

Entertainment

"... we did mad dances..."
John Lennon

Anne-Marie de Moret

Trauma drama

Lloyd Wasser

An involvement with the world of theatre requires a number of important qualifications: enthusiasm, ingenuity, and a fair bit of talent. It is rare indeed to find someone who had acquired all three, so meeting Anne-Marie de Moret was a real privilege.

Head over heels in love with the theatre, Moret is the author of more than twelve plays, and the director of hundreds more. As a dramatist, poet, teacher, and humanitarian, she has transcended both physical and linguistic boundaries to bring her plays to audiences everywhere.

"When you have theatre in your blood, you can never deny its urging," says Moret. "No thrill can be as great as watching actors become characters who invite an audience into their lives. I observe dramatic tensions in others and in myself, and then, the team work needed to shape the magic of illusion into a stage form of reality takes place."

Early last month, Moret brought her latest production, *The Placer*, to York's Samuel Beckett Theatre,

where it played for three nights to enthusiastic audiences. Similar in style to Beckett's own works, the play attempted to tackle the problems existing today between men and women.

"I think men are so much stronger and more interesting than women," stated Moret. "In my own play, the female character tends to be easily disgusted with her life, and quite demanding."

Moret's love of theatre originated in France, where she grew up before the Second World War. It was in Paris, where she watched the stage plays and vaudeville, that Moret first tasted the stage life.

"I was raised in France, and it being very Catholic, we were not allowed to think of theatre as permissible for young ladies. The church had always been against theatre because in acting you actually take the feelings and emotions of a soul which is not yours—you are, in fact, imitating God."

Moret found ways around this taboo by performing plays allowed by the priests. They had to be

either of high literary quality or the re-enactment of saints' lives. It wasn't exactly what she'd had in mind, but it was theatre.

Later, the war brought the Nazi invasion to Paris. Moret and her family joined the underground resistance movement and it was there that she first met Albert Camus, the French existentialist writer.

"My father introduced me to Camus, who was then writing his first novel. We worked together on his newspaper, with my particular job being to thaw out the blocks of ink parachuted to us by the allies. After a while I was even allowed to write a few short poems."

Moret's real involvement with the theatre began after the war, when, as a representative of the students of France, she was asked to entertain students of the University of Paris who'd been stricken with tuberculosis. Gaining Camus' assistance for her plays, Moret would perform every Thursday for the students at the hospitals. It was during this time that she decided to leave for the United States.

"I went to the United States, to St. Louis and the Middle West. I wanted to do theatre, but my desire was frustrated because St. Louis only had Vaudeville and popular theatre of the time, and I wanted to tell these people what I'd just gone through with the war. Since I was still in correspondence with Camus, Sartre, and others, I wanted to do their theatre. I had the definition of what I wanted, but I still required the theatre."

Moret obtained Camus' and Sartre's permission to produce what she wanted of their works, and she devised the Theatre-In-Translation to present the works to the people of St. Louis. However, it didn't go over very well as the material proved too avant-garde for the playgoers in the area. At times, her audiences numbered only six or seven people.

With the advent of the Vietnam



Stuart Ross

"I can't eat or sleep until I've completed a play."

War, new interest was shown for Moret's form of drama. It allowed free expression for veterans of that bloody confrontation, and Moret discovered among her students a number of young poets who discovered they could write through the trauma of war.

"We did their material," she says, remembering the hardships. "It was one way to help them readjust. I remember one of these young men had the job of stuffing the body bags, which are exactly like garbage bags, with the pieces of his friends. When he returned to suburbia, he had one poem called 'The Body Bags', which was absolutely devastating. He would see those bags on every curb. No one could understand his reaction to the garbage bags."

Moret, with the help of her students, organized a collection of the monologues and took them to Washington as a form of protest against the war. It was one more way for her to use her love of theatre to fight a cause.

As well as writing dramatic material, Moret is also the author of several comedies.

One of these, *Turbulence*, was recently purchased by an American television station, and several of her historical plays, both in English and French, have been used on radio stations in the States and Canada. Her next work is the life story of St. Catherine Laboray, a

visionary nun of nineteenth-century France.

What is Moret's technique for writing her plays? Hard work, and a lot of patience. Once finding an idea that works, Moret allows it to sit in her mind for a while—sometimes as long as two years.

"Nothing is wasted on the playwright," she says. "One tiny detail will result in a complex portrait. Drama and tragedy must have substance, however, so a waiting period is necessary to fully develop the idea. When I'm ready to write, it just comes out. I can't eat or sleep until I've completed the play."

An adopted American, Moret has acquired a great understanding of American dramatic form, yet she tends to steer clear of it in favour of European and avant-garde styles. For this reason, her plays have been more widely received in Canada and France than in the Midwest.

"In the United States there are two things you have in every play—money and drinking. I defy you to find a single play that does not touch on these two things! In Canada, however, things are much different. The identity crisis, the Quebec issues, are much more interesting and need to be deeply explored."

Anne-Marie de Moret is an innovator, a writer with a keen sense of the complex relationships between people. Her plays reflect her life: deep, complicated, and quite dramatic. She has a compulsion to record the human condition, and it is through playwriting that this compulsion can be satisfied.

"One of my obsessions is that I've seen so much of the harshness of life, and I've come out of it. I'm a survivor, and I feel what has helped me to get over it are other people."



This ain't no disco

Terry van Luyk

The widely known East Indian dancer, Menaka Thakkar, will be performing at Burton Auditorium this evening. Thakkar, who teaches at York's Department of Dance, choreographed a dance based on the Sanskrit poem, 'Geetgovinda', written in the 12th century a.d.

The dance, lasting two hours without intermission, is a solo performance but Thakkar finds it "as relaxing as meditating." The pace is slow. Facial expressions and simple gestures are as important as the steps themselves. During the performance she will change costume five times, each time within 30 seconds. The colours of the different costumes, she says, "are to represent the change of mood of the dance."

The stage will be set up with three screens in the back, onto which images are projected. There will also be a narrator, letting the audience know what's going on. Six cloth pillars will hang from the auditorium, representing the thousands of pillars which hang from temples in India. Music, incense and flowers add to the atmosphere.

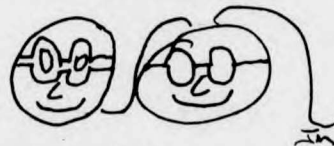
The theme of the poem is based on the growing love between Lord Krishna and his lover, Radha. It follows the phases of their relationships from the initial excitement and passion of a new love to the jealousy of Radha caused by Krishna's interest in other women, and finally to their reunion. Thakkar alone portrays all these characters and emotions.

The performance, sponsored by York's Dept. of Dance and Stong College, will begin at 8:00 and is free.

Lobster's choice

O.E., a new Canadian suspense-drama by Shawn Zevit, author of last year's "Where the Lion's Sleep", premieres at the Sam Beckett Theatre this coming week. The play was developed at the Alberta Playwright's Workshop in July 1980, in Drumheller Alberta. Directed by Zevit it includes a cast of second to fourth year theatre students. O.E. runs January 15 at 8 p.m., January 16 at 8 p.m. and 10:30 p.m. and Saturday January 17 at 8 p.m. C U there.

Senior Common Room. Starting time will be 5 p.m. unless otherwise announced. Watch



noticeboards for announcements. Jan. 13—Bill Marsh, Donna "I love Hamilton" Bartolini, Gerald Parowinckak.

Jan. 27—Michael Schiff, Ken Hollis, Nadine "Lemme outta here" Raciunas.

For more info, contact Peter Robinson, 271 Winters, or phone 961-3768 and check out his accent.

Ground Control reports that the York Poetry Series will start up again on Tues., Jan. 13 in Winter's

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