

Photo by David G. Fitzgerald

**N**estled among the mountains in southwestern Oklahoma near Lone Wolf lies Quartz Mountain State Lodge, popular site of water sports, fishing and camping. For two weeks every June, however, vacationers must give way to youthful students of the fine arts, participants in one of the state's best-kept secrets, the Oklahoma Summer Arts Institute.

OSAI is a function of the Oklahoma City-based Oklahoma Arts Institute Inc., a non-profit organization born in 1976, when a group of parents approached the State Arts Council of Oklahoma to investigate the possibility of providing their children with a summer arts experience akin to the handful of other fine arts camps scattered around the country.

The task fell to a 1962 University of Oklahoma alumna, Mary Frates, and a small group of arts enthusiasts who organized a three-day trial camp with 100 students in Tahlequah. The camp, offering five disciplines—mime, writing, printmaking, music



# Quartz Mountain Magic

by MARGARET FRENCH

and ballet—was so successful that a search was launched immediately for larger accommodations, with safety the prime consideration.

“We looked statewide for the place that would be safest—that we would be able to secure for the teenagers,” recalls Frates, now the executive director of the Oklahoma Arts Institute. Quartz Mountain provided not only adequate facilities but also the ideal natural environment.

“It is perfectly beautiful and fairly rustic,” says summer institute director Mary Gordon Taft. “The students are away from classrooms, away from a school and city atmosphere. They are out there with the mountains, stars, birds and water just to study art.”

In the ensuing years—next year will

mark the 10th anniversary—OSAI has thrived. The curriculum has been revamped to include eight disciplines—acting, ballet, drawing, mime, modern dance, orchestral music, photography and writing. A 200-student enrollment from ages 14 to 18 is taught by internationally prominent artists, including such luminaries as ballerinas Rosella Hightower and Maria and Marjory Tallchief, actress Jane Alexander and her husband, director Ed Sherin, ballet dancer-choreographer-actor Daniel Levans, pianist Israela Margalit and conductor Judith Somogi. *Continued*

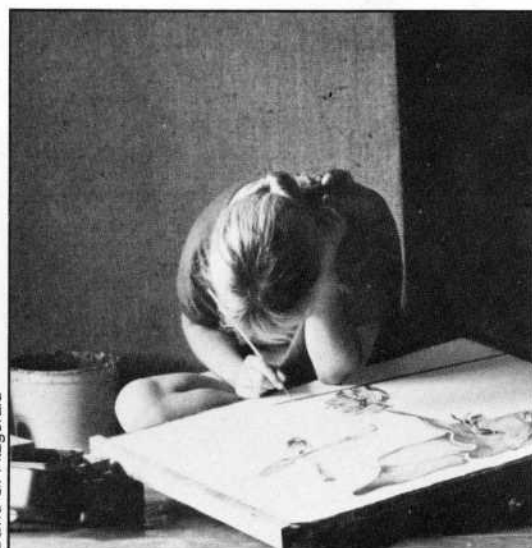


Jill Evans / Fitzgerald Associates



Holding a mini OU alumnae meeting while packing for Quartz Mountain are OAI executive director Mary Frates, left, public information director Tamara Ferguson and counselors Mary Martin and Valerie Dick.

David G. Fitzgerald



To qualify for the Oklahoma Summer Arts Institute, the young artists must attend a master class in which they must solve three drawing problems.

Several OU professors annually join the migration to Quartz Mountain. This year's OSAI faculty included Marjory Cornelius, cello; Wayne Crouse, viola; and OU orchestra conductor Legh W. Burns, who is the institute's music coordinator. In past years, OU faculty participants included Jacob Larson, trumpet; William Scharnberg, French horn; Ko Yukihiko, modern dance; James Faulconer, music theory; Yvonne Chouteau and Miguel Terekhov, ballet; and Daniel Kiacz, printmaking.

As camp director Taft notes, "OU has been a wonderful backer of the institute since the beginning."

The University is also well-represented on the Oklahoma Arts Institute's statewide governing board of artists, educators, civic leaders and arts patrons. OU Dean of Fine Arts Nat Eek is a director as are School of Drama director Greg Kunesh and School of Music director Allan Ross. Kunesh and Ross also serve on the advisory panels that select the Quartz Mountain faculty.

In addition to Frates, OU alumnae involved with OSAI include Tamara Ferguson, the institute's public information officer and financial assistant,

and her 1981 journalism classmate, counselor Valerie Dick, and 1985 art graduate, counselor Martha McFarland. Two OU students, Legh J. Burns and Mary Martin, also worked as counselors this year, while a member of the OU Department of Public Safety, Harmony Cook, was a security officer.

The University's College of Fine Arts supports a popular program through which high school seniors may apply their Quartz Mountain studies to one hour of college credit. Bonnie Hammett, OU staff member from the Oklahoma Center for Continuing Education, sets up shop at Quartz Mountain to ensure that the paperwork goes smoothly for the students.

This year, approximately 450 students from across Oklahoma and surrounding states competed for the 200 available slots. Acting, mime, both dance classes and orchestra students all must audition in Oklahoma City, Ponca City or Tulsa, while drawing students attend a master class in which they are given three drawing problems to solve. Those competing in writing and photography submit portfolios.

Taft says the uniqueness of Quartz

Mountain—offering multiple disciplines simultaneously—is perhaps its strongest selling point and contributes to the institute's overwhelming success.

"It has been interesting to listen to the faculty emphasize to their students that they really cannot give their art form the soul that is necessary if they do not understand what else is going on," Taft says.

"If they cannot understand what a mime is doing, how can they be wonderful dancers? How can a mime who does not understand the emotion taking place in a painting then create a physical painting on stage?" Taft feels a well-rounded performer stands a much better chance of touching the audience's heart. "Performers cannot create the human emotion inherent in all art forms if they do not have a broad understanding of the human condition and of the arts," she adds.

Shana Parkey, a four-year student-turned-counselor, believes an element missing from Quartz Mountain is what sets it apart. "There is no time for politics here," she observes, "and that becomes evident the very first day you walk onto the campus. There is only pure art, which is great."

Tim Long, three-year oboe student from Norman who this year won a violin chair points out, "There's no competition here. By the time we get to camp, the competition is over, and we can enjoy it."

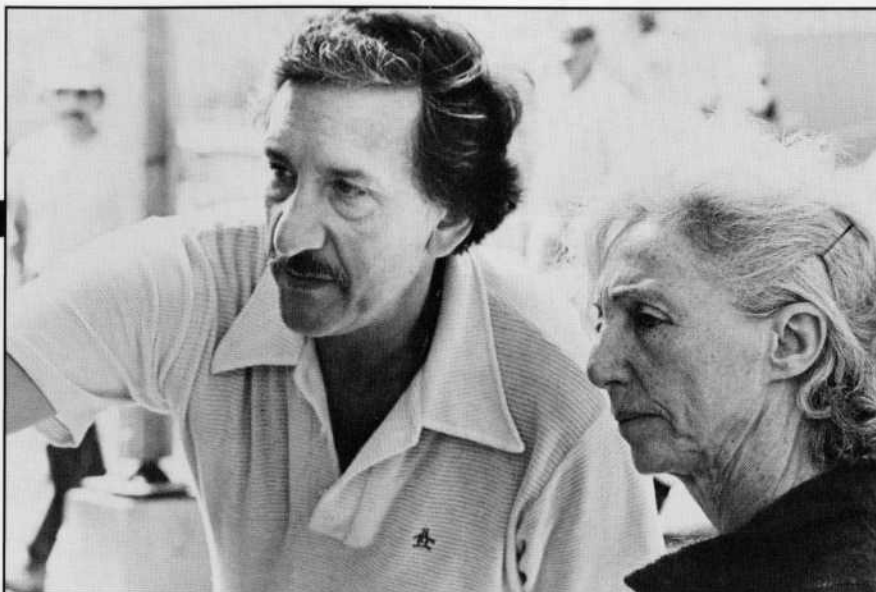
Counselor coordinator Mia McEldowney feels one of the most beneficial aspects of the camp is that the students "can take risks in their expressions of art at Quartz Mountain they would not take in their own home towns." A Seattle art gallery owner, McEldowney takes a two-week vacation to participate in the summer institute, a "revitalizing" experience she "would not miss for the world."

The week before camp begins, a moving van transports the Oklahoma Arts Institute office and its six-member staff from Oklahoma City to Quartz Mountain for the two-week period. They are joined there by nursing and security personnel, 23 counselors, each responsible for overseeing a small group of students, and 30 faculty members, including artists-in-residence. Quartz Mountain lodge employees manage food and housekeeping services.

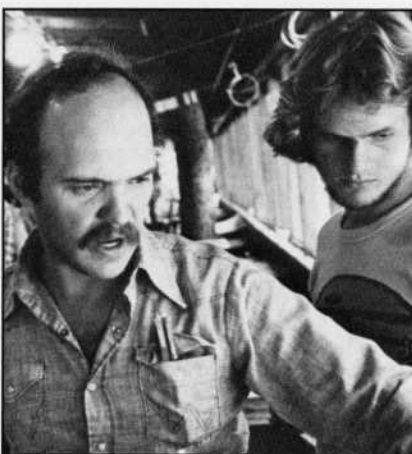
Workers begin the physical transformation of the vacation resort to an educational retreat well in advance of the first class meeting. The installation of flooring over the lodge's indoor pool creates a practice floor for ballet and modern dance, complete with panoramic mirrors to aid instruction.

When the dancers leave, the converted pool becomes a stage for rehearsals and performances of the 80-member orchestra. Bleachers constructed on three sides of the pool area accommodate the 400 to 500 guests—parents and teachers from home, local townspeople and assorted dignitaries—who come to enjoy the orchestra's four public concerts.

Outdoors, large tents shield the working actors on the tennis courts and the mime class on a patio. Dance students study in a permanent outdoor amphitheater, which provides an area for an accompanist, barre instruction, exercises and stage movements all in



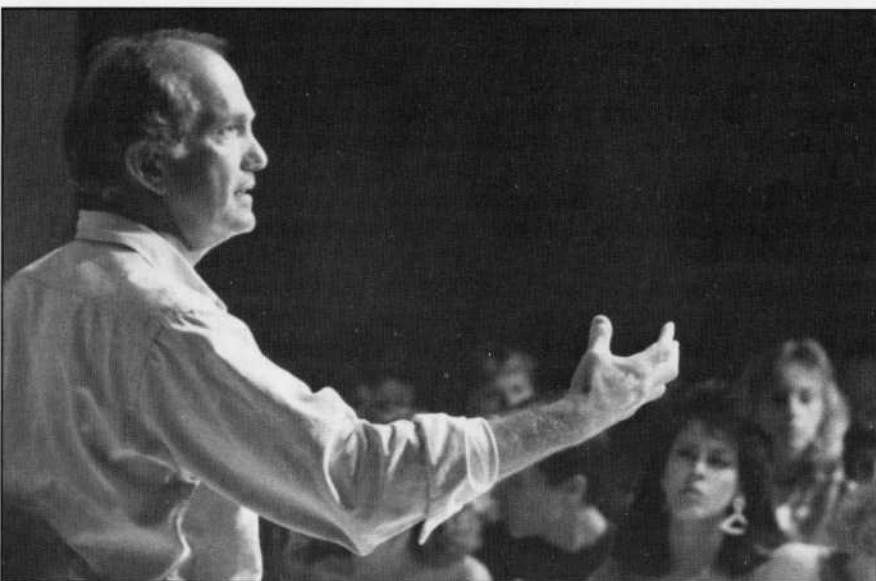
*Expert instruction at Quartz Mountain has come from such notables as OU's Miguel Terekhov, left, and Rosella Hightower, one of Oklahoma's famed Indian ballerinas.*



*Instruction in printmaking came from OU art professor Daniel Kiacz, left.*



*Actress Jane Alexander joined husband Ed Sherin on last year's arts faculty.*



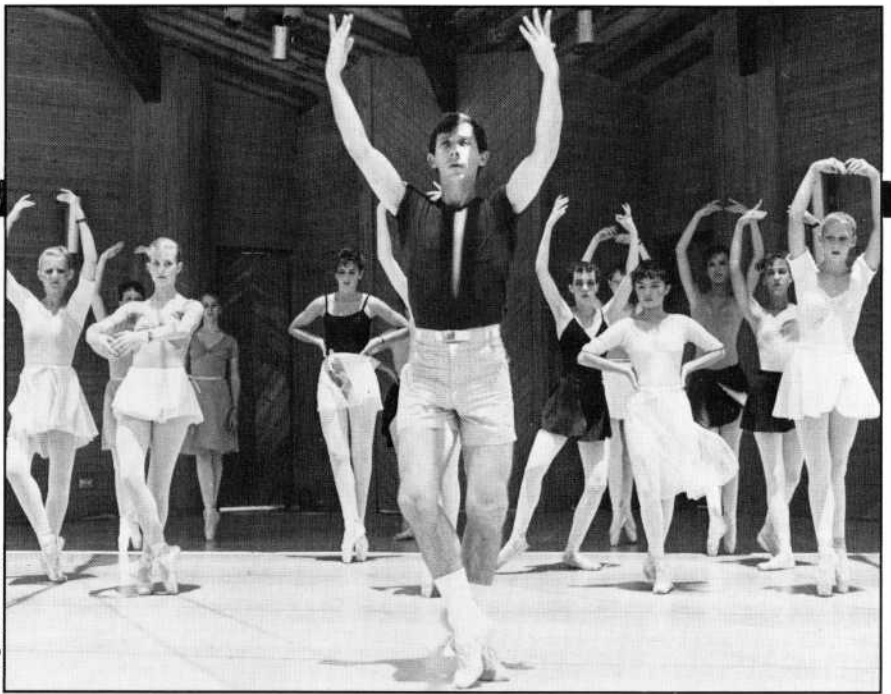
*Acting students at the summer arts institute have the opportunity to learn from one of the American stage's best directors, Broadway's award-winning Ed Sherin.*

Photos by David G. Fitzgerald



David G. Fitzgerald

*OU orchestra conductor Leigh Burns is music coordinator for the institute.*



Margaret French

*Ballet instructor at Quartz Mountain this summer was New York City stage and film director/choreographer Daniel Levans, who has created more than 30 ballets.*

one. Photography, writing and drawing classes meet in guest cabins near the park's only entrance, which is closely guarded by park rangers.

The students stay in other cabins scattered around the rambling compound, with buses ferrying them to and from classes, meals, swimming and other activities. The first night, the young artists are allowed to walk the hilly, winding road to the main lodge for dinner, a cleverly calculated move that generally eliminates late arrivals and no-shows at the scheduled bus runs for the remainder of the camp.

Quartz Mountain students follow a rigorous, intensive daily schedule during the two-week period. Breakfast is served at 7:00, often after pre-sunrise events including hiking, mountain climbing and aerobics. Class sessions run from 8:30 until the 11:30 lunch break, resuming at 1:30 until 5:30 dinner time.

In the evenings, the popular "conversation with the artist" hour draws large crowds. The optional question-and-answer session allows the featured faculty member to visit informally with students and fellow faculty. On performance nights, the campers attend an orchestra concert. On other nights they may choose from a series of electives including demonstrations, films or lectures—in another

effort to intermingle the disciplines.

The schedule for the orchestra students is perhaps the most strenuous. They must rehearse constantly, all together, in small groups and singly, in order to present four full concerts in two weeks, not unlike a professional symphony.

"It gives them an idea of what a professional orchestra is all about," says OU violist Crouse. "They put out a program with four rehearsals in four days. Coming from their junior high or high school orchestras where they spend 18 weeks working on a program, they suddenly have four days. They are sort of in shock, but we tell them that it is just real life. It is like being a horseman—you ride with the people, you get to the hurdle, and you go over it."

As soon as the conductor is chosen for each OSAI season, music coordinator Burns offers program suggestions and together they decide on the music to be performed, based on Burns' assessment of the young musicians. With this year's auditions in March, the students did not receive their music until the second week in May, reducing preparation time.

However, Burns says, they are serious about their work and will "do what they must. They have this desire, and when they arrive, they know what the commitment is." This year's premiere

concert consisted of a Faure suite, two movements from Dvorak's sixth symphony and Rimsky-Korsakov's "Russian Easter Overture."

"I learn more here in two weeks than I do in the whole school year," second-year viola student Michelle Christian notes. "The teachers and conductors treat us like adults. They give us the responsibility of learning our parts by ourselves before we get here; we are expected to be able to play it on the first run-through. This is one of a few places that we can play music like this while we are still in high school."

Oboist Long agrees. "The music is very hard; I didn't know I could play some of it. When I first came, people who had been here before kind of pulled me along, and then suddenly I learned to do it myself."

Presenting four concerts gives the orchestra students ample opportunity to demonstrate their abilities before their peers, and the thrill hits home with each completed performance. Cello student Fred Hanratt, who studies privately with Cornelius and will attend OU, testifies that the best reward comes when students in other disciplines tell him that a performance was "one of the best concerts I ever heard."

Cornelius has returned to Quartz Mountain for eight years, because, she says, "It is the finest thing that has

ever happened in the arts for the youth of this state." She considers the extra benefit gained by providing the exposure to a full range of artistic disciplines "critically important."

The students acknowledge those feelings of respect for one another's art form and admit they marvel at each other's capabilities. Fourth-year photography student Scott Hunt says that a type of love and admiration develops for his peers as his own abilities grow.

"You learn to respect them," he says, "not just for what they are and who they are but for what they have the ability to do. Every year I am in awe at what people my age and younger can do; it doesn't seem possible. I think it makes me work harder knowing that there are people out there who are better than I am. I am a much better photographer because of Quartz Mountain."

In addition to the summer program, the Oklahoma Arts Institute publishes student poetry, displays student art in permanent and traveling exhibits and produces educational and motivational films, some of which have been broadcast on the Oklahoma Educational Television Authority network. Each fall during a series of Quartz Mountain weekend workshops, the institute involves adults in a curriculum of photography, theatre, writing and visual arts.

The institute receives funding from the State Arts Council of Oklahoma, the State Department of Education, the State Department of Tourism and Recreation and the National Endowment for the Arts. Private contributions come from a growing network of corporations, foundations, civic and arts organizations and individuals.

Cost per summer student to the OSAI is \$1,300, of which each student pays only \$475 for tuition, including room, board and instructional materials. This year 81 scholarships ranging from \$50 to \$250 were awarded.

Taft insists that the institute will never turn away a student who has qualified but cannot afford the tuition. "We find some way—organizations

from the student's community, our pool of donors, foundations that give scholarship funds—somehow we find money to get the student here."

Basking in the success of nearly a decade, OSAI again is on the threshold of expansion. Plans are on the drawing board for six permanent pavilions at Quartz Mountain, hopefully to be in place by next summer, to serve as OSAI classrooms that could double as storage space and be used by other groups during the year. A large performing hall to provide a permanent home for the orchestra and darkroom facilities is scheduled for occupancy in 1988.

The dedication of OSAI planners has written many happy endings for students who now work or study in the places of their dreams. Currently five OSAI students, three of them OU-bound, are serving six-week internships with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, which has promised to make OSAI a regular stop on their recruiting tour. Two students are interning at the Parsons School of Design in New York City, and one is studying with the Boston Ballet. All are on scholarships, owing in one way or another to their OSAI connections.

"This is a place where dreams come true for many Oklahoma youth," publicist Ferguson says. "For two weeks, the arts are in full focus with everyone involved realizing they have only a short amount of time to study. With this thought in mind, participants push, push, push themselves to their highest capabilities. Creative energies abound and are extremely contagious. But with the grouping of so many wonderfully talented people working and learning together in one place, what could one expect but a phenomenal experience?"

The Oklahoma Arts Institute staff hopes to offer more workshops during the year and possibly conduct master classes by enlisting guest artists in Oklahoma for symphony appearances. They also would like to increase the number of students attending the summer camp.

"We'll be able to take a few more students with the new building," Taft says, "but we never want to grow so big that we lose the intimate quality and the ability of the faculty to work one-on-one with the students."

That closeness enjoyed by faculty and students sometimes creates a natural progression with students who desire to continue studying with a particular professor in college or privately while still in high school. Cornelius believes OSAI has proven to be an important public relations tool for OU. "Of course in the long run, each student goes where he or she wants, and each for a different reason, but it certainly always keeps OU in a favorable light, whether they opt to come to our school or not."

Burns emphasizes that the faculty does not recruit the summer students for their schools, which he believes is not always the case at other fine arts camps. OSAI nonetheless remains a valuable recruiting tool for OU. For example, Burns says, "Those students who study at Quartz Mountain with Mr. Crouse know the instruction they will have at the University of Oklahoma because they know he is there. We recruit by example, and I cannot think of a better way.

"It has paid off for OU in a thousand different ways," he continues. "Just to have OU faculty and administrators connected with an organization as wonderful as this, by association if for no other reason, OU really benefits. This is such a highly visible and extremely well-run organization."

After a summer at Quartz Mountain, the faculty return to the campus with a renewed feeling of optimism for the future of the fine arts in Oklahoma.

"Young people who excel in a situation like this are very bright, and they are capable of doing many things," Cornelius says. "You know as an educator that at this given moment, in this given situation, you are offering an artistic enrichment that is going to be a part of them for the rest of their lives." 