
Introduction

Mavor Moore is a professor of theatre at York University in his native Toronto, but he is far from being a cloistered academic.

For more than forty years he has been involved with the theatre professionally, as actor, director, producer, reviewer, writer of scripts, critic and administrator. He has played the title role in *King Lear*, Shaw's *Caesar and Cleopatra*, Coulter's *Louis Riel*; directed or produced over fifty plays, including Gogol's *Government Inspector*, *Dial M for Murder*, *Laugh with Leacock*; and, for the Canadian Opera Company, *Don Giovanni*, *The Bartered Bride* and *Love for Three Oranges*. He has performed in and written numerous scripts for CBC radio and television and for the National Film Board of Canada. His published books include plays, poems, translations and musical adaptations. He has worked for the United Nations Information Division, served on the first governing board of the Stratford (Ontario) Shakespearean Festival, as general director of the St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts (Toronto) for fifteen years and as a governor of the National Theatre School for thirteen years. Since 1979 he has been chairman of the Canada Council. He has received three Peabody Awards and been appointed to the Order of Canada.

This background guarantees that what he has to say about the performing arts in Canada is worth attending to. Moreover, one's attention is held by his breezy style, which combines candor, shrewdness and provocativeness. Here, for instance, is his description of the genesis of Canadian Confederation: "A bunch of colonial politicians got drunk together one night in 1864 and decided they loved each other (with modified rapture) enough to start a new nation . . ." Though omitting important factors such as fear of Yankee expansionism,

this account has an agreeable down-to-earthiness for those who have listened to the political rhetoric attendant upon the recent "patriation" of the British North America Act of 1867 from London to Ottawa.

I would like to add a word of caution to those who might approach Canadian drama solely by reading the plays. To do so is often to run the risk of disappointment – as may be said of most contemporary drama, with a few exceptions such as the plays of Tom Stoppard. But when I have dragged skeptical Americans to the Young Vic to see Barry Broadfoot's *Ten Lost Years*, or up the back streets of Liverpool to see Théâtre Passe Muraille's *1837* on tour, or to *Billy Bishop Goes to War* at the Royal Alex in Toronto, those Americans have been very favourably impressed with the vitality of the productions. As in earlier ages, the performed play's the thing. And in London the visibility of Canadian plays may increase, since entrepreneur Ed Mirvish, who revitalized the ailing Royal Alex, is going to try to do likewise for the moribund Old Vic. Nowadays, Canadian drama may be acquiring enough momentum, at home and abroad, so that each new wave of activity need no longer be mistaken, as Mavor Moore rightly observes, for a starting-from-scratch.

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