

# entertainment

## Tremblay's newest: flawed farewell

By Catherine Clemens

*St. Carmen of the Main*, now playing at the Tarragon theatre, is part of a farewell trilogy written by Canada's foremost playwright, Michel Tremblay.

The play is the culmination of a ten year period and touches on all of Tremblay's characters, his favorite of which is indisputably Carmen. Carmen is the daughter in *Forever Yours, Marie-Lou* (1971) and represents to Tremblay "...the first of my characters to break out of the poor, ignorant environment in which everyone else is stuck."

In *St. Carmen of the Main*, Carmen (a country and western singer) leaves Nashville and returns home to the Montreal Main. She is now prepared to sing in the language of the French prostitutes and transvestites that comprise her following instead of wailing about some irrelevant cowboy on the range.

The rhinestone-studded cowgirl concludes that she is there to put forth a social message. Carmen wants to shake the people out of their complacency by telling them they have the strength to change their lives. After Carmen's performance, the wide-eyed masses wander through the audience in ecstasy telling each other that "...Carmen says deep down inside I am strong" and for the first time they want to change. Carmen has given them respect, dignity and hope.

For the people who make their money off the street-people's weaknesses like Maurice, (the owner

of the club where Carmen works), the "scum" must stay unlightened. Carmen becomes the dangerous catalyst that must be eliminated.

Carmen's replacement is Gloria, the Spanish singer and the old Queen of the strip. The high point of Gloria's career was when she floated down from the rafters on a vine covered swing wearing a basket of fruit on her head and singing some best forgotten Spanish aria. Gloria symbolizes all the foreign culture that Quebec imports, being too insecure of their own artists and language. The image of Gloria, swinging back and forth while a chorus of prostitutes beat lifelessly on percussive instruments, metaphorically illustrates what happens when a foreign culture and language is shoved upon a group of people. The effect is nullity.

The importance and power of Tremblay's message in *St. Carmen of the Main* overshadows one outstanding flaw: the character of Carmen is flat. The fault does not rest with Tremblay or actress Brenda Donahue who plays Carmen, but with the translator, John Van Burek. Tremblay has a high reputation for creating great portraits of women, but Carmen is a disappointment: she lacks any of the qualities or characteristics of a true visionary and comes off as little more than a star-struck idealist who happened upon a silly notion of reforming confirmed down-and-outers with a song.

The chorus of street people, brilliantly meshing individual

voices, produces the nocturnal rhythms of the street against which the story is told. Huddling together they pace from side to side on the grated scaffold that represents their home, the street. Their boots make clanking sounds on the metal sidewalks. The only colour in their black and grey world comes from the odd scarf or dried flower. Peering accusingly from behind dirty storefront windows, clutching

at one another to keep warm, one can't help but suspect that we are the ones shutting them out, and perhaps we are.

Until recently, a whole class of people had been ignored. Tremblay has contributed more to the development of a strong cultural identity than any other playwright. Not only did his use of jocular save Quebec writers from the quagmire of French colonialism but it also

gave Quebecers a sense of identity. *St. Carmen of the Main* is one of Tremblay's last works for the theatre and one of his best. He is leaving playwrighting now that the Parti Quebecois is in power and the English realize they are the minority in Quebec and are obligated to learn French: "It's not because of me", Tremblay says, and then laughs: "... but I hope I had a small part in it."

## Psychic art display

By Cynthia Wright

After work one day in 1955, Alma Rumball had a visionary experience. She began to hear a voice which commanded her to draw the words and images that came freely to her mind.

Since that time she has produced hundreds of drawings "automatically." She claims that the drawings are not a result of any conscious willing on her part.

If all that sounds like a cliché out of psychic literature, wait till you see the drawings. *The Automatic Drawings of Alma Rumball* are now on exhibit at the Art Gallery of York University (N145 Ross, until January 29).

These strange and beautiful drawings, made with crayon and coloured ink, are very detailed. Virtually every inch of the paper is covered with intricate swirls and arabesques in vivid colours: pinks, purples, yellow and gold.

Some of the drawings have "automatic" messages traced across them: "Alma came to draw and write" and "Alma came to Earth as Joan of Arc." Others depict strange creatures in mythical lands. The most unusual drawings look very much like art from the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, as a Lama now living in Canada has confirmed. Rather remarkable for a woman born in 1902 into a strict Protestant home, and with no exposure whatever to the iconography of Tibetan art.

Dating from 1955-1976, the

drawings are the work of a very complex imagination. Whether or not you are convinced of the validity

of psychic automatism, go and see *The Automatic Drawings of Alma Rumball*.



Sandy Zeldin photos



## Woman's Almanac '78: encourages, inspires

By Sue Kaiser

Once more, the Women's Press has issued an aesthetically pleasing and fact-filled calendar. Called *Everywoman's Almanac 1978*, it comes in a comfortable pocket size, with a super sturdy binding. (My last year's version would last another 12 months if its pages weren't full!)

*Everywoman's Almanac 1978* follows previous years' pattern of using each month as a separate theme, filling the spaces between the weeks and months with related pictures, comments and diagrams. This year, the pictures are more rationally placed, and leave more room for personal notes. The themes this year explore many aspects of women's experiences, centred around the overall theme of the economic crisis. They include fresh insights in some often seen topics, such as "Women and Sport" and "Daycare", as well as some uncommon topics, like the "Disabled" and "Waitresses".

As with other theme calendars, *Everywoman's Almanac* intends not only to organize your personal time, but to provide inspiration. It is a record of women's voices, offering their own perceptions and understanding of the forces shaping their lives.

Also like other theme calendars, *Everywoman's Almanac* is not for everyone. Its content is encouraging and inspiring for women who feel connected, even in small ways, with the women's movement, who feel that the struggle for rights, equality and non-sexist life is not yet won. Women who want to keep the Women's movement a media event or a textbook trend, will be uncomfortable with the struggling and determined content of *Everywoman's Almanac*.

If you're not yet organized for 1978, take a look at *Everywoman's Almanac*. Available through Women's Press and bookstores for \$3.95.



CAREER OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN

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Contrary to popular belief, York Cabaret has not gone into hibernation for the winter months. Ture, after three full-blown

productions playing to packed houses, the holiday season was celebrated quietly enough with *Christmas Reclassified* by J. T. Bear and Cathy Knights, directed by Brenda Gladwish, and witnessed by a privileged few. Despite exams and a blizzard, an intimate and appreciative audience did turn out.

The two women from *Reclassified* are back this February 2nd and 3rd with their own show to

help you handle the February blahs and celebrate Groundhog Day in style.

Pam Mingo and Cathy Knights are adding to the swelling ranks of non-theatre majors who help dispel the myth that Cabaret is a glossy Theatre Department institution. It's the only regular outlet for your directing, writing, composing and performing talents so why not fool around a little this term and put your dreams and

jokes on stage. If you enjoy watching — it's even more fun if you join in. If you don't like what you see, come and show us all how it should be done.

Meanwhile auditions for *Brecht on Brecht*, to play March 9 and 10, will be held this Tuesday, January 24th in Bethune Studio; Director, John Leberg; all welcome. The next day Alan Fox is holding auditions, yet again, for *Waiting for Parot*, a spoof with songs on

the existential angst of being a York student. This show was postponed last year due to lack of available actors at Christmas, but is back now with new life and vigour and a different director: audition at Bethune studio on Wednesday, January 25th at 7 pm.

To write, direct, or help in any other capacity, contact Kate Lushington, 667-3775 or 486-8936 or leave messages at 210 Burton or the Theatre Department.