

Taking Charge of Oyez Review

Joe Burton had no idea the newly offered creative writing class that he signed up for this past fall would include totally redesigning Roosevelt University's 35-year-old literary magazine, *Oyez Review*.

"Working on *Oyez Review* was an enlightening and rewarding experience," said Burton, a master of fine arts student, who is now working on his thesis in creative writing. "The class provided us all with a very thorough understanding of the production involved in the literary industry."

At the beginning of the fall 2002 semester, seven creative writing students read and evaluated hundreds of fiction, non-fiction and poetry manuscripts submitted from all over the country. They met in small groups to discuss the quality, style and appeal of each piece. Then they selected the winning works to be published in *Oyez Review*. The second half of the semester dealt with the actual production of the magazine as the students worked on the layout and the content of the publication.

"The production of the magazine was really exciting but it was challenging because we received hundreds of good submissions," said Lani Montreal, a graduate student in the Creative Writing Program.

After several months of intense production, the students completed their work on *Oyez Review* in December. Janet Wondra, an assistant English professor and coordinator of the four-year-old Creative Writing Program, taught the class and organized the effort to give the magazine a new look with more than 90 pages of high quality contemporary literature. "The students really deserve the lion's share of the credit. It takes a lot of hard work and dedication to produce a magazine of this caliber in only one semester," said Wondra, the former assistant editor of *The Georgia Review*, one of the country's most

prestigious literary magazines.

The magazine contains well known poets and authors of fiction and non-fiction from all over the country. The nine poem sequence, "The Buried Body" and "Mother's 80th Birthday" by poet Grace Marie Grafton, a distinguished poet from San Francisco, are among the poems published in this edition of *Oyez Review*. Non-fiction author and Push-

the university level. "Roosevelt's Creative Writing Program is expanding at a rapid pace," said Wondra. "And *Oyez Review* is a wonderful example of how the program is starting to take off."

Oyez Review has been a tradition at Roosevelt University since 1967, when it began as a student club and was sponsored and published by English faculty members.

Since then, it has been published once a year for the past 35 years.

This is the first time, however, that the magazine has been totally designed, edited and produced by students in the university's Creative Writing Program.

"Working on *Oyez Review* helped to raise my awareness of the professionalism that is expected when submitting manuscripts," said Roger Don Staffaroni, a master of fine arts student, who is just finishing his thesis in creative writing.

This fall's *Oyez Review* class is expected to appeal to more than just creative writing students. Journalism major Anjelica Honeycutt, who took the course in fall 2001, believes the experience can be useful for students entering the communications field.

"I have actually applied the skills I learned from working on *Oyez Review* to my position with the Torch," said Honeycutt, a senior at Roosevelt. "I believe this class can be beneficial to anyone who enjoys writing and has the motivation to take it."

Eric DeVillez, a graduate student in the program, enjoyed the class so much that he signed up to be the editor of the upcoming edition of *Oyez Review*. He has already begun working with Wondra to attract new students for the fall class and soon will begin working on reviewing content for the magazine.

Oyez Review can be purchased at the Roosevelt University Bookstore for \$4 per copy. You may also purchase a copy by contacting Joyce Vennay in the School of Liberal Studies at 312-341-2157. ▽



cart Prize winner Gary Fiocke also appears in the magazine with his non-fiction piece, "Break Stuff."

The Creative Writing Program, which began in 1998, is designed to provide writers with the tools needed to produce well-crafted poetry, fiction and non-fiction. The master of fine arts program includes several workshop-style classes where students have a chance to constructively critique each other's work.

The program took a major step forward last July when it joined The Associated Writing Programs, the professional organization for creative writing faculty and students at