is going to talk about the meaning of Passover.

Without understanding Passover, you really can't understand the whole issue of why Jesus was in Jerusalem in the first place and how the killing took place and the meaning of the Resurrection."

Meanwhile, Rouse's 345-member Eastside church continues to evolve into one of the Upstate's truly integrated — even on Sunday mornings.

RETIREMENT INSURANCE MUTUAL FUNDS TRUST SERVICES TUITION FINANCING

Deferring taxes with TIAA-CREF can be so rewarding, you'll wonder why you didn't do it sooner.

Call us for a free tax-savings calculator

One of the fastest ways to build a retirement nest egg is through tax-deferred Supplemental Retirement Annuities (SRAs) from TIAA-CREF.

With funds automatically deducted from your paycheck, you can easily build income to supplement your pension and Social Security.

And your contributions to SRAs grow undiminished by taxes until you withdraw the funds.¹ Add to that TIAA-CREF's solid investment performance, bolstered by our commitment to keeping expenses low, and you have more money working for you.

So why wait? Let us help you build a comfortable retirement today with tax-deferred SRAs. We think you will find it rewarding in the years to come.

IT'S EASY TO SAVE MORE THROUGH THE POWER OF TAX DEFERRAL

	\$102,068
\$67,514	
■ Tax-deferred savings after taxes ■ After-tax savings	
\$41,232	
\$31,933	
\$13,052	
\$11,609	
10 YEARS 20 YEARS 30 YEARS	

In this hypothetical example, setting aside \$100 a month in a tax-deferred investment with an 8% return in a 28% tax bracket shows better growth than the same net amount put into a savings account.³

TIAA-CREF

Ensuring the future for those who shape it.[™]

1 800 842-2776

www.tiaa-cref.org

Ben Stiller Jenna Elfman Edward Norton

Keeping the Faith

If you have to believe in something, you might as well believe in love.

TOUCHSTONE PICTURES AND SPYGLASS ENTERTAINMENT PRESENT A KOCH CO. / NORTON-BLUMBERG PRODUCTION A BARBER/BIRNBAUM PRODUCTION
 BEN STILLER EDWARD NORTON JENNA ELFMAN "KEEPING THE FAITH" ELI WALLACH AND ANNE BANCROFT THE ELMER BERNSTEIN MUSIC BY MICHAEL KAPLAN
 DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY MALCOLM CAMPBELL EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS MYNN THOMAS PRODUCED BY ANASTAS MICHOUS EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS GARY BARBER ROGER BIRNBAUM JONATHAN GLICKMAN
 WRITTEN BY HAWK KOCH EDWARD NORTON AND STUART BLUMBERG DIRECTED BY STUART BLUMBERG CASTING BY EDWARD NORTON

COMING SOON TO THEATRES EVERYWHERE

1. Under federal tax law, withdrawals prior to age 59 1/2 are subject to restrictions, and may also be subject to a 10% additional tax. 2. You may be able to invest up to the IRS maximum of \$10,500 per year. To receive a personalized calculation of your maximum contribution, call TIAA-CREF at 1-800-842-2776. 3. The chart above is presented for illustrative purposes only and does not reflect actual performance or predict future results of any TIAA-CREF account, or reflect expenses, TIAA-CREF Individual and Institutional Services, Inc. distributes CREF certificates and interests in the TIAA Real Estate Account, Teachers Personal Investors Services, Inc. distributes the variable component of the personal annuities, mutual funds and tuition savings agreements. TIAA and TIAA-CREF Life Insurance Co. issue insurance and annuities. TIAA-CREF Trust Company, FSB provides trust services. Investment products are not FDIC insured, may lose value and are not bank guaranteed. For more complete information on our securities products, including charges and expenses, call 1-800-842-2776, ext. 5509, for the prospectuses. Read them carefully before you invest or send money. © 2000 TIAA-CREF 100.