

USI THEATER PRODUCTION

BRINGS OLD FRIENDS TOGETHER



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When USI Theater decided to do three American classics for the 1987-88 season, the director and his wife, Doug and Laura Hubbell, thought of an old friend from college days.

They called Robert Meadors in Detroit, where he is a consultant with Thomas Cook Travel U.S.A., and asked if he'd like to be a guest director for the local production of "The Glass Menagerie."

Meadors was very interested. It not only would mean getting back into theater, where he had spent many years of his life, but getting to spend some time in home territory. He is a native of Petersburg, Indiana, and said aside from a visit seven years ago for a class reunion, has not made it back often since he left in 1951 to go to Indiana University.

Meadors wasn't sure his employer would give him the time needed for casting and rehearsals. But the employer cooperated readily and Meadors has arrived and has rehearsals well under way for Tennessee Williams' first masterpiece that originally appeared on Broadway in 1945, starring Julie Haydon and Anthony Ross.

USI Theater will present the classic at 8 p.m. Thursday-Saturday, December 3-4-5 and 10-11-12, and 2 p.m. on Sunday, December 6. The cast of four includes USI students Tedd Klipsch, Lisa Hubbell, and Bill Hairston, and Laura Hubbell as the mother, Amanda Wingfield. Lisa is the Hubbell's' daughter, making the play to a large extent a family affair for old college buddies. Doug Hubbell again will handle scenery and backstage necessities.

The most unusual aspect of all this is the fact that Meadors has been confined to a wheelchair as a result of a viral infection 10 years ago that attacked his spinal cord. He had, from 1962 until 1980, been a civilian director for various U.S. military theater and musical programs in Baumholder, Nurnberg, Frankfurt, and Heidelberg, Germany.

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Meadors said they put together small variety shows that went on tour and also had permanent playhouses for regular productions. As a matter of fact, he noted, the USI Theater reminds him of the playhouse in Frankfurt.

In all the years dealing with talent in the military, Meadors said his only brush with "fame" was with Jim Yester of the music group, Association. He said Gary Burghoff -- perhaps better known as Radar on the long-running "M*A*S*H" television series -- was associated for some time with a group in France.

Meadors' health problems prompted his retirement in 1980, primarily because Europe was not "wheelchair friendly," he explained. He added that retirement "was wonderful for about three years, then I got bored." Extensive travel during his years in Germany made the travel business a natural attraction. He took a travel industry course and began interviewing, winding up with Thomas Cook in 1983.

Meadors said he's been back to Europe twice since then and finds it still isn't "wheelchair friendly," not like Michigan or Washington, D. C. But the airlines are extremely wheelchair friendly, he said, aiding his wandering ways.

For those familiar with the hilly terrain surrounding USI Theater at Barker and Igleheart avenues, Meadors points out that a ramp from the parking lot has made the theater wheelchair friendly also.

(Note to Editors/News Directors: Meadors has quarters at Solarbron during his stay here. He can be reached during the day for interviews, (812) 985-9010, and asks that you please let the phone ring, because he may not be able to answer quickly.)