

Cast Walks Together to a success

WILLIAMSBURG
The first production of the Williamsburg Grassroots Theater Project was an all-out success. "Walk Together Children" brilliantly incorporated storytelling, drama, song and humor.

Not only was the show extremely enjoyable, it taught. What "Walk Together Children" said was worth taking seriously.

The Williamsburg Grassroots Theater Project represented a collaboration among area citizens, W&M students, faculty, and artists-in-residence Robbie McCauley, Dudley Cocke and Theresa Holden.

What could have been an unwieldy undertaking was handled with creative finesse. Gathering stories from those living in Williamsburg during the Civil Rights Era was an enormous task. After the interviewing and research was completed, the information was refined into an entertaining, palatable form.

"Walk Together Children" was the result. Although the presentational mode was unlike traditional theater, it worked exceptionally well. Using the convention of a story circle, each "character" recounted events which moved him, angered him or merely fostered introspection.

There were no leads, no stars. The stories were the focus. The performers helped recapture the experiences of actual people, actual

William and Mary Theatre presents "Walk Together Children." Script by Hermine Pinson. Phi Beta Kappa Memorial Hall, April 11-13. Matinee April 14.

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happenings occurring in Williamsburg 30 or more years ago.

Hermine Pinson wrote a spectacular script around the stories. The vignette style of presentation was very effective. The dialogue rang true and the characterizations were incisive. Pinson drew the audience into 1960s, recreating pain and injustice without resorting to rhetoric.

Bruce McConachie directed. I was very taken with his staging. The simplicity he used allowed the stories to shine through without clutter.

Every scene was logical, clean and representational of the atmosphere he needed to create. I thought some of McConachie's finest work was reflected in the dichotomous church scene and in the final melee at the school board meeting. Both of these pieces were extraordinarily sharp, driving and illuminating.

The ensemble cast was fantastic. Every member was outstanding. Vivian Appler, Brian Boyd, Alicia Caleb, Kevin Cusick, Dan Figg, George Jack, Elaine Kessler, Nina Millin, Bonnie Morrison, Colleen Mylott, Tristan Poje, Tevera Stith, Sylvia Tabb-Lee, Russell Taylor and Dan White worked together as a unit, pursuing and achieving a common goal of excellence.

There were some nice musical performances delivered by cast members including "So Far Away." The five musicians, Everett Collins, Robert Frances, Kirt Moody, Michael Jones and James Patterson underscored with superlative instrumental accompaniment.

B. Christine McDowell's costuming effectively suggested the time, and Richard Palmer's exquisitely designed and painted flies, the locale.

"Walk Together Children" was the best production I have seen anywhere this season. I ardently look forward to future offerings from the Williamsburg Grassroots Theater Project.

Virginia Casette

April 12, 1997