

Entertainment

Karen Connelly Gives Final Campus Reading



Connelly reads from new works at Mem Hall (Marc Landry photo)

by Andrew Sneddon

UNB writer in residence and recent winner of the Governor-General's Award Karen Connelly gave her final public reading at the Fredericton campus on Wednesday, February 9. She was introduced as a Fredericton household name, and the sizable Mem Hall audience attested to her local (at least!) celebrity status.

The bulk of Wednesday's hour-long reading was taken up by a new short story entitled "The Violinists". Connelly introduced the piece with a disclaimer of sorts — this was a new type of writing for her: a tale. Also, the story was an escapist exercise, being set in Spain partly out of disgust for Fredericton's cruel winter climate. Basically, "The Violinist" is about a young girl (not the title character) maturing sexually, experiencing the world in new, somewhat confusing ways as a result of this

change, and enjoying an innocent, idealistic state of love. The girl (being Spanish, I don't know how to spell her name — say "Yurvana") feels a connection/attraction to a young traveling street musician — the violinist — and finally meets him for a romantic encounter. Connelly has written this piece sweetly, using pleasingly transparent imagery and plot

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construction techniques. For example, the girl experiences her new longings in terms of fruit; in her first meeting with the violinist, she takes an hour to eat an apple he gives to her. Also, after a moment of self-exploration, her fin-

gers smell like the sea; after this, she wants to, and eventually does, swim naked in the ocean. She is attracted to the violinist's fingers through his music; it is not his kiss, but his fingers on her face that really bring out her new sexual adulthood. Linked to this, she expresses her feelings not through words, but through the noises she bangs out of her household piano. Finally, the lovers that she sees in the streets, and to whom she feels a new attraction and interest, seem to vibrate with the same musical aura that encompasses the violinist and herself. The audience clearly enjoyed the unrolling of the plot and imagery: I glanced around while Connelly was describing the meeting between the girl and the violinist, and people were obviously drinking up the pleasantly gentle sexual imagery and events.

The three poems that Connelly read, also new works, were not so sweet as "The Violinist", although two of them did address love. The first was a love poem, of sorts, about Connelly's mother. With a bittersweet note, Connelly matter-of-factly described a woman familiar with tragedy. In spite of this kind of life history, the poem ends on an up note with the woman speculating about the likely flourishing of her garden in the spring. The last piece was a prose poem entitled "PS or The World Devours You", and it was the only item that did not circle about love (Valentine's is in the air, I guess). This

poem had a more assertive tone than the previous works, and was characterized by a rich web of world-images (Calgary, Europe) and eating/being eaten situations.

The impression I left with was that Connelly was describing the dialectic of a struggle that she entirely expected to lose, but that it was the actual struggling that was enjoyable. It will be interesting, when Connelly returns to read sometime in the future, to find out how the struggle is going.

Arts Cabaret: Did Your Mom and Dad See Ya?

by Nathan Weinman

Do you remember in elementary school when you had talent shows and everybody's parents showed up to take pictures of their little pride and joy? Well, at the 11th Annual Arts Cabaret, hosted by the Arts Undergraduate Society, not even the parents showed up. In fact, counting the campus police and the people working the show, there might have been thirty of us in attendance. One of my friends who is in theatre said that it was a "comfortable" crowd. Nice rationalization.

The small turnout was actually a shame because the night had such great potential. The wine and candlelight setting certainly did create a friendly relaxed atmosphere. Unfortunately, the talent was (too be polite) at times somewhat lacking. Now before you stop reading or start to pick up your pens to crucify me in next week's "Blood and Thunder," let me give credit where credit is due.

The show consisted of ten acts, mostly of the musical variety, with a very long twenty minute intermission. This break was actually a blessing because the Arts Society provided a table of extremely tasty finger foods. The first act was The UNB Bicentennial Choir. I admit that I am no connoisseur when it comes to harmonizing but I must say they sounded pretty good. I also think that we get enough of that Sunday mornings. I mean mellow is good but this is too much. The next performer was Tara Martin, who sang an uninspired song written by Celine Dion (who happened to finish runnerup in the *Rolling Stone* Reader Poll category WORST female vocalist). On the otherhand there was Caroline Morrissey (the other female soloist of the evening) who sang a beautiful number from the Broadway show "Cats". This performer definitely has a chance for a professional singing career; her voice is beautiful.

There were also a couple louder acts during the evening. The first was Brownielocks and the Three Guys. These guys sounded like Pearl Jam must have (before they learned to play). I

know that in the story Goldilocks eats porridge, but in this case I was hoping she would come and eat this band's guitars. The other "alternative" sound of the evening came from a band called The Out Crowd who did play a nice version of Steppenwolf's "Magic Carpet Ride." The problem was that the instrumental section was so loud you could not hear the lyrics.

One interesting act was a duo named Doug and Ken. These two guitarists are actually fifth year forestry students. Before you laugh let me tell you they were actually quite good. Mixing guitar with harmonica, they performed a nice version of one of my favourite songs; "Sonny's Dream". Although a little rough sounding at times, these guys were quite enjoyable. (By the way Doug and Ken, the masters of this song, Cricklewood, perform at the Rogue on the 17th.)

You may sense that I am saving the best for last and this is indeed true. There were three solo guitarists during the evening who performed at a higher level, not reminding me of the forementioned talent show. The first and best was Jay Pennell. A veteran busker, this man was the consummate entertainer, sort of a John Prine/Clapton street performer. The second was Hugh Macneil who played a very nice Dylan song called "Spanish Boots of Spanish Leather." The third guitarist was Andy Diddick who combined personal stories with self-written songs that created a great working relationship with the audience. Basically what I am trying to say is that these guys were the show.

I must also mention that the M.C.'s for the evening did a decent job even if being a little long winded at times. Tony Lepage was also involved in a "Most Impressive Skit" which drew big laughs from the audience.

My advice to the Arts society would be to advertise more effectively next year. Maybe having the show during the week would draw more people. The weekend is often reserved by most of us students for not so cultured activities.

Still Life: Subject and Symbol at the UNB Art Centre

By Jethelo E. Cabillete

Art encompasses many different types of media through which an artist expresses his or her feelings, thoughts, ideas or opinions. It also encompasses a wide range of art styles, ranging from impressionism, Renaissance pieces, post-modernism and abstract art. This week, the focus is on the UNB Art Centre exhibit entitled *The Still Life: Subject and Symbol*.

Still life traditionally contained symbolic significance, but as the years passed, artists of this style shifted focus to concerns of structure, form, colour and pattern doing away with the symbolic aspect of this style. Peiraios, an ancient Greek artist, is credited with the birth of still life around third century B.C., with grand mosaics and murals depicting a cornucopia of foodstuffs in abundance in Greek society. In the sev-

enteenth century, still life grew in popularity, with a smaller scale, focus on secular objects and the addition of religious references and symbolism. In some cases, sexuality and sensuality were incorporated into the works as well. The Dutch translation, *Stilleven*, and the French one, *nature morte*, suggests the incredibly evocative theme of this style of art, namely, that all or most of the subject matter are dead or inanimate. Still life can also include variations of other art styles into this genre; abstractionism and surrealism have in some works, enhanced the dead/inanimate theme. However, the most sought after feature of this art style is the ability of the artist to skilfully create shape and form with a clinical precision and attention to detail.

The style can be broken down into three forms of still life. The *ontbijt*,

or breakfast feast, displayed a simple dining situation, while the *banketje*, or banquet piece, presented a more elaborate and richly rendered feast. The third form, the *vanitas* piece, was an evocation of wealth, power, wisdom and the follies/vanity of humanity. The three forms of still life remain in many of the pieces that one can see in the exhibition. To this day, this style of art still enjoys popularity, and achieves the same painful attention to detail, form and theme that past artists followed.

The exhibition, *The Still Life: Subject and Symbol*, is a look at the collection contained in the UNB Art Centre. The works displayed at the Art Centre range from *ontbijt* to *vanitas*, and contain aspects of abstractionism, surrealism and realism. The three works that come to mind most read-

ily to the spectator, are Fred Ross' *Still Life with Shell*, Meredith Hawes' *Untitled (Still Life with Lamp)* and Ann Hale's *Place*. Fred Ross has managed to capture a richness of colour and detail in *Still Life with Shell*. This piece is lifelike, and evocative of the *vanitas* method, symbolic of the wealth represented by the rich tapestry and of sensuality depicted by the shell centerpiece. In *Untitled (Still Life with Lamp)*, Meredith Hawes conveys a sense of loss and poignancy in a realistic style. This piece was created to commemorate the death of a good friend. As in the early *vanitas* works, the piece is rife with symbolism; from the lit lamp soon to be extinguished (symbolic of her friend's death) to the rose (which contains religious significance). Last, Ann Hale's *Place* is a colourful version of the *ontbijt* style, con-

trasting the texture of the peppers and beans with the pattern of the table cloth and background. This piece is reminiscent of the contemporary still life artist's focus on subject detail and texture, rather than symbolism. Other works in the exhibition include: Erica Rutherford's *Still Life with Red* (combining the *ontbijt* style with simple abstractionism), Henry W. Jones' *Gants de Caouchou/Scie pas de dents* (a dark themed blend of surrealism and the *vanitas* style) and Goodridge Roberts' *Still Life with Carnations* (with its suggestive expressionism and *ontbijt* style). There are many other wonderful pieces in the exhibition that remain to be seen. *The Still Life: Subject and Symbol* continues until February 27, so don't miss out on this exhibit.