

Hyper York grad warmly received by audience, but . . .
Maybe more laughs next time

By BONNIE MITTEN

York graduate Catherine Marrion, was positively received by the Saturday night premiere crowd in her first major role since graduating from York's Masters of Fine Arts program.

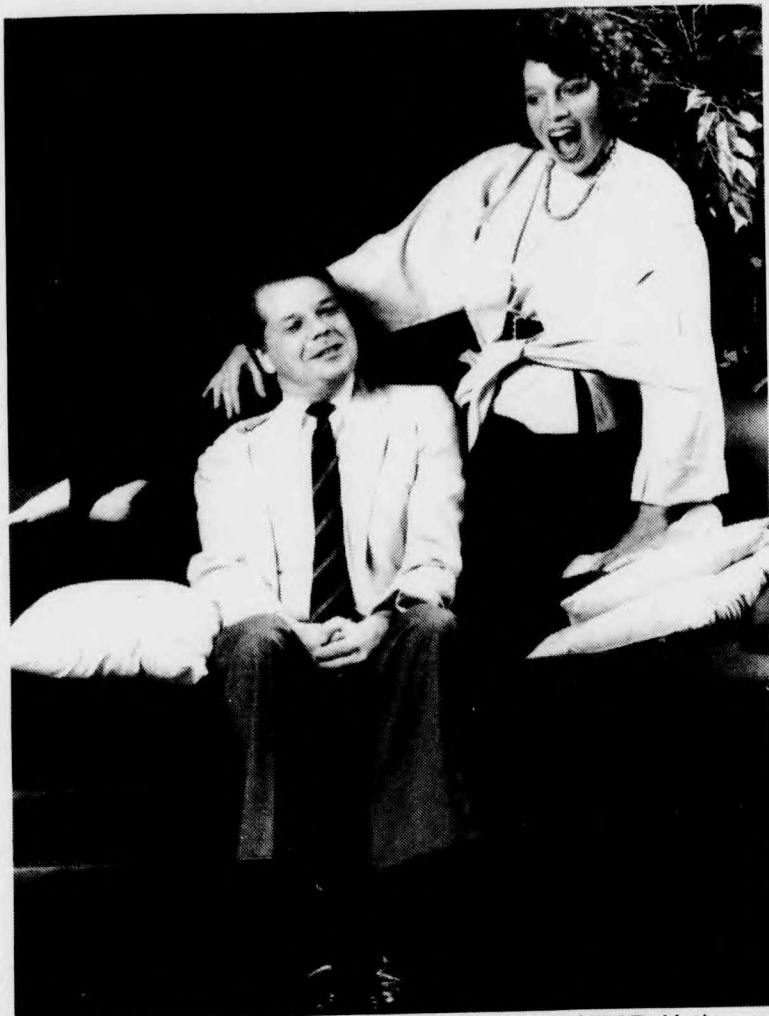
As Sydnee Post in Harry Cauley's *Next Time, For Real*, Marrion is neurotic, self-centered and insecure. She latches on to Mark Webster, a mid-western businessman and through their relation reveals many of her character's weaknesses. Unfortunately Marrion played her demanding role to an irritating extent. Possibly this was intended, or it may just have been the excitement of opening night. Nevertheless, after too much jumping around and hyperness the character of Sydnee became an annoyance.

Kevin Haxell, as Mark Webster, was very effective as the archetypal timid businessman. The familiarity of his character makes him easier to relate to than the loud Sydnee. If Webster was a gene, he'd be so recessive compared to Sydnee that his crusade to befriend her would seem incomprehensible.

It is not until much later that Webster reveals his own weaknesses after relentless badgering from Sydnee. The action never really reaches an emotional and thrashing physical climax.

The most delightful moments in the play occur during the brief encounters with Walter, played by Yo Mustafa, the transvestite neighbour and 'girlfriend' of Sydnee. In many ways Walter is like a Shakespearean fool: his presence only further accentuates the mundane hang-ups that plague Sydnee and Webster.

Walter's charm and flippant attitude provides the needed comic break in the plot's flow. It is ironic



NEVER EAT ANYTHING BIGGER THAN YOUR HEAD: York grad Catherine Marrion (open-mouthed) and Kevin Haxell (defensive).

that Walter, a transvestite, is more in touch with reality than either Sydnee or Webster.

One can't help but want something more out of these cardboard characters after the first few minutes of action. This becomes the case at the end of the play when Webster reveals, in a rather anti-climatic fashion, that he is a runaway. To

remedy this situation, and increase the effect of the characters' personalities the neurosis and shyness could be gradually increased as the plot develops.

Although *Next Time, For Real* is billed as a 'comedy with a message,' it seems as though the comic element of the play is overshadowed by its message.

Heavy-handed *Joe Beef* lectures at Harbourfront

By ADAM KARDASH

Karl Marx at Harbourfront? Well, he's there in spirit in David Fennario's latest play, *Joe Beef*, at the Brigantine Room until November 16.

In a strong performance by John Friessen, Joe Beef is an historical figure from 19th century Point Charles, Quebec, who fed 1000 workers and their families during the famous Lachine Canal strike. Bartender, layman and an exploited member of the working class, Beef is the perfect tool for Fennario's Marxist oriented play.

Fennario uses the extremely outspoken Beef in order to provide the seamy details as to how the English bourgeoisie exploited the French and Irish working class of 19th century Quebec. Indirectly, the play also tells how the rich descendants of those same people still mistreat workers today. It is this combination of history and modern political criticism that makes *Joe Beef* unique.

Within the first five minutes the

play's socialist undercurrent becomes explicit. When actress Mary Durkan rips into an upbeat tune entitled "Have another brew, there's nothing else to do," it's a strikingly satirical reference to the suppression of the working class. It is in scenes such as this that the sarcastic tone for the rest of the performance is set.

The first half of the play is entertaining and director Simaon Malbogat skillfully moves his cast of 10 actors through a production that combines cabaret and drama. But the flare of the first half disappears after the intermission, as the second half becomes a medium for Malbogat to give his interpretation of Fennario's socialist script.

Granted, the play is designed as a mini history lesson of Marxist Canada, but that does not mean that Joe Beef himself has to read aloud quotations from the *Communist Manifesto*. In the program playwright Fennario is quoted as saying, "This play is written as a statement of pur-

pose." Unfortunately in the second half of the play this "purpose" is shoved down our throats and all effectiveness is lost.

Countless times in the second act subtlety is sacrificed for hardcore Marxist-oriented satire. Malbogot should have retained the more oblique approach he had his actors employ in the first half, rather than the brash style they use in the production's latter portion. A more gentle style would have been much more effective and entertaining.

David Fennario is one of Canada's most celebrated playwrights, with *Baconville* being his major success to date. His working class background no doubt contributes to his blatant frustration with the social situation of the world and Canada. Whether plays such as *Joe Beef* will radically change people's views remains to be seen, but this production and its heavy handed means of conveying Fennario's message does little to further the playwright's cause.

CONTEST TIME



Back from an amazing holiday in Florida is our continuing "answer a simple question and win a great prize" contest. Up for grabs is one of 20 pairs of tickets to *Streets of Gold* starring Klaus Maria Brandauer. The film is showing tonight (Thursday, November 13) down at the Uptown, and to win all you have to do is tell us for what film Brandauer earned an Academy Award nomination. (You remember it, the one with Redford and Streep). Drop into *Excal* office and confess your answer to fearless leader Lorne and you'll be off to the cinema.

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