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## Reid Gilbert

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Moses and the Prophets, and exemplified by Christ) must be observed; there should be no large disparity in the distribution of wealth. Christians must modify economic theory or provide a new theory, though Christian economists are not agreed as to the nature of a new theory.

"Love, Justice, and U.S. Economic Life." according to Dr. Monsma, must provide the following: 1) all families must always be assured access to the basic necessities of life; 2) they must be given the opportunity to develop their God-given talents, so as to provide for themselves and for others who are in need; 3) they must be provided with the economic and political freedom necessary to exercise responsible stewardship as producers and consumers; and 4) there must be a reduction in the concentration of wealth and income, and in its resultant power. In the U.S. there is great disparity in income, concentration of wealth in the hands of a few, and concentration of unemployment among the lower classes at a high social cost. This disparity tends to perpetuate itself.

Dr. Monsma recommended several government policy changes that could help us move toward justice according to love. A negative income tax, a guaranteed income, and a comprehensive national health-insurance plan, would provide major advantages. We must educate to improve work-skills, end discrimination, and increase work opportunities. Large corporations must be

decentralized, and large mergers prevented. A more progressive income tax is needed, along with limitations on advertising and public-relations expense.

Workers should be encouraged to become involved in management; corporation boards should be required to include workers. Government should make loans available to beginning small businesses and cooperatives. Lobbying and campaign contributions must be restricted. There should be a limit as to the spread between the lowest and the top salaries.

We must be more conscious of the needs of others; we should change our attitudes toward material goods; and we ought to exercise better stewardship. Christians must also develop a better standard of living, and then share their goods with others. Christians should have the assurance that the Christian community will meet their needs as they develop. We must love God first and our neighbors as ourselves.

In summary, then, our visiting scholars provided analyses and evaluations of the American economic system, each designating weaknesses, concerns, and recommended modifications. Their insights were candid and straightforward; their suggestions were carefully considered. Their conclusions should be studied thoughtfully as we seek to improve equity and to make progress in demonstrating the love of Christ in our economic life.

Henry De Groot

## Reid Gilbert

Dr. E. Reid Gilbert, and two apprentices from his Wisconsin Mime Company, recently spent three days (January 25-27) on Dordt's campus. During his residency, Gilbert conducted workshops, gave a lecture, and presented a public performance. Between sessions, he made himself available to anyone who wanted to discuss mime, the theatre, religion—or Reid Gilbert and

his evolution as a professional actor.

Gilbert's background includes a wide variety of educational and occupational experiences. As a boy growing up in the hills of Kentucky and Tennessee, he was deeply influenced by stern Baptist preaching; self-taught, guitar-strumming, banjo-picking folk singers; country dances; and a vibrant natural environment. As a student,

Gilbert first earned an A.A. degree from Brevard College, then a B.A. (sociology) from Duke University, an S.T.M. (religious theatre) from Union Seminary, and a Ph.D. (Asian Theatre) from the University of Wisconsin. In addition to his formal education, Mr. Gilbert spent a year under the tutorship of Etienne Decroux. As an ordained minister, Gilbert was a pastor in Methodist churches in Texas, Indiana, New Jersey and Wisconsin. As an educator, he taught at Union College in Kentucky, Lambuth College in Tennessee, University of Wisconsin, and the National School of Drama in India. (He presently teaches in his own Valley Studio near Spring Green, Wisconsin.) As a professional artist, Gilbert directed thirty-five productions, acted in several PBS television series; was founder, and is executive director of the Wisconsin Mime Company; is an administrator for International Mime and Pantomimists; and is director of the first national Festival of American Mime—a festival to be held this summer in the Milwaukee Performing Arts Center.

Gilbert's diverse background was illustrated in the activities which he conducted at Dordt.

During the morning of January 25, he led a lecture/workshop on body language in public speaking and acting. He demonstrated that the body, for the speaker and the actor, is both the medium and the message. For this reason, he said, the speaker and the actor must fully control the body so it performs with eloquence and precision.

In the afternoon, Gilbert presented a lecture/workshop on Asian theatre. He described how performers in Asian theatre use very controlled, deliberate mime. He discussed the Noh and Kabuki forms of theatre; and he demonstrated how costumes, make-up, masks, props, and mime are all highly stylized in the Asian theatre tradition.

The evening session was a three-hour workshop in mask making and use of masks. Gilbert introduced the subject with a brief description of how masks have

been used throughout the history of theatre. He then explained how an actor in Asian theatre develops the essence of characterization through an identification with the mask and meaning of the mask. Gilbert demonstrated how the actor respectfully approaches the mask and places his face into it; by this act, the actor as artist submits himself to serve as an extension of the meaning of the mask. Gilbert then demonstrated how masks can be made with plaster. Participants in the workshop spent the remainder of the session making masks and exploring how they could be used.

In the morning of the following day, Mr. Gilbert conducted a workshop in stage movement for the actor.

In the afternoon, he was scheduled to deliver the lecture, "Theatre and the Christian." However, rather than present a formal speech, Dr. Gilbert simply conversed with the audience. He began by talking about his boyhood days. "In the hills of Kentucky," he said, "art was a part of everyday life. We were always encouraged to fiddle, sing, whittle, and dance." But while the natural and social environments encouraged creativity in everyone, individual members of the community responded to the same stimuli in one of two very distinct ways. People were either "church-folk" or "celebrative."

"It is not necessary," said Gilbert "to specialize in being Christian or to specialize in being celebrative. God calls us to be total human beings—serious, responsive, celebrative and joyful." Gilbert recalled that his early association with a stern religious environment discouraged his creative senses. Today, however, as both minister and actor, he feels compelled to create because he considers his art to be an extension of his ministry. "I approach the arts in a celebrative sense, seeing the joy of the arts with a good deal of serious questioning. I can do a great deal with this—even more than in the church. People in the church expect the preacher to say certain things because they've heard it before and because he gets paid for it. But the dramatist can say it in much more

graphic terms.”

Dr. Gilbert was asked whether art (and specifically—drama) should be celebrated in the church. He responded by reading a quotation:

The church cannot do without the quickening of sensibility and intelligence, which is the work of art. Art without faith is blind; faith without art is empty. But faith quickened by art is a witness to the Light of the world; and art quickened by faith is a suffusion of the world by the same Light—Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Man—the hope of the world and of man. . .

Gilbert commented,

We are always doing drama in the church, enacting/re-acting the greatest drama mankind has ever known—the death and life of Jesus Christ. Now how you want to extend that is another question. All sorts of things can happen. The arts are already in church—painting, music, art, architecture, dance. The question is simply, how much more do you want to do? Any time there is mime or movement, that is dance—the bride entering down the aisle, the minister holding wine and bread—there is dance, how much farther you go is up to you. How many new experiences do we want to create? If we are to find ourselves, to understand ourselves in the image of God, we will do that in our creative paintings, creative movements, creative sounds; then we find ourselves in the image of God who is the creator.

Gilbert explained that art in the church should not be restricted to any specific art form; nor should it be restricted to any type of art within a given form. The only distinct qualification for acceptable art in the church is the quality of the art in

relation to the quality which is available. “People say,” said Gilbert, “that as long as they’re doing it for the church, it doesn’t have to be very good. Imagine how the Jehovah of the Old Testament would react to a person who sacrifices a scrawny little lamb that would have died anyway. This does not mean that the Metropolitan Opera must perform [in church], but that we must combine the best local quality and the expressions of the people. And the choice of taste or type of art or music must come from the wellspring of the church itself.”

During the evening workshop, Gilbert introduced illusionary techniques of mime. Participants in the session quickly learned that the magic of mime activities such as walking in place, stylized walk, ice skating, bike riding, and creating an imaginary wall, are charming illusions only when they are created with the delicate finesse of a highly skilled artist. Gilbert’s supple body was always balanced and controlled as he easily demonstrated each activity. But individuals who tried to imitate his movement often found their bodies too rigid, too weak, or too clumsy to create the illusions.

During his final day of residency, Dr. Gilbert led two workshops in stage movement. He used both sessions to re-state some of his earlier instructions, to answer questions, and to help individual actors develop their techniques.

In the evening, Gilbert and one of his apprentices performed before a full house in Te Paske Theatre. The performance began with a brief, verbal introduction to mime. The remainder of the program consisted of short scenes, each one introduced by an actor holding a sign—a method made famous by Marcel Marceau, who, like Reid Gilbert, was also a student of Etienne Decroux.

Dr. Gilbert was on campus for only three days; however, during that time he demonstrated to more than seven hundred people that he is not only a superb teacher, but also an excellent performer.

Verne Meyer