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## Laud Players For Fine Artistry

By ROSE VAUGHN

PINE BLUFF, Ark.—Members of the Southern Association of Dramatic and Speech Arts are now recognized as leaders among the amateur actors and actresses of the nation.

This was revealed at the association's recent 11th Annual Festival, held here at A. M. and N. College and attended by residents from all sections of Arkansas and neighboring states.

"From the original play, 'Rare Cut Glasses' by Gloria Maddox, to the Dillard University Players' 'The Slave With Two Faces,' the entire festival was an inspiration to the founder, director and the public," declares John Howard of Arkansas A. M. and N. College.

Ten of the colleges that met with the 16 in the initial 1936 conference were present at the 1947 meet.

The SADS is the product of the genius of Randolph Edmonds, a pioneer in the promotion of dramatics in Negro schools. It was he who convinced directors of institutions to include dramatics in the curriculum and raise the standard

for dramatics in not only colleges but high schools as well.

Tuskegee Institute was host to the first conference. Florida A. and M. was next and at this time a premium of original plays was presented. Highlight of the meet was "Yellow Death," presented by Dillard University Players. Mr. Edmonds was author of the play.

Creative writing was the theme of the next festival held on the campus of Wiley College, with the novelist - anthropologist - critic, V. F. Calverton, as guest speaker. The organization began to function through three regional divisions at this meet.

Emphasis was placed on student participation and leadership at Tuskegee in 1939. The premiere performance of Owen Dodson's "The Amistad" was presented by drama students of Talladega. Also at this time the new Saver Library and Hale Woodruff's painting based on the incident, were dedicated. Alvin Locke, philosopher, editor, writer and critic, was main speaker.

The 1940 festival was held at Tennessee State College. Two evenings of one-act plays were presented, during which time the Tennessee State Statecrafters enacted "Death Takes A Holiday." Through the lecture of Dr. G. Oscar Russell, specialist in voice and speech at Ohio State University, keen interest in effective speech was created.

Twelve colleges participated in 1941 at Tuskegee and adopted the constitution under which the association now operates. The late Dr. Kock of the Carolina Playmakers expressed his views on creative writing.

The conference returned to Wiley College in 1942 with the Tolson's Log Cabin Theater. Dr. Thomas Poag was named president at this meet.

A News Letter, published at intervals, kept the association together during the war years and in 1946 the organization returned to Tennessee State College. Raymond Johnson, director of Nashville's Community Playhouse and writer for the Nashville Tennessean, was critic.

The festival moved into its second decade with students from 10 schools present—Fisk University, Kentucky State, Southern University, LeMoyne College, Lincoln University, Grambling College, Tennessee State College, Dillard University, Arkansas State College and Wiley College. John McLinn Ross, critic, director, technician and author was guest speaker. He delivered an address on Eugene O'Neill's "Negro Protagonists."

A rare combination of plays was presented under the direction of such leaders in dramatics as Dr. Lillian Voorhees, Fisk; Helen F. Holmes, Kentucky State; Elsie Van Ness, LeMoyne; Thomas D. Pawley, Lincoln; Floyd L. Sadle, Grambling; Dr. Thomas Poag, Tennessee State; Rodolph Edmonds, Dillard, and Leonard C. Archer, A.M. and N. College.

Graduates of schools represented in the association are engaged in various phases of the field of drama throughout the country; some are on Broadway; some are in radio work; some have organized Little Theatre groups. But they are ALL fighting for recognition as dramatists in their own right.