

Outstanding

Fly Them to the Moon

Most teenagers are not eager to get up on Saturday mornings unless they have to work or their parents are taking them to the Gap for a shopping spree. One group of high school students and a handful of college students are sacrificing prime sleeping time to be a part of



A Moon Prince character wears a full-headed mask.

The Moon Prince at UNC-Charlotte. The cast, comprising students from eleven Charlotte high schools, can be found dancing and singing on the stage at nine on Saturday mornings as they rehearse the show.

The City Voices program is the brainchild of James Vesce, who is an assistant professor of directing and acting at UNCC. He wanted to reach out to kids who would not normally have the opportunity to perform. Vesce produced the show with inner-city kids in Boston at the Massachusetts College of Art with success. With a grant from the Arts & Science Council and partnerships with groups such as Charlotte Fighting Back, the program and show have come to fruition.

"We're really trying to teach young people a lot of different things through this program. ...In the course of doing the production, we're teaching them a lot about structure in their life and discipline and self-esteem," Vesce says.

The Moon Prince, written by Vesce and lyricist Marlon Carey, depicts the story of a boy named David growing up with the African folktales his mother taught him as a child. "There are four animals in terms of human-size puppets that someone actually plays or portrays," says Vesce as he explains how masks are used in this rap opera. Discussions will take place after each performance. More information on page 50.

—LEK