



# A DRAMATIC MINISTRY

## THE ACADEMY OF ARTS

The excitement on Nicky Chavers' face is contagious as he surveys the newly renovated, 400-seat auditorium—the culmination of more than 15 years of work to create a permanent home for The Academy of Arts, the Christian drama ministry he founded in 1971.

"Some people thought we made a foolish move when we bought this building," Nicky says, referring to the old Taylors (S.C.) High School that was built in 1923 and purchased by the Academy in 1987 for \$45,000—a dollar a square foot. And even though the renovation has required more work than anyone imagined initially, the creation of a place where drama students can use their talents for God has been worth every effort.

Nicky, who earned a bachelor's degree in Bible and sacred music and a master of fine arts in music

and dramatic production from BJU, created The Academy of Arts to help Christian young people see the connection between drama, music and ministry. Its summer evangelistic drama teams have ministered in more than 1,000 fundamental churches in 27 states, reaching more than 50,000 people each year with the Gospel message in dramatic form.

But until now The Academy of Arts had only temporary homes, operating out of Nicky's home or using local church auditoriums for rehearsals. Having a central location for training and performing will allow the Academy to expand its outreach. It will continue having two-week training sessions for high school and college students who will form the drama teams that travel to churches across the country each summer presenting biblical dramas, many written by Nicky.

During the school year, Academy of Arts teams present drama seminars in Christian schools, helping the students produce their own dramatic productions—from providing scripts, costumes and lighting to helping them create advertising and manage ticket sales.

"Our motto is 'Making the Bible Come Alive,' and we try to saturate these kids with the biblical message," Nicky says. "They become the characters and learn more than they ever could by just reading or even memorizing and meditating. Through drama the Bible is being absorbed."

And because there is now a permanent home for the Academy, Nicky has established a year-round performance schedule as an outreach to the community. Academy of Arts students perform biblical drama, gaining experience while they minister to their



audiences. The Academy's year-round curriculum culminates in a two-year associate's degree, an apprenticeship type of program granting credits that are recognized by several Christian colleges, including BJU.

Nicky points to many examples of God's provision throughout the renovation: the 500 theater-style seats purchased for \$25 from an elementary school in North Carolina, the 81 stage lights bought secondhand for \$45 each when the average cost for one light is typically \$250, and the lighting control board that was donated. A 40-ton air-conditioning unit donated by BJU will help to cool the auditorium. Renovations include the completion of the auditorium, administrative offices, choir room, recording studio, dormitory rooms, restrooms and air conditioning system.

As he looks up at the original heart pine ceiling beams and

woodwork surrounding the stage area, Nicky says God has provided more than anyone expected when the project began. He marvels over the 42-foot stage area with lighting ports for professional lighting, a rotating center that makes scene changes easier, and a scene-making shop.

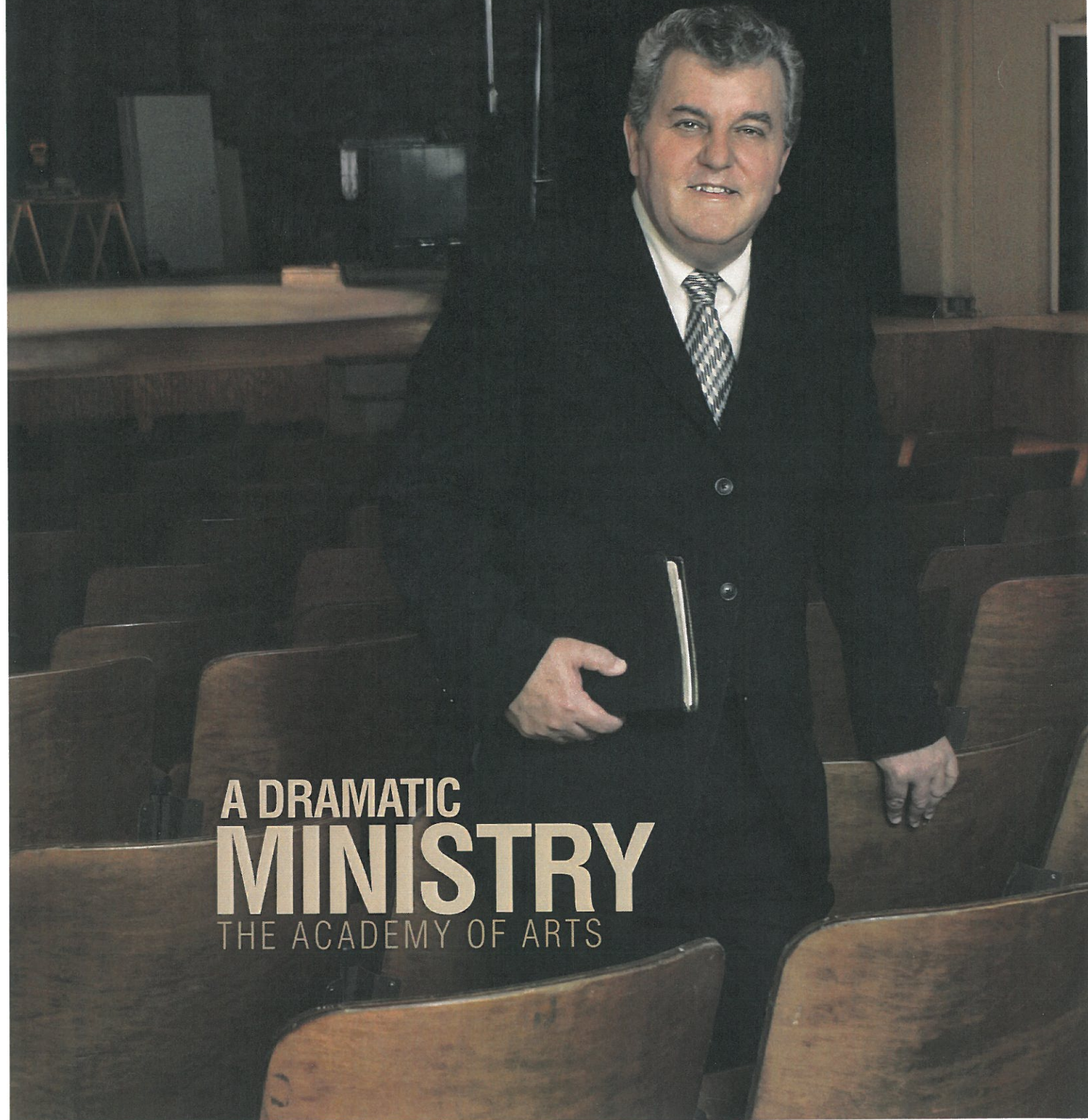
Nicky also credits his wife, Sheri, whom he describes as his "putty" because she "fills in all the cracks," and the Academy's 12 staff members, who have "unbelievable skills" and have helped defray the costs of renovation by taking on much of the work themselves.

The first play performed in the new auditorium—Nicky's original drama "God Meant It for Good"—might be an apt description of the path God has led Nicky and The Academy of Arts along for the past 30 years. ■

Learn more about the Academy of Arts at [www.theacademyofarts.org](http://www.theacademyofarts.org). For information about productions, internships or team scheduling, call 864-268-9342 or e-mail [information@theacademyofarts.org](mailto:information@theacademyofarts.org).

# *bjureview*

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