

JM's Diary

1933

October 10 - Excerpt from JM's Diary

University of North Carolina

JM with Professor Koch, Director of the Carolina Playmakers. Beside giving courses in drama in the college and graduate school, K and his colleague, Selden, together with Davis, an instructor in English who serves as business manager, direct the work of the Playmakers. Mrs. Davis serves as wardrobe mistress. This group, originally developed as a University dramatic society by Professor Booker, has now been incorporated, the controlling group being composed of members of the faculty, together with some outside members who are specially concerned with the group's activity, (e.g. Paul Green).

Its productions are its sole source of income at present; and in recent years, since the depression set in, they have been limited to a local series, and to short tours within the state. Previously the company went as far north as Boston, being able to command a guarantee of \$350 for each performance.

In addition to directing The Playmakers, Koch was instrumental in organizing the Carolina Dramatic Association which brings together for an annual contest in play production, play writing, etc., interested groups and individuals within the state. This work is carried on through the Bureau of Community Drama established as a part of the University extension service.

K regrets his inability to continue The Playmaker's extended tours. But since their discontinuance he has become convinced that his courses in playwriting must be combined with experimental production, and so has devoted his energies to that. Last year some 52 plays by thirty authors were given experimentally before invited audiences. As a result, K and S have been busier than ever before, much of their time being taken by routine work which could be delegated to others. A possibility of real assistance might come through the provision of funds for student assistants. Such funds could be doubly beneficial if used by Koch to employ deserving students. K believes some touring essential to the Playmakers' activity, primarily to give his students an acquaintance with audiences and their responses to dramatic situations. At the same time, tours spread his doctrine of folk drama. It seems likely however that provision for rather more touring in the vicinity of Chapel Hill would be sufficient if the group were not dependent on income from performances.

K is also concerned about his ability to continue publishing his quarterly, The Carolina Playbook, which he feels instrumental in carrying his ideas of the value of folk drama out into the schools. He is shortly to be faced with a rise in printing costs which may force its discontinuance.

Lack of provision in the University budget, and the resignation of the woman who has voluntarily served as executive seem likely to diminish the effectiveness of K's extension work this year. A young woman who manages the local book store, has agreed to serve as executive without pay; but she is able to devote only two or three evenings a week to the work. K would surely welcome assistance which would enable him to secure the services of a trained and competent person for this post, which was provided for by the University before the budget was cut.

October 8, 1953 (Continued)

K's theatre is by his own account admirably suited for his work. A grant of \$15,000 from the Carnegie Corporation provided equipment after the trustees of the University had of their own accord appropriated \$25,000 for remodelling the building.

K himself is a rare combination of vision and practical judgment. His gift for concrete and even picturesque statement has brought him much favorable attention. The first play, for example, given in his theatre was before a set representing its facade, in the pre-Civil War time when it served both as a library and a hall for student balls. The play was a light and romantic treatment of student life, which ended with the arrival of word that Sumter had been fired on.

The duration and extent of his activities may be suggested by the fact that two cabinets in his office are filled with books on the drama in which his work is treated. The attached reprint of his address before the ALA at New Orleans speaks for itself.

There seems to be no question that through lack of support K's energies are being diverted from the work he should properly do. At present the University's contribution includes only \$100 a month for office expenses (including \$15 a week for a none too competent stenographer), beyond paying K and Selden's salaries, and \$1800 of Davis's, the remaining \$700 being drawn from The Playmakers. What the Playmakers have comes from the sale of tickets and of the Playbook, which does not pay its own way. Last year, with utmost economy practiced, expenses totalled \$3161 against income of \$2937. Volunteer assistance has been drawn on as much as possible, but as K says, "The boys have to study!" Mrs. Davis gives a large part of her time to serve as wardrobe mistress without compensation beyond her husband's salary.

K spoke sympathetically of Stringfield's activities, but recognized his lack of qualifications for serious work beyond the development of student talent through organizing performances. S did not go to college and apparently lacks background to develop the work of the Institute of Folk Music by himself. Hence the appointment this year of an executive committee to control its activity.

Carolina Playmakers
1932-1933

	<u>Income</u>	<u>Expense</u>	<u>Profit or Loss**</u>
Production	\$1,812.85	\$1,703.01*	\$ 109.84
Outside attractions (Jitney Players)	148.00	112.45	35.55
<u>Carolina Playbook</u>	303.85	459.47	125.62**
29th Tour	272.00	235.97	36.03
30th Tour	203.30	180.89	22.41
Summer School Production	167.25	167.25	-
Office and Administration	-	302.20	302.20**
	<u>\$2,937.25</u>	<u>\$3,161.24</u>	<u>\$223.99**</u>

*This includes \$700 for
Davis's salary