

Below is the text of Bob Chapman's initial, and ultimately successful, email pitch to Duke to acquire the Synergic Theater archives. It originally was directed to a different place (Duke Archives) than where it wound up (the David M. Rubenstein Rare Books and Manuscripts Library), so the initial introductory paragraph along with personal contact information has been deleted.

The reason I'm writing is to suggest that Duke Archives might be an appropriate home for the records of an amazing avant-garde arts organization, Synergic Theater, born at Duke in 1974. The artistic directors of Synergy, David and Suzanne White Manning have strong Duke connections. David is an author who graduated in the late 60's and Suzanne taught modern dance at Duke. I was involved in helping them create what was originally known as Project Synergy, an astonishing performance art experience that debuted in Page Auditorium as part the USA-USSR Summer Arts Festival, which I coordinated for the 1974 USSR-USA International Track & Field Meet in Durham. David and Suzanne later were instrumental in catalyzing the nascent arts movement at Duke, leading ultimately to the relocation of the American Dance Festival from Connecticut College to Duke and to the creation of Duke's Institute for the Arts which has in turn become part of Duke Arts.

Synergic Theatre moved from Duke to San Francisco and then to New York. For the next 20 years Synergy and the Mannings were devoted to an astonishing creative evolution of a new art form, blending, sound, images, movement, dance, drama and shadows in ways that were previously unimagined and unexplored.

Here are reviews of some of their many performances:

*"...a brilliant integration of live dancers and shadowplay techniques. This breathtaking technical feat allowed visual and verbal metaphors to move pungently and effectively between the real and the imaginary, from personal experience to commentary on human behavior."*

Anna Kisselgoff, The New York Times

*"...dance, speech, stage settings and lighting effects were so blended that one art became inseparable from another. Watching the shadows was like turning the pages of an old scrapbook kept by someone's immigrant grandparents."*

Jack Anderson, The New York Times

*"Projections, movement, music, shadows and speech combined in a remarkably smooth way. A great deal of deft artistry has clearly gone into this ambitious production."*

Jennifer Dunning, The New York Times

*"... brilliantly conceived and faultlessly accomplished ... the Mannings have perhaps extended theatre itself."*

Bert Wechsler, Attitude

A good way to learn more about the Synergic Theatre would be to visit their archival website at <http://synergictheater.org/>.

I recently spoke with David Manning and he told me that he would be delighted if Duke Archives became the home of the Synergic Theater's physical archive. It is a treasure trove.

If you are interested, please contact David at xxxxxxxxxxxx.

Thanks,

Bob Chapman