

Staff claims Baldwin houses ghosts



Roger Meissen/Index

Auditorium manager Randy Bame conducts a sound check last year in the Baldwin Hall Auditorium for a Lyceum event. Bame said he has heard many stories of ghosts and spooks in Baldwin Hall.

Emily Finnegan
for the Index

Students looking for a scare this Halloween need not venture farther than Baldwin Hall Auditorium.

Unbeknownst to many, the auditorium that plays host to Lyceum events, concerts and comedians is also the site of several ghost stories.

In his 19 years at Truman, Ron Rybkowski, professor of theater, has heard many of the stories associated with the haunting of Baldwin Auditorium and had his own experience with a ghostly resident of the room.

Rybkowski said he encountered a ghost several years ago before the theater department was relocated to Ophelia Parrish. He said the incident occurred while he was working alone on the light grid located about 65 feet above the stage in the auditorium.

"I was up there all by myself, minding my own business, and then all of a sudden right behind my right ear I heard a little girl say, 'Hi,' just plain as can be," Rybkowski said. "I turned, and there was no one there, so I quickly did my job and got out of there."

Although the ghost startled him, she seemed very nice, Rybkowski said.

Baldwin Auditorium Manager Randy Bame also had a strange experience in the auditorium.

Bame said that about two years ago he was leaving the auditorium around 2 a.m. after a night of preparation for a Lyceum event. He said he realized he had forgotten to turn the lights off in a room on the right side of the stage.

Bame said that when he went back to get something and turn out the light, he found the light already had been turned off.

"I thought it [was] fairly possible that the bulb could have picked that time to go out, so I kind of reached around for the light switch, and sure enough the light switch was down," Bame said. "I guess someone was trying to be helpful."

Bame has worked for Truman for five years and was a student at Northeast Missouri State University in the early 1980s. He said he has heard ghost stories associated with

Baldwin Hall since his days as a student.

Bame said one prevalent story involves people hearing violin music and seeing the ghost of a woman on the north side of the building.

Steve Baldwin, former Baldwin Hall custodian, had two experiences involving phantom music during the more than 10 years he worked in the building.

One incident involved a co-worker who repeatedly heard music while she was working, as if someone was practicing, Baldwin said. He went with her to look for the source of the music, but they found no one else in the building.

"It kind of shook me up because she was definitely upset, and she's a very strong-willed person, and I'd never seen her act that way before," Baldwin said.

"I turned around and there was no one there, so I quickly did my job and got out of there."

Ron Rybkowski
Professor of Theater

On a separate occasion, Baldwin said he was approached by a professor who wanted to make her classroom more soundproof. When Baldwin inquired why the soundproofing was needed, the professor told him the group practicing during her night class was so loud, her students could not hear her lecture. However, when Baldwin went to investigate the source of the music, he said he found no one else in the building.

Both Bame and Rybkowski said many of the haunted happenings took place in the auditorium's center, around the women's dressing room in the basement of the building and the old dentist's chair that was stored there.

Eight or nine years ago, the theater department acquired the dentist's chair from a local dentist for use in a production of "Little Shop of Horrors." Rybkowski said that after the production, the chair was used as a comfortable place for actors to sit while they had their makeup applied.

Bame said he recalls one story of a girl who was standing at the sinks in the dressing room, looking into the mirror, when she saw a man sitting in the chair in the reflection.

"Of course when she turned around, the chair was empty," Bame said.

Two summers ago during the Upward Bound talent show, Bame was unable to open the door to the women's dressing room, he said. He tried again the next night, and after several attempts to get the door open, it released, and the dentist chair was about four

feet inside the door, Bame said.

"I don't tell that story a lot because there are a lot of holes in it," he said. "The door could have swelled. It's possible somebody could have moved the chair. It's not what I would call completely tangible."

Rybkowski said the incident startled him. "Obviously [Bame] was creeped out because [the chair] weighs 500 pounds," Rybkowski said. "It takes several men to move that thing. It was all the way back on the other side of the room, so somehow it crossed the room and was sitting in front of the door."

The theater department removed the chair and put it into storage at the Greenwood School about a year ago, Rybkowski said.

Both men said they also have heard stories of mysterious voices coming from the dressing room. Rybkowski said he had a male student who fled the room after a voice instructed him to "Get out." Another student heard a voice say, "Won't you play with me?" he said.

One student, a track athlete, was working in the women's dressing room when he heard the door slam, Rybkowski said. When he went to see what caused the door to shut, another door that leads to the stairwell across the hall slammed closed. The student ran to the stairwell door only to see the next door at the top of the stairs swing shut.

"No matter how fast he ran, he would never find anyone when he got to the door, and the next door would slam in front of him," Rybkowski said.

Bame said he hasn't heard of any encounters with ghosts in the past two years. Although he keeps an open mind about ghosts in general, he said he tries to find practical explanations for occurrences in the auditorium because he works there.

Rybkowski said he believes the stories, and he was not shocked to find the auditorium haunted.

"Where I used to work before in California, we had a ghost that lived in the theater department," he said. "So when I found out there were ghosts here, that didn't surprise me."

Baldwin, despite his experience, said he does not believe in ghosts.

"I really don't believe in spirits," Baldwin said. "I don't know if these things are ghosts or what they are, but there is definitely something going on over in Baldwin Hall. There's something strange with that place."

HAUNTED HOUSE | Co-owners turn an old, unused warehouse into a Halloween fright for locals looking for entertainment in Moberly

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more, so now people around the college ages are coming more often," he said.

Freshman Laura Lukowski has never been to a haunted house, and she said

the Dungeon might become her first.

"I am really considering going to this one because the people I know who went said it was really scary, so I think it will definitely be worth the money," she said.

Lukowski said haunted houses

are a good way to get psyched up for Halloween.

"Blood and gore scares me a lot, but something that just jumps out scares me to death," she said. "The unexpected is definitely the scariest."

The Dungeon is not recommended for those who are pregnant, younger than 10, have respiratory or heart conditions or claustrophobia.

Patrons appearing to be intoxicated, wearing any type of temporary cast or

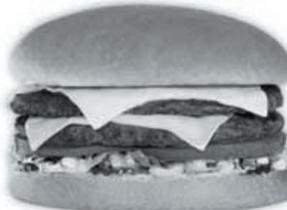
brace or using crutches also will not be admitted.

The Dungeon is open 7 p.m. to 1 a.m. Thursday to Saturday throughout October. This week it will be open from today to Monday.



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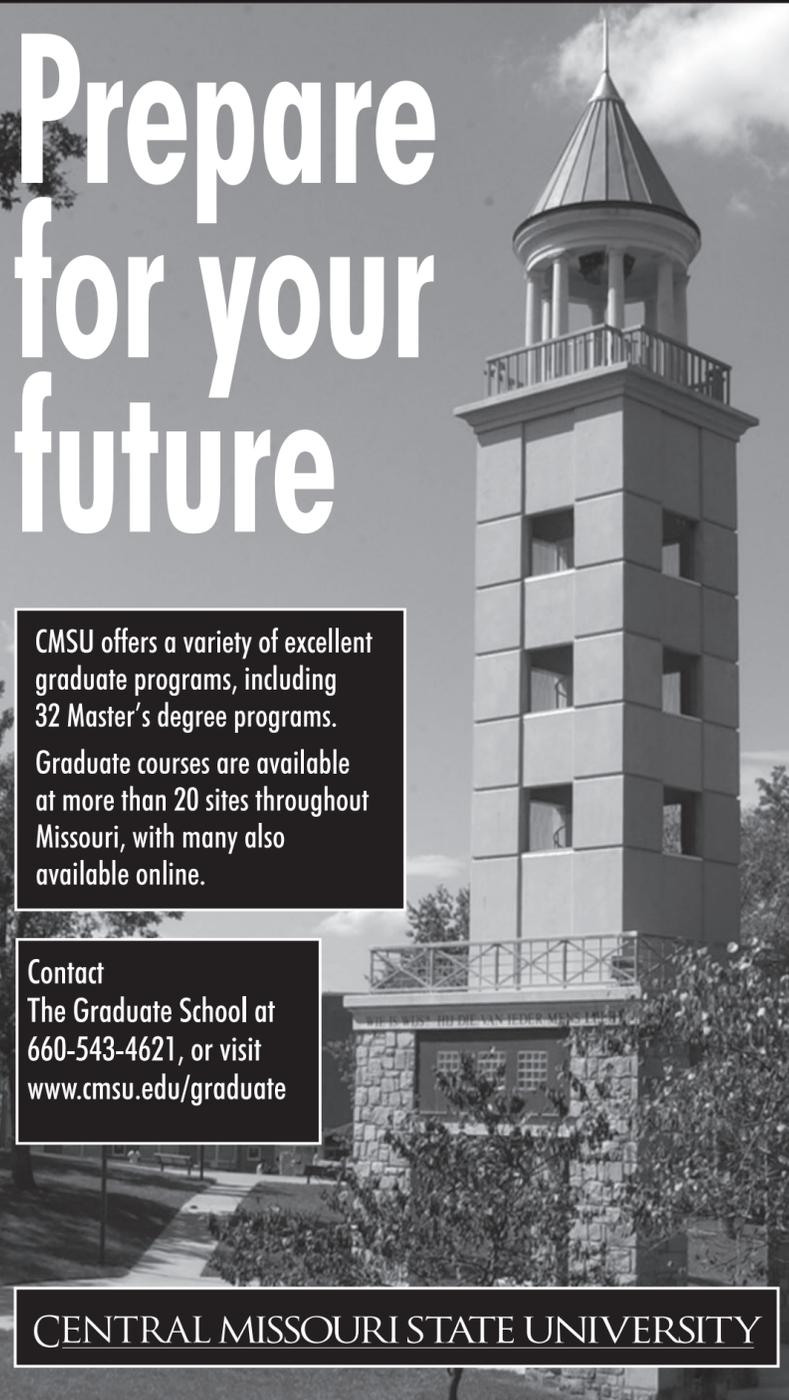
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