

arts

Anderson makes York years work with ambitious Dancemakers

By NICOLE DESJARDINS

York Dance graduates from the seventies are a remarkably dazzling group of performers. York graduate Carol Anderson, now Co-Artistic Director of Toronto's Dancemakers, is one of the original members of the company. It all started when a number of graduates came up with the ambitious idea of creating a repertory contemporary dance company. Their language is dance and they speak it well. They proved it in a five-day run last week at the Premiere Dance Theatre.

For Anderson, attending York was a turning point in her life. She took advantage of all the facilities and guidance available. While at York she studied modern dance, ballet, history and dance criticism. Anderson also worked with guest artists and choreographers from the States.

After finishing her BFA in Dance, she left Toronto to continue her studies in London and New York. The following year she returned to the city and, taking advantage of the available government grants, she became involved with a number of other York grads in the creation of a new dance company. Thus, Dancemakers was born. While its number of dancers has fluctuated over the years, today six of Dancemakers' nine regulars are graduates from York's dance department.

Last week, Dancemakers made an impressive return for their second season at the Premiere Dance Theatre, with four works, including two world premieres.

The show opened with one of Anderson's works called *Windhover* (1983). In creating an

atmosphere of a light breeze accelerating into a gale force wind, all seven dancers were swept away in all directions at different speeds. They leaped high and were blown off balance with their legs and arms extended. Tremendous energy was exuded from each dancer. *Windhover* prepared the audience for a captivating evening.

Mansion followed, a piece choreographed by a company member (and York Dance graduate) Conrad Alexandrowicz. In this piece, Alexandrowicz used carefully chosen gestures and characters to explore the gap between the upper and lower classes in our society.

The three dancers projected their roles well. Susan McKenzie gave a gripping, communicative performance as the pauper; her pathetic and hopeless beggings to the rich couple (Patricia Fraser and Francisco Alvarez) eventually disappeared and were replaced by aggression, overcoming them as a hunter does his prey.

For the show's finale, Dancemakers presented two world premieres. *Missing Persons*, choreographed (again) by Carol Anderson, featured rapid flashes of bright light on a darkened stage. With each flash, the dancers assumed new stationary positions, while a cigarette-smoking detective in a hat and trench coat looked on. While visually interesting, the dance had a vague story line that was hard to follow.

The feelings of fear expressed by the four dancers were confusing. By the end of the piece the only apparent fact was that the two women (Carol Anderson and Danielle Belec) and the two men (Conrad Alexandrowicz and Fran-



DANCEMAKER: Carol Anderson.

cisco Alvarez) were either dead or missing persons.

Unfinished Business finished the evening. This world premiere was choreographed last spring by the renowned James Kudelka of Les Grands Ballets Canadiens in Montreal. Using atonal music by Michael J. Baker, Kudelka merely assembled a variety of frantic and precise movements. The five dancers, dressed as private school pupils, with their kilts, sweaters and green knee-high socks did not have any distinguishable characters.

The dancers, moving with great energy and determination, ended it all in a cheerful leap as the music stopped; a fittingly joyous ending to a remarkable performance.

Even Queen danced the brunle before breakfast

By ELIZABETH DUNLOP

Burton Auditorium was the stage for a performance of Renaissance Dance by the University of Waterloo Renaissance Dance troupe last Friday afternoon. The audience of Fine Arts students and faculty was treated to a sampling of ballroom dances from the period ranging from brunles to lively galliards.

During the Renaissance, these elegant and restrained dances were highly popular courtly entertainment, and it is even rumored that Queen Elizabeth herself did as many as eight dances before breakfast.

The Renaissance Dancers, four men and four women, were directed by dancer Janet Wason. Each dance was introduced by a reading from Shakespeare, and the steps were used to illustrate scenes from plays such as *Romeo*

and *Juliet*, *Henry V*, and *Love's Labor's Lost*.

The costumes were pre-16th century. The men dressed in tights and colored capes while the women sported the tightly corseted dresses of an era when comfort wasn't important.

The taped music was provided by the Wilfred Laurier Baroque and Early Music Ensemble, and chosen according to the manuals of T. Arbeau—the same books used by Wason for the dances. The music made the performance more monotonous because there was never any conflict between the movement of the dancers and the musical accompaniment.

All of the dances displayed a strange mixture of theatrical and social influences including the sexual roles of the time. The galliard was one of the more interesting pieces, involving a tongue in cheek competition between two of the men, each trying to outdo the other in their mastery of the intricate steps. The women looked on

fanning themselves daintily, admiring respectfully one dancer with a particularly impressive repertoire of steps.

The country steps, which emphasized the flirtatious side of the dances, were a little more realistic. While the women danced the men entered the stage one by one, to stand by, talk among themselves, and glance meaningfully at the women. While this was going on, other activities began in the ballroom. The dance entitled "Les Bouffons" (which, incidentally doesn't mean The Buffoons) involved an energetic display of mock swordfighting, complete with dummy swords.

Despite the repetitious, and occasionally tedious aspects of some of the more genteel dances, this performance of The Renaissance Dancers was an enjoyable, if slightly restrained look at the dances of the 16th century.

Shields confesses to odd sort of naturalism

By KEVIN CONNOLLY

"I have to confess, I'm here in a rather fraudulent position," began Carol Shields, before her reading this Tuesday at Winter's College.

Shields, the Winnipeg poet-novelist went on to read from work which strayed from her primarily naturalistic novels and short stories, works which her editor calls "her little wierdies."

Winner of the Canadian Writer's award for fiction in 1976, for her novel *Happenstance*, Shields is the author of three other novels, two books of poetry, numerous short stories and a critical study of the pioneering pre-Confederation writer Susannah Moodie.

Speaking to an attentive audience of about 30 students and faculty members, she read from three of the 22 short stories she has written in the last year.

"I got halfway through a novel and left it," says Shields, who felt that the novel form, with its concentration on a particular set of characters and events, was not the medium she wanted for her most recent literary interest, "the exploration of different narrative approaches."

Shields read enthusiastically, her clear, expressive voice lulling the audience into the static tone of *Invitation*, her first short story of the afternoon. At first, the story seemed to contradict her earlier assertions, since it is a largely naturalistic mood piece about a lonely displaced woman who receives a series of invitations in the mail. As these invitations pile up and we realize they are all invitations to functions occurring on the same night, the realism



POET AND MUSE: Carol Shields.

of the story slips away and we are left with an allegorical story that sounds very much like a modernized fairy tale. In the end, the protagonist is so confused by the prospect of making a decision she opts for a quiet evening at home.

Though her conclusion is somewhat predictable, we experience her private actions as somewhat of an epiphany; the perspective shifting from the protagonist's perspective to a more omniscient discussion of passing strangers' reactions to her solitary figure in the window above the street.

Shields' second story, *Mrs. Turner Cutting the Lawn*, didn't fare as well. Its hyper-extended narrative is just too distracting to sustain the listener's interest.

An initially satirical story about suburbia expands into a rather complicated series of character studies, and ends somewhat inexplicably with Mrs. Turner's appearance in a piece of poetry, written by a professor she meets on a tourist trip to Japan.

Although the story's loose ends are tied up conceptually, the proliferation of characters and locations leaves us with all the signs of a short story that should be a novel. As it stands, the story enjoys only limited success.

Shields' last offering, *Purple Blooms*, was the best of the three pieces. It is a tight allegory about a woman who presents all her loved ones with a book of poetry, all the time knowing that they are unlikely to read it.

The conclusion of the story is a dreamlike encounter in which the heroine accompanies a crowd of people, all of them trying to get their copy of *Purple Blooms* autographed by the author. While the woman's mother, father and assorted neighbors miraculously spout philosophical truisms from the book, the heroine, reading from a new found, untitled volume, realizes the diversity and random perceptions of the human beings she was trying to mould. Like the other two stories, *Purple Blooms* finishes with a tight poetic image.

Though all of the pieces she presented had an overtly presented "moral" to the story, Shields always avoids being preachy or trite. Shields also talks of her recent writing with an appealing optimism: "I feel ecstatic—about a foot off the ground—and I feel comfortable being there." Judging from what we saw at Winters on Thursday, her optimism is justified.

All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called Huckleberry Finn.

—Ernest Hemingway

ArtStuff ON CAMPUS

Continuing

- An exhibition of screenprints by artist Gerd Winner is at the Art Gallery of York University, N145 Ross, until Nov. 9. HOURS M-F 10-4. 667-3427. Reviewed this week.
- Graduate student Jeff Nolte has his photographs on exhibit to Nov. 1. Calumet Student Lounge, Calumet College.
- Christopher Durang's *Actor's Nightmare* and *Identity Crisis* continues tonight and tomorrow night at 8 p.m. at the Samuel Beckett Theatre, Stong College. \$2.
- Winters Gallery presents *Safetalk*, a multimedia installation by J.P. Arcuethy through to October 27. 123 Winters College. Hours: Tues.-Sat. 12-4.

OCTOBER 18

- *Love & Work Enough*, a music and mime celebration of Ontario's pioneer women. McLaughlin College, Junior Common Room, 3:00 p.m. \$5, all proceeds benefit the Nellie Langford Rowell Library.

OCTOBER 24

- Samuel Beckett Theatre presents *At Home* by Michael Weller and *Present Tense* by Joseph McNamara until Saturday. Stong College at 8 p.m. \$2.

- Fine Arts and the Dance Department present the first of four Dance Labs this year with works by Sylvia Glasser, director of a multi-racial South African company, and Davida Monk, of Le Groupe de la Place Royale. Burton Auditorium. Free admission.

PREVIEW

- Theatre Glendon opens its new season October 24 with David Mamet's *Sexual Perversity in Chicago*, a comedy that addresses the callousness and hostility that has become a part of male/female relationships in the 20th century. It is described by Stephen Divine, the theatre's technical director, as an enjoyable look at people we know; people we have all met before.

Chosen for its audience appeal, the new production aims to attract new patrons for Theatre Glendon with its realistic, if slightly satirical treatment of the singles bar mentality.

The light-hearted, unsophisticated play runs October 24-27. Tickets are \$3, available at the door. All performances will start at 8:30 p.m., with the exception of the October 25 and 26 "pay-what-you-can" matinees at 1:15 p.m. For information, call Theatre Glendon, 487-6250.

—Elizabeth Dunlop

OFF CAMPUS

Continuing

- *Responding to Photography*, an exhibition of selected works from private Toronto collections. Art Gallery of Ontario. Through to Dec. 2. 977-0414.
- *The Dressing Gown*, written and directed by Sky Gilbert, at the Buddies in Bad Times Theatre, 666 King St. W. Through Oct. 21. Tickets \$6.25, \$8.25. Showtimes: W-S 8:30 p.m., Sun. 2:30 p.m. 927-8998.
- Sharon Pollock's *Doc* plays until Nov. 4. Toronto Free Theatre. 26 Berkeley St. \$6-\$12. 368-2858.
- David French's *Salt-Water Moon* plays until Nov. 4 at Tarragon Theatre, 30 Bridgman Ave. \$6-\$12. 531-1827.