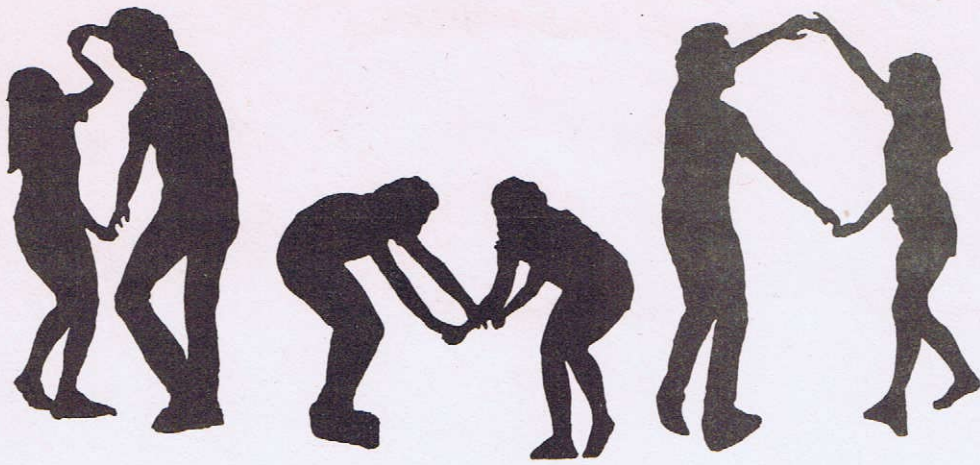


Sun Photos
By Bryan Grigsby



"Mama, Mama," Performed With Eyes Closed, Is a Two-Person Exercise in Trust

Breaking Down Barriers to Self-Expression

By LEX CLARK
UF Student Journalist

The experience was a good one for exploring both body and mind creativity. Recently at the University of Florida the Universal Movement Theatre Repertory held a one-day workshop.

The workshop was conducted by repertory director Mark Hali Amitin, who brought his Visions of a Changing Theatre from New York to the Reitz Union to urge free-wheeling expression from those participating.

Amitin got his start in radical theater in 1968, when he joined the Living Theatre as a production assistant. He advanced to manager and started traveling with the company. Mark has conducted over 150 workshops like the one held Aug. 6 in the Union ballroom.

The workshop was divided into two afternoon sessions which dealt with group participation and an evening session where Amitin talked on the history of radical theater, emphasizing the Living Theatre.

The afternoon movement started with a group of about 50 people doing physical stretching, pulling and loosening the limbs and mind.

After putting both mind and body at ease, volunteers pantomimed actions and feelings opposite to what they were really feeling.

This exercise was followed by several participants standing together in a line with an arm over the person's shoulder on either side of them. All together, taking a deep breath, each person talked, in one constant flow, of whatever came to his or her mind.

It was confusing but fun trying to keep track of one thought while others around you are talking about something completely different.

Other exercises of trust and communication without verbalization followed.

An exercise called "Mama, Mama," developed a feeling of trust between two people. Touching each other with extended hands, one person lead the other, whose eyes were closed, around the ballroom saying, "Mama Mama."

Standing on a 7 foot-high platform and "flying" into the waiting arms of people below was a good rush.

"Streets and alleys" and an exercise called "Ohm" were group participation situations. "Streets and alleys" has several rows of people lined up in front of each other with outstretched arms. Two people, one chasing the other, must run parallel to the outstretched hands.

A signal-caller starts the exercise by yelling "streets." The chaser runs after the chatee. The caller calls "alleys," and the people in rows turn 90 degrees, changing the paths from one direction to the other. The exercise continues until the chatee is caught.

"Ohm" is an exercise where everyone forms a tight circle, arms around each other, to chant "ohm, ohm, ohm" for a few minutes until silence overtakes the circle.

Swaying, teetering and holding one another up, the energy stimulated from one person to another in the circle reaches a point of togetherness where the circle becomes a unit, having one movement unique to itself.

"The purpose of the exercising sessions is to break down verbal contact, so that the body and mind can express themselves, exercising the body and not the vocal chords," Amitin said.

At the evening session, Amitin covered the history of radical theater. Explaining that radical experimental and avant-garde theater is a breakaway from the usual stage production, he said, "It absorbs the viewer, so both the actor and his audience participate in the production, chanting and directing feedback on the play."

Going into the Living Theatre, founded in 1947 by Julian Beck and Judith Malina, Amitin showed a film on some of the theater's plays and explained how the troupe has practically defined avant-garde, experimental theater style in this country.



MARK AMITIN OF UNIVERSAL MOVEMENT THEATRE REPERTORY brought "Visions of Changing Theater" Here From New York



ABSORBED PARTICIPANT LEARNED TO LET THEMSELVES GO



WORKSHOP UNLOCKED BODY AND MIND OPENING Avenues OF SELF-EXPRESSION



PARTICIPANT LEARNS IT DOESN'T TAKE WORDS TO EXPRESS HERSELF



Moving around Reitz Union ballroom with eyes closed was an exercise in trust.