

Clowes Hall

celebrates 35 years at Butler

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While several hundred Butler students pass by Clowes Memorial Hall each day, probably few are aware of its remarkable past. The looming limestone and cement structure has been a part of the cozy Butler campus for 35 years. However, its extraordinary beginnings should not be forgotten.

The initial idea for the creation of this large theater came from George Henry Alexander Clowes and his son Allen Whitehill Clowes, a 1939 cum laude graduate of Harvard. According to Allen Clowes, he and his father had dreamed of a "proper hall for a symphony." Although the elder Clowes died in 1958, Allen lived to see their dream visualized and appropriately named after his father.

The construction of Clowes Hall began on Aug. 15, 1960 and continued for the next three years. The

auditorium, which cost approximately \$3.5 million at its birth, was designed with the latest technology and fashion in mind.

Associate architects, John Johansen and Evans Woollen III, paid close attention to details in order to give the structure a modern design which would satisfy all the requirements of lighting, acoustics, staging, and seating.

With a hydraulically operated orchestra pit, a 24,000 square foot lobby area, and nine-story-high stage house, Clowes was indeed at the peak of theater design.

Finally at 8 p.m. on Oct. 18, 1963, the massive hall opened its 26 front doors to welcome the crowd to its grand opening - an Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra performance featuring soloist Grant Johannesen.

In the following week, more came to test the comfort of the 2,200 plush red seats and to see such well-known performers as



Courtesy Photo

Bob Hope, Maurice Evans, and Captain Kangaroo. William Travis Selmier, an In-

dianapolis native and 1952 Butler alumnus, served as the facility's first general manager.

At 29, Selmier was "probably the youngest manager of a major theatrical or civic center in the nation," former *Collegian* reporter Karen Clark said.

Despite his age, Selmier dictated nearly everything at the new fine art center, from bookings to main-

tenance crews. His efforts provided the virgin theater with a first year loaded with a variety of performances, including an appearance of the Chicago Opera Ballet and a New York City Opera Company performance of the famous *Madame Butterfly*.

Since its spectacular opening, Clowes Hall has been a successful theater. Throughout the last 35 years, it has hosted an array of performances ranging from professional Broadway shows to Butler amateur ensembles to university convocations.

Butler pupils at the time of its creation called Clowes Hall "really great," and with expectations of popular shows such as *Rent*, and *Annie*, current students would most likely agree.