

January Presentation – Puppets On Stamps

Genie Eaker, Founder of **The Patchwork Players**



Genie, pictured here at her home in South Carolina, founded **The Patchwork Players** in 1979, the **International Year of the Child**. This was very fitting since her vision was to create quality theatrical productions of classical tales for family audiences and to make them accessible by bringing them to theaters and schools throughout the South with her three touring companies.

The following several pages will provide a bit of an insight into the magical world of **The Patchwork Players!**

Genie Eaker Collects Vintage Postcards & Period Costumes



Genie designed and wore this costume for a Renaissance Festival in Florida.

By Ken Hall

Genie Eaker is a working actress who comes from a theatrical family and got her first paid acting gig (in a TV commercial for the Slinky toy) at age five. She's been in numerous productions for National Public Television – most of them shot in her native South Carolina, then uplinked and aired nationally. She also heads up a children's acting troupe called The Patchwork Playhouse.

It's fitting (no pun intended) that Eaker should have a massive collection of costumes and vintage couture. The costume collection at Columbia College in S.C., where her parents were co-chairs of the theatre department, was a constant source of fascination for her when she was a kid. "It was a wonderful chance to play dress-up," Genie recalled. "I think I drove the people there a little crazy."

Later on, Eaker studied costuming in college and when her design instructor retired, Genie was able to buy her entire collection of costumes. "It actually included the collection from her teacher before her, so it was a huge number of pieces," she said. "And many were authentic outfits from the Victorian and even Edwardian eras – not costumes, but actual clothing that people wore."

Add to that clothes Eaker has purchased online, at estate sales and auctions, in stores and at antique shows, and you've got a collection so monstrous it probably needs to be housed in a museum – or have one created for it! For now, most of the pieces are boxed and in the attic of her home and her parents' home. Some of the more rare and interesting articles of clothing she owns include:

* A Victorian era bathing costume,

She was raised in a theatrical family and is a veteran of numerous public television productions.

complete with bloomers, "an itchy wool tunic" and a cap.

* A beautiful bodice, "so tiny you'd think it was made for a five-year-old."

* A Twiggy-esque upper thigh length dress (perfect when worn with Nancy Sinatra-style "walking boots"), with a bodice made from a metallic fabric, rhinestone buttons and celluloid purse.

* Velvet jackets and black velvet opera capes (which Genie does, in fact, wear to the opera).

* "Tons of hats," many of them from Paris and made in the '20s, '30s and '40s. She also has Great Gatsby-style "cloche" hats (close-fitting and rounded off) and Victorian top hats with metal frames that are made to collapse and put under one's seat at the opera.

* Bias-cut dresses worn by movie stars during Hollywood's Golden Age, like the stunning silk velvet evening gown with halter top, or any one of a number of satin dresses, some with metal and glass beaded embroidery.

* Hundreds of beautiful accessory pieces, like nicely detailed kids' leather gloves; purses (her favorites are celluloid) and buttons ("I collect those, too!").

The pieces that are nearest and dearest to Genie's heart are the ones from the Victorian and Edwardian eras, although she said they are getting rarer and more difficult to collect. "The fabric disintegrates over time," she lamented. She lovingly stores each piece in a ventilated box, or on a plastic hanger, not metal. She steam cleans, not dry cleans, and never, ever wraps anything in plastic.

Continued on page 48

Celebrity Collector...continued

Eaker has conducted several runway fashion shows at which models wear vintage clothes from her collection. "People love it," she said, "because they get to see the clothes as they're worn, not just draped on a hanger or mannequin." Proceeds from the shows often go to funding the many



Genie looking wistful in the lead role of a Patchwork Players production of "Sleeping Beauty."

plays and other projects undertaken by The Patchwork Playhouse, which she started in 1980.

Eaker is selling a few of her vintage clothes through a friend, Edward Ejck, who owns the Victorian Ivy antiques shop in Tarpon Springs, Fla. "Young women looking for a certain retro look are my target audience," she said. "We just sold an embroidered Chinese jacket from the '60s, dark velvet burgundy with floral silk embroidery, to a young English-woman who fully intends to wear it."

Clothing is something that turns up frequently on the 10,000+ postcards Eaker has accumulated over the years. Many are older - some pre-1900 - and show people from around the world, in what were their "costumes" from the time. "These images are a history of our nationalities and cultures," she said. "How people dressed, even their jewelry, said so much about who they were."

Genie soon discovered she had an appetite for more cards to keep for herself. "They appeal to me because they were an early form of communication, before the telephone became popular," she said. "They are an early history of families who were



Genie appeared with Muhammad Ali at a radio station in Tampa for a children's charity.

often separated - fiancées writing to their soon-to-be spouses, for example, or soldiers on the front lines. They're quite personal."

Imagine Eaker's delight and shock when she acquired a collection from someone and found in the group a card from her grandfather to his then-fiancee (and Genie's grandmother)! "When my mother read that card, she just broke down and wept," Eaker said. And, as if that weren't enough, there was also one written by her grandmother, to

Continued on page 60

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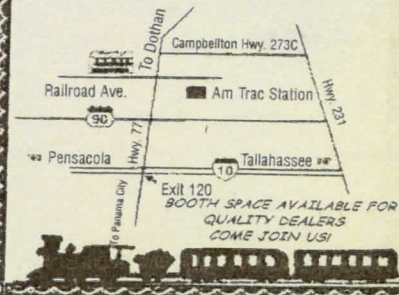
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Celebrity Collector...continued

her sisters, describing a trip she was making.

Virginia Gene Eaker was born February 19, 1958, in Columbia, S.C., where she was raised by her father, Gene (a set designer and director, after whom Genie was named) and mother, Catherine (a playwright and director). In addition to chairing the theatre department at Columbia College, both par-

ents were involved in numerous television projects, many for public television.

It's no wonder, then, that Genie has many NPT credits on her resume, including "Jennifer, Gee" (a musical about the difficulties children encounter as

they grow up; she had a lead role) and "The Emperor's New Clothes" (a holiday special in which Genie played a traveller from a distant land; ironically, she went to Turkey to get inspiration for the costumes, which she designed).

Other public TV roles included the lead in "The Snow Queen" (a Hans Christian Anderson story that still airs today, ten years after being filmed); and "A Medley of Mime" (done in the late '80s as a holiday special). Oh, did we mention? Eaker is a mime, having studied with a principal company member of Claude Kipnis, the father of American mime (and a student of Marcel Marceau).

You may visit Genie Eaker online through her website, www.patchworkplayhouse.com, or you can e-mail her at eaker@patchworkplayhouse.com.



Genie designed the costumes for this production of "Puss 'n' Boots."



1950's-era postcard features Flamenco dancers. Lady's costume is hand-stitched and raised, in 3-D.



In England, Eaker dressed as Beatrix Potter ("Peter Rabbit") for a one-woman play on the life of the author.

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Genie Eaker

It was just a few years ago when Genie Eaker discovered her strong desire to work with children.

Today, she maintains her instinct was a good one.

The 26-year-old artist-in-residence at Columbia College has had more than a few opportunities to share her creative talents with area youngsters

and others statewide since coming to work for the school four years ago.

Mrs. Eaker is

coordinator of the College's Gingerbread Theatre, which produces five children's shows each year and conducts summer creative dramatics classes for area youngsters.

"I don't consider adult theater more important or more valid than children's theater," said Mrs. Eaker, a staff member with the college's Speech and Drama Department.



Staff photos by TIM DOMINICK

It was during her study of drama at Columbia College that she had come to that conclusion. While in college she served as the resident artist in area schools and said she then had an opportunity to see the big interest children have in theater.

And since her graduation in 1980, much of her energies have remained with that age group.

"Performing for children is an art form unto itself," said Mrs. Eaker, who has a long list of productions to her credit.

But she explained her theatrical work is not intended solely for entertainment but also is designed for educational purposes.

Three years ago, she organized the Patchwork Players, a professional, touring theater group based at the college. Today she serves as managing director of the group.

The performing ensemble travels to schools and presents various productions geared to children in kindergarten through sixth grade and also



produces two shows a year for the Gingerbread Theatre.

Her shows feature well-known titles such as "Tom Sawyer" or "The Three Little Pigs," but Mrs. Eaker said each production also attempts to convey a message related to education or values.

"They (the children) really don't realize they're learning while they're watching."

Mrs. Eaker said that when performing for children, one must devote a great deal of attention to both detail and consistency.

Children offer a special appreciation that can be found among few other audiences, she added.

"It's nice to come in and be a special occasion for people, but you have to be prepared for the fact that they're going to be very honest (in rating what they see)."

In addition to the mime and creative expression classes she teaches for area youngsters, Mrs. Eaker also serves as resident artist for several classes at Columbia College.

She also has appeared in a number of adult theater productions and has been involved in a variety of educational and instructional television productions.

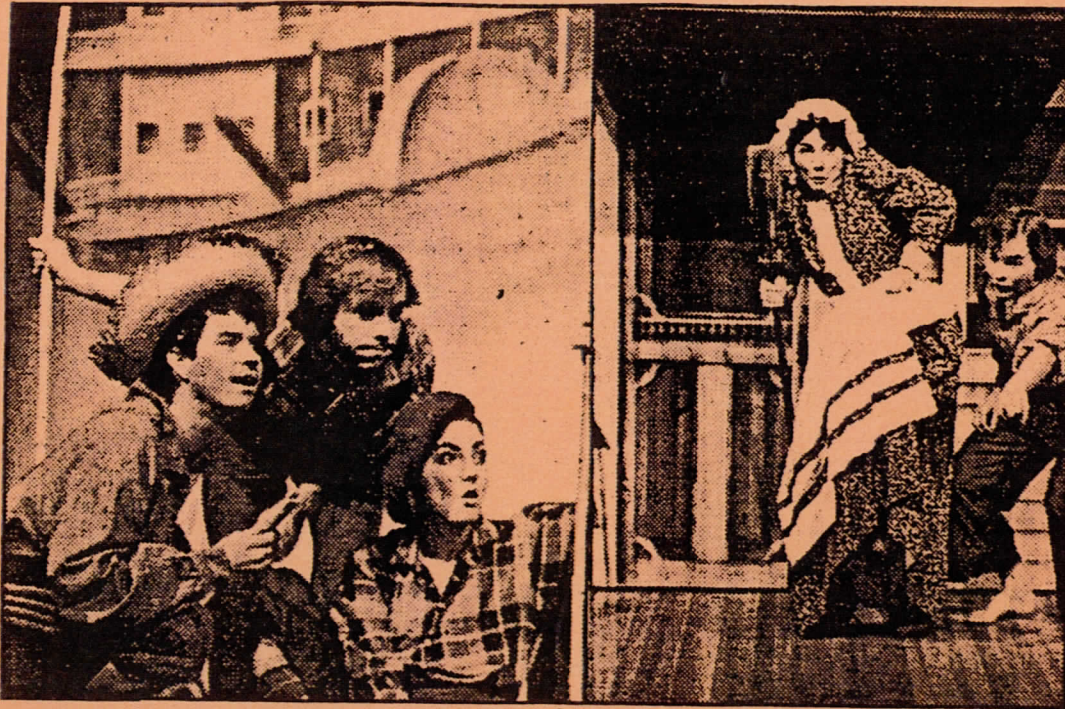
Mrs. Eaker recently developed a special curriculum for 3-, 4- and 5-year-old children designed to enhance their personal and social development, oral language and concept development, listening skills, visual perception and discrimination, and motor skills.

She said she would like to see the development of more programs aimed at children and added the public's attitude toward children's theater continues to improve.

"Everything you do for children has to be first-rate," she said.

By Bertram Rant

The Patchwork Players present an American classic with their "Tom Sawyer Sketchbook"



Part of a great entertainment package, the professional touring troupe "The Patchwork Players" will present a selection from Mark Twain's "Tom Sawyer Sketchbook" all three days at the Suncoast Travel Show.

The Patchwork Players will present "The Tom Sawyer Sketchbook" at the 25th Annual Suncoast Travel Show at the Florida Suncoast Dome February 12, 13 and 14.

An imaginative musical for family audiences based on Mark Twain's classic novel, this is a fast-paced delightful collection of sketches featuring well-known characters from the book. Tom, Aunt Polly, Huck Finn, Sid, Joe and Tom's first love, Becky Thatcher, will act, sing and dance their way into your hearts as they tell one of America's favorite stories.

**"They will act,
sing and dance
their way into
your hearts as
they tell one of
America's
favorite stories."**

The Patchwork Players is a professional theater company now in its 12th season touring throughout the southeastern and mid-Atlantic states.

Featured performances include the International Children's Festival at Wolftrap, The National Garden Festival in Gateshead, England, and ongoing family performances on public television.

For performance times, please consult the Schedule of Entertainment which appears in this program.

ONCE UPON A TIME



LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD

This classic tale is adapted as an introduction for young children to the many concepts of time. When Little Red loses track of time on her way to Grandmother Red's house, she meets the sly wolf who tries to trick her with clever disguises. The importance of time, and how to use it wisely, is stressed. This play has a happy ending as Little Red and the wolf both learn valuable lessons.

THE SNOW QUEEN

A curse turns a little boy's heart to glass and he can no longer see the happiness in the world around him. He is taken to the cold home of the Snow Queen, where he lives without feeling. A childhood playmate searches for the boy and, when she finds him, warms him with her love. Time has passed during their adventures and the boy and girl share what they learn about the things that survive through time.

THE MAGIC CLOCK OF CUCKOO

This is a light-hearted story of the time travels of Kimmy and her friend, Timmy. The magic clock sends the children on a journey back to the days of the cave man, far into space and the future, and to visit their own memories. Children in the audience use their imaginations to join Kimmy and Timmy on their time travel adventures and explore timeless fun.

THE RED SHOES

When a poor village girl wants nothing more than her own pair of red shoes she is tricked by a gypsy who wants to use the girl in her traveling show. The shoes hold a curse that make the girl unable to stop dancing. With the help of a friendly clown the girl finally escapes the curse and the gypsy. She learns that with patience and time, she can earn the red shoes of which she dreams.

ON TOUR

1992 - 93 Season



A Victorian thriller featuring a husband, Jack Manningham who may be a dangerous killer, his wife who seems on the verge of being driven insane by Manningham, and Sargeant Rough, a Scotland Yard detective who is trying to solve a 15 year old murder that took place on Angel Street in the house in which the Manninghams now live. Stolen rubies, flickering gaslights, strange sounds at night from the floor above all add to the mystery. Since its brilliant success on the London and Broadway stages, *Angel Street* has held audiences throughout the world spell-bound!

Ladies in Retirement

Edward Percy and Reginald Denham

This thrilling Victorian story tells of the disappearance of Lucy Fiske, a colorful ex-actress who lives in the isolated countryside with her companion, Ellen Creed. Ellen's sisters, two eccentric and simple minded maiden ladies, have come to visit and want to stay. It is after Miss Fiske wants to send the sisters away that she and Ellen have an argument and Miss Fiske disappears. Albert, nephew of the Creed sisters, and the family's shady character, turns up and begins to ask questions. Albert sets a trap and gets some chilling answers! Produced with great success in New York, *Ladies in Retirement* has been a favorite with audiences who enjoy psychological melodrama.



NIGHT MUST FALL

Emlyn Williams

Danny, a bell hop who comes to the Bramson Bungalow in a remote area of England, has murdered one woman and it is obvious that he is plotting the murder of the elderly Mrs. Bramson who adores him. Olivia, her niece, is fascinated by Danny and does not betray him even though she knows he is a pathological killer. A Sunday night comes, other occupants of the house leave for the day and Danny begins his preparations for murder. But Olivia comes back unexpectedly! This play was produced with great success in London and New York with Emlyn Williams in the role of Danny.

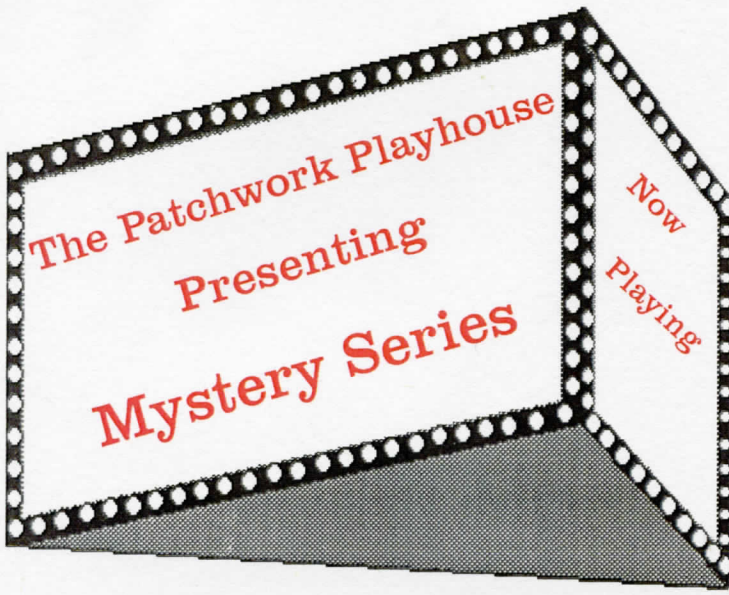
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Boatyard Village

The Patchwork Players opens its series of mystery plays in the Patchwork Playhouse at Boatyard Village in Clearwater Florida with the ever popular melodrama *Angel Street*. Brunch and dinner theatre reservations are available for interested groups.

An interesting array of shops and crafts make up the complex, including restaurants, an ice cream and sandwich shop, book store, clothing shops and a variety of others. Rustic boardwalks lead from area to area overlooking the waterway and offering a picturesque view of the various boats - including a shrimp boat on weekends!

Edward W. Ejk is manager of the the playhouse. For information call 813-934-4483 or 1-800-477-7252.



ABOUT THE PLAYERS

Dear Mrs. Williams:

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for selecting the "Patchwork Players" to represent the United States during the National Garden Festival Stars and Stripes Week. These talented artists are from my state of South Carolina. This is a great honor of which the "Patchwork Players" and our fellow citizens are very proud, and I commend you and the British American Arts Association for sponsoring this most worthy cultural exchange program..

Sincerely,
Strom Thurmond

"... a dynamic musical programme... a must for Festival visitors... The Patchwork Players in a musical play about Mark Twain's hero, Tom Sawyer.
The Daily News & Newcastle Chronicle - Journal, Ltd.
National Garden Festival
Gateshead, England

"... The International Children's Festival is now history. On Behalf of the Fairfax County Council of the Arts and the International Children's festival staff, thank you for your part in it. Your special talents brought the arts to life for thousands of children and their families; our own goal which we could not have achieved without you.

Jennifer Fiske, ICF Prod. Coordinator
Wolftrap Farm Park
Fairfax County Council of the Arts

"... It was a pleasure working with the Patchwork Players at the Opera House. The performances were excellent.

Juliette Thompson, Executive Director
Monticello Opera House
Monticello, Florida

"... The Patchwork Players is more than another acting troupe; it is a phenomenon akin to Disney's world of superb adult organization integrated with the pure splendor of imagination..."

Elizabeth Beattie
Columbia Review Magazine



The Patchwork Players

1512 Columbia College Dr., Columbia, SC 29203 1-800-477-7252

About the Players

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Sincerely,
Strom Thurmond, US Senator from South Carolina

"...a dynamic musical programme...a must for Festival visitors...The Patchwork Players in a musical play about Mark Twain's hero, Tom Sawyer."

The Daily News and Newcastle Chronicle and Journal, Ltd.
National Garden Festival
Gateshead, England

...The International Children's Festival is now history. On behalf of the Fairfax County Council of the Arts and the International Children's Festival staff, thank you for your part in it. Your special talents brought the arts to life for thousands of children and their families; our own goal which we could not have achieved without you.

Jennifer Fiske
ICF Production Coordinator
Wolftrap Farm Park
Fairfax County Council of the Arts

...We were delighted to have your participation in ...Stage South's community tour. Working with such talented performers was a distinct pleasure. Thanks for all you did to make the season a great one!

Myrna Rodriguez
Stage South Coordinator
South Carolina Arts Commission

... The Patchwork Players truly exemplified talent and professionalism. Their performances were enjoyable, exciting and captivating.

Vanessa Frasier
Marketing Director
Charles Towne Square
Charleston, South Carolina

...It was a pleasure working with the Patchwork Players at the Opera House. The performances were excellent.

Juliette Thompson
Executive Director
Monticello Opera House
Monticello, Florida

...thank you for your participation this year. Your performance was one of the highlights of the evening.

Nancy Vaegle
"Evening of the Arts"
Marriott Hotel, Shipyard Plantation
Hilton Head, South Carolina

... The Patchwork Players is more than another acting troupe; it is a phenomenon akin to Disney's world of superb adult organization integrated with the pure splendor of imagination...

Elisabeth Beattie
Columbia Review Magazine

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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 29, 1990

Ms. Jennifer Williams
Executive Director
British American Arts Association
116 Commercial Street
London E16NF
By Hand

Dear Ms. Williams:

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your good work as Executive Director of the British American Arts Association and for selecting the "Patchwork Players" to represent the United States during the National Garden Festival Stars & Stripes Week. These talented artists are from my state of South Carolina.

This is a great honor of which the "Patchwork Players" and our fellow citizens are very proud, and I commend you and the British American Arts Association for sponsoring this most worthy cultural exchange programs. We are proud of our participation in this fine program, and we thank you for such a unique opportunity.

Again, congratulations on this important event and I wish you the best of luck in all future endeavors. I trust that the "Patchwork Players" will enjoy their stay in your hospitable Nation. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of assistance.

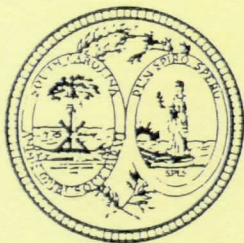
With kindest regards and best wishes,

Sincerely,



Strom Thurmond

ST/hw



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JAMES B. JOHNSON, JR.
DIRECTOR

March 29, 1991

Ms. Genie Eaker
Patchwork Players
1512 Columbia College Drive
Columbia, South Carolina 29203

Dear Genie:

You have a one-hundred-member fan club made up of children's services staff from the public libraries around the state! Your session at our workshop was helpful and inspiring, and fun. I believe that many of the librarians will take your exercises and advice seriously and work hard on making more effective use of their voices. Thank you so much for sharing your wonderful talent with us.

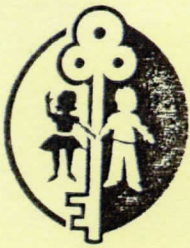
This week has been hectic and I have not followed up on my commitment to call you and your mother to make a date for lunch and a talk about future training. I shall do that next week and hope that we can get together very soon.

Columbia College is fortunate to have the Eaker family as a part of its faculty and staff. And the children of the state who participate in your theater productions are receiving pleasure, enrichment and inspiration that will stay with them all their lives. I am sure. I look forward to many more opportunities to work with you.

Sincerely yours,

Jane A. McGregor
Children's Services Consultant

JAM:da



Latchkey

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Telephone (813) 573-1060

Executive Director
Linda L. Morlock

Board President
Tamra Muir

September 9, 1991

Ms. Genie Eaker, Director
The Patchwork Players
1512 Columbia College Drive
Columbia, SC 29203

Dear Genie:

I am pleased to be able to offer my support of The Patchwork Players, and I wish to express my appreciation and thanks for your continued commitment to our Agency and the many fine performances you have given since 1988.

The Peanut Butter and Jelly Series was especially enjoyed by the children at our centers. Your commitment was particularly evidenced by the benefit performances of "Leander's Tower" and "Twas The Night Before Christmas" to promote the Agency and highlight the growing need for quality child care.

Special thanks is in order for your appearances in Tallahassee on Florida's Children's Day to promote and support children's issues before the Legislature.

Sincerely,

LATCHKEY SERVICES FOR CHILDREN, INC.

Linda L. Morlock
Executive Director

LLM:md

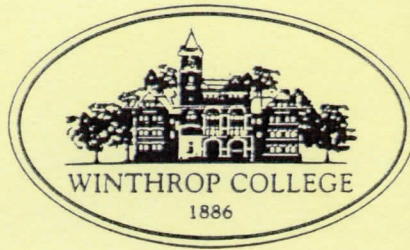
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Arts in Basic Curriculum
School of Visual and Performing Arts

January 22, 1991

Genie Eaker, Patchwork Players
Columbia College
Columbia, SC 29203

Dear Genie,

One of my greatest joys in returning to South Carolina is witnessing the dynamic impact Patchwork Players has made on arts education in the schools. As Project Coordinator for the statewide Arts in Basic Curriculum Project, I have been travelling the state talking to teachers, students and principals about quality education in the arts. How often I have heard the names Genie Eaker and Patchwork Players with much admiration!

It is a delight to know that Columbia College hosts one of the most exciting programs in drama for our young students! I have great respect for Columbia College, and am proud to know Patchwork Players remains a vital connection between the college and the community. I know through my state travels, that your work has inspired so many teachers, students and administrators. I get to SEE the results which you have inspired. It is very fulfilling to see your work build upon the visions of the ABC Project, as you work with our model sites. Please know that Patchwork Players and your consultation with our teachers and administrators have helped to design innovative avenues for communication, as well as creative programs for the classrooms.

There are many artists who support the ABC Project, which is thrilling. But there are very few who offer their support with such openness, warmth, dedication and true vision for the importance of arts education for our children. You are not only among those treasured few, but are, indeed, a leader among them. Thank you for your inspiration and leadership. Thank you, also, for a magnificent contribution during the recent Arts in Education Conference sponsored by the SC Arts Commission. Your presentation helped to bridge that crucial link between the artists and their support and sensitivity toward school needs.

My heartfelt contratulations for the vital work you and Patchwork Players are contributing to our state. As we confirm and realize quality educational reform in South Carolina, the efforts of the ABC Project are strengthened by your commitment, by your innovative curricular designs, and by your exemplary communication and dedication to our children and their teachers. I look forward to calling upon your help with the Department of Education and SC Arts Commission as we continue implementation of the arts in our K-12 school system.

With much respect and appreciation,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carol".

Carol Collins
ABC Project Coordinator
Winthrop College

Rock Hill, South Carolina 29733
(803) 323-2323



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*Tom Sawyer... Snow White and Rose Red...
The Frog Prince*

Summer Season '93

*Patchwork Players
presents*

