



Cast members of the nationally acclaimed Underground Railway Theater perform a scene from *Home is Where*. The proceeds from their November appearance at Wooster's Freedlander Theatre benefited the Homelessness Coalition Task Force which aids area poor and displaced persons.

Underground Railway Theater troupe performance benefited disadvantaged

Wooster students concerned about the problems of poverty and homelessness in Wayne County recently demonstrated their concern with theater performances and a food drive designed to raise public awareness of several current issues.

The Wooster Volunteer Network, with The United Way's Homelessness Coalition Task Force and a number of other campus and community sponsors, arranged two performances of the nationally acclaimed Underground Railway Theater at Wooster. On Nov. 14, issues of women's sexuality and life choices were addressed in a one-woman cabaret, *Mothers and Others*, in the Luce Hall multipurpose room. On Nov. 17, *Home Is Where* explored the issues of homelessness and the many meanings of home through a combination of puppetry, music and movement at Freedlander Theatre. A soup supper at the Westminster Church House preceded the show. Proceeds from ticket sales benefited the Homelessness Coalition Task Force.

Founded in 1976 in Oberlin, the Underground Railway Theater took its

name to commemorate that city, which served as one of the last stops on the midwestern branch of the Underground Railroad. The primary goal of the group is to use the energy of the theater to explore pressing social issues. The group has performed a variety of original productions across the United States.

Chris Drake '87, intern at the Volunteer Network, and students involved in the Network's Hunger House program wanted to bring the Underground Railway Theater to Wooster after seeing the group perform last year. Drake approached Carolyn Dederer, executive director of The United Way of Wooster and a member of the Homelessness Coalition, about co-sponsoring the URT as a way to increase awareness within the community and on campus of the problems of homelessness in Wayne County.

"Affordable housing is a real problem in our community, and in order to find solutions, the public needs to be aware that the problem exists," said Dederer. "We saw an opportunity with this performance to use our collective resources to do that."

Drake agreed. "Homelessness is perceived as a big city problem, as the bum on the street. The reality is homeless families, women with children, and it occurs in rural areas also. It's good to see the campus helping the community on an issue like this."

The Women's Resource Center, another group within the Volunteer Network, arranged for the performance of *Mothers and Others* after learning that the URT was already scheduled to appear. While at Wooster, URT co-founders Wes Sanders and Debra Wise also spoke about their work in the theater to interested students at a session held by the Career Development and Planning Office. Other groups which sponsored the URT's appearances included Deré House, Dream House, Environmental Concerns for Students, Habitat for Humanity, Hunger House and Westminster Church. Additional community sponsors were Bank One, Catholic Commission, The Freedlander Foundation, First Methodist Church, Habitat for Humanity of Wayne County, The Rubbermaid Foundation and Wooster Interfaith Housing.

Fourteen different campus groups collected non-perishable food and personal hygiene items at independent collection sites throughout the week. All the donations were brought to Lowry Center, where WCWS sponsored a dance at The Underground to mark the drive's end. Students were admitted to the dance by donating a food item. The collection was distributed to several local programs aiding the poor and displaced.

Grace Pauline Ihrig 1902-1990

Grace Pauline Ihrig, 88, died on Nov. 7 at the Smithville-Western Care Center in Wooster. She had taught French literature and culture at Wooster from 1923-70 and at Auburn University in Alabama from 1970-72.

Ihrig was born in 1902 in Wooster to Allen Claude and Alta Hartel Ihrig. She was a 1919 graduate of Wooster High School and earned a bachelor of arts degree from The College of Wooster in 1923 where she was the first recipient of the Jonas O. Notestein Prize for graduating with the highest scholarly achievement for her entire college career. She received both her master's and doctoral degrees from Columbia University.

She was the author of *Heroines in French Drama of the Romantic Period: 1829-1848*. Ihrig was a member of Westminster Presbyterian Church where she had served as a deacon, elder, clerk of session and president of the Women's Association.

A memorial service in her honor was held on Nov. 14 at McGaw Chapel. Memorial contributions may be made to the Mission Budget of Westminster Presbyterian Church, 353 E. Pine St., Wooster, Ohio 44691.

Mystery stories help chemistry professor teach Navajo culture

With a color slide of a Navajo medicine man as a backdrop, a professor reads a passage from a book about Native Americans.

At first glance, this scene might not seem extraordinary. But the professor in question is a chemist. And the passage under discussion is from a best-selling mystery by Tony Hillerman. A chemist? Hillerman novels? A Navajo medicine man?

As students in one section of Wooster's First-Year Seminar can attest, the unusual combination is an effective way to deal with the questions under discussion — questions about discrimination and racism.

"This is such a complex topic that I think using the Hillerman books is a lot easier way to understand Native American culture than just reading about it in a dry college text," said Megan Hout, a first-year student from Defiance. "Also, all the things that our professor has brought to class have really helped us to understand that these are real people to whom this is happening right now."

Khalid Khan, a first-year student from Lahore, Pakistan, said that he sees parallels between the way the Navajos have been oppressed by the U.S. government and the way the British oppressed the people of India during the colonial era in that nation. "Hillerman's book *The Dark Wind* has helped me to understand how the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs followed the old British practice of divide and conquer by turning the native peoples of a region against each other until their society was all but destroyed," he said.

When Wooster's faculty adopted "Difference, Power and Discrimination: Perspectives on Race, Gender, Class and Culture" as the theme for the First-Year Seminar program, Paul Gaus, an associate professor of chemistry, chose a distinctive route by which to address these issues. He combined his scientific curiosity with his interest in Navajo culture.

"I've always been interested in and concerned about Native American issues in society," said Gaus, who specializes in inorganic chemistry. "Further, I think that scientists have developed the kind of intellectual skills that help them to inquire into and analyze societal problems such as those posed by our historical and contemporary treatment of Native Americans."

The idea of a chemist exploring issues in an entirely different discipline is not all that foreign at Wooster, says Gaus. Wooster has had a long tradition of allowing faculty members to cross departmental lines and to approach serious scholarship in non-traditional ways.

The First-Year Seminar is a primary example of this tendency. The 35 seminars are taught by professors from all dis-

ciplines. The teachers use common texts for the course but develop their own themes for the individual sections of 15 students.

As he approaches the theme for this year's seminar with his students, Gaus believes that an effective way to make them aware of how the organized power base can control the destiny of a group of people is to use the example of the systematic destruction of the Navajo Nation by agencies of the U.S. government over the last 100 years.

"The Native American got a very raw deal in this country, but we need to go beyond that in our seminar and seriously examine the many ways the ancient Native American culture has been destroyed by the policies of our government," said Gaus. "One way to understand just how much they have lost is to look at the historical cultural richness of the Navajos and compare it to their current plight."

To prepare for the seminar, Gaus spent several weeks last summer traveling through the Navajo Reservation in New Mexico where he conducted his own interviews, including one with novelist Tony Hillerman. He also photographed aspects of present-day Navajo life. Many of the locations he photographed are described in various Hillerman novels.

"My goal was to see firsthand how accurately Hillerman has portrayed the Navajo culture, both past and present," said Gaus. "Whenever I spoke with Navajos about his work, they would reply, 'If you really want to know about Navajo life, just read Hillerman. He's got it perfect.' This caused me to realize that his books would be excellent teaching vehicles.

"His novels expose my first-year students to how oppressed peoples feel without having them put off by what some would perceive as threatening pronouncements by such people as Malcolm X, for instance. With Hillerman, once you've solved the mystery, you've learned to think like a Navajo."

Once Gaus established the accuracy of the mystery stories, he decided to use them in combination with more traditional sociology texts to illustrate for Wooster students how the Navajo culture was all but eradicated. In turn, he uses these events as a metaphor for what has happened to all people who have been victims of organized oppression in this nation and others.

"I want Wooster students to understand what has happened to people of color in our society," he said. "And I want them to be angry about what our society has done to Native Americans, African Americans and other minorities. Perhaps then the cycle of oppression and cultural destruction will come to an end."

Scottish theologian visits Wooster

Elizabeth Templeton traveled with her husband and three children to Wooster from Scotland to serve as the Theologian in Residence at the College in late September.

During her visit, she taught a variety of classes and met with people from a range of area religious organizations.



Elizabeth Templeton

One highlight of her stay in Wooster was a lecture to the college community and the general public. In that speech Templeton called for a heightened awareness of ethical behavior for all individuals as citizens of global society.

"If we go for the ethics of Earth, we will, literally, manage better," she said. "There will be less chaos. Society will know roughly where it stands. We will be responsible and be better able to identify and penalize deviants from our social norms. But, we dare not identify God with these norms."

Templeton also said, "The generosity of God encompasses and sustains and surpasses our need for one another as it transforms, beyond our wildest dreams, the ecstasy of the Earth."

A native of Glasgow, Scotland, Templeton holds a master of arts degree in English literature and philosophy from Glasgow University and a bachelor of divinity in systematic theology from Edinburgh University where she received the Cunningham Fellowship as the most distinguished graduate.

She was a lecturer at New College for nine years, after which she served in special capacities with various religious groups. She has written on a variety of religion topics and is completing her second book.