

# Coe's *Ballerina* an abrupt good-bye

by C. Fertile

*Ballerina*, by Arne Skouen, is an unrelenting drama about a former ballerina and her autistic daughter, who dances. The mother, Edith, is played brilliantly by Anne Baxter. Malin, the daughter, is played by Shannon John who also gives a remarkable performance.

The play revolves around Edith's attempts to provide a world and security for Malin who is clearly in a world of her own. As the play progresses it becomes evident that Edith is not altogether altruistic; she needs Malin to give her a reason for existence. She also knows that she alone cannot handle Malin anymore in their home in the Norwegian countryside and so tries to recruit Rutta (Wenna Shaw) to move nearby. Rutta visits Edith and Malin in their hotel room (where the entire play takes place) and immediately re-establishes communication with Malin. Rutta and Edith are the only people to have mastered Malin-language and so are able to deal with her.

Edith and Malin are also visited by the maid, Hanne (Janet Daverne) who tells Edith of a friend she used to have who had an autistic boy. The friend died in a car crash, but the boy survived.

Two other visitors to the room are Birger (Deryck E. Hazel) and Audun (Stephen Nesbitt), Edith's ex-husband and son. They come to see what can be done with Malin (and Edith) and all kinds of confrontations about the past take place. The bitterness hangs heavy.

In some respects the play is like a Bergman movie: consummate acting by the main characters and a tendency to pound home the theme. No comic relief, either. You leave the theatre feeling like



Anne Baxter, Wenna Shaw, and Shannon John make the best of a shaky script, turning out excellent performances in *Ballerina*.

you've been hit by several bricks.

One problem with the play is that although the trauma is relentless, it is also disjointed. It seems that the playwright was trying to pack in as many angles of pain as possible. The transitions are abrupt and in the case of the father and

son visit, the audience is jerked into yet another psychological catastrophe far too quickly to find the scene believable.

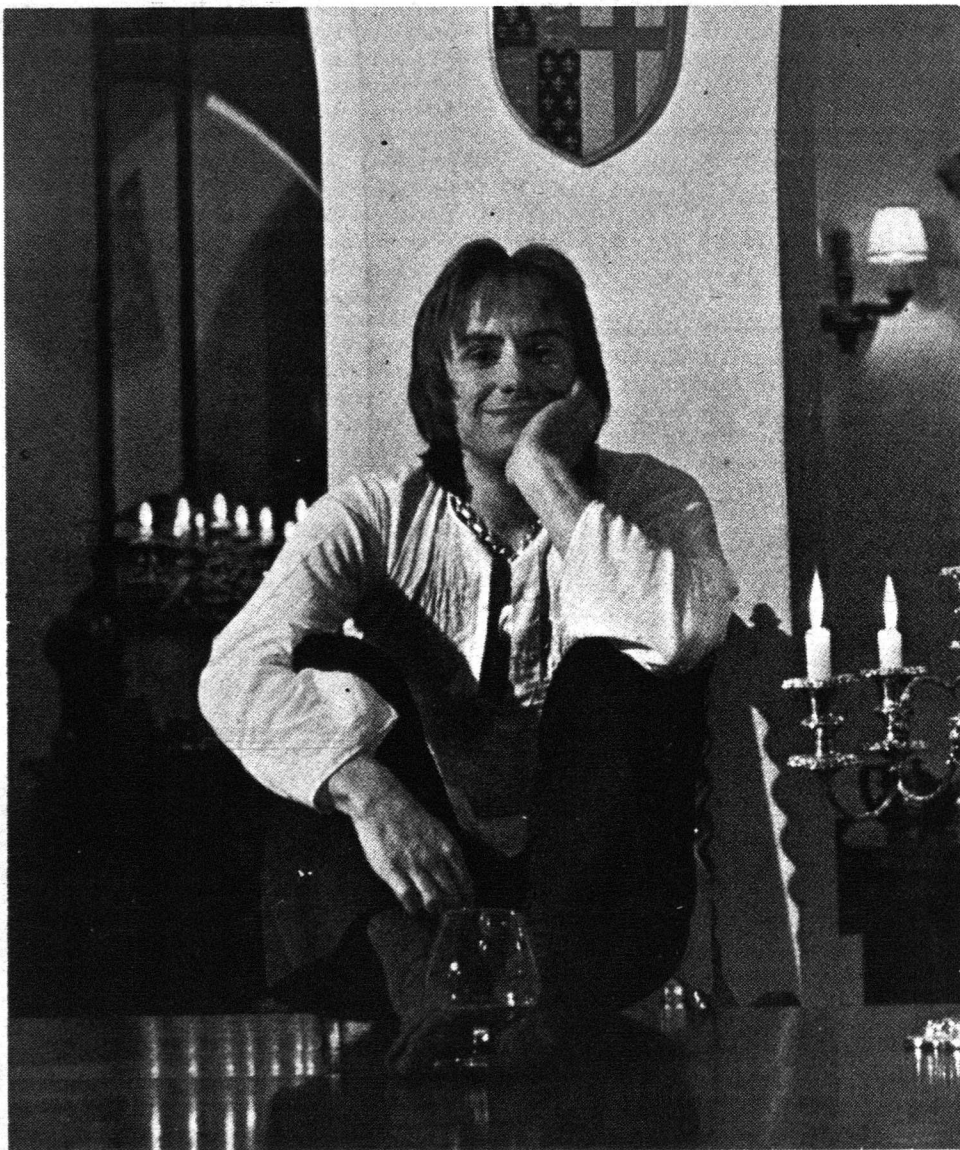
Ultimately the defects in all the so-called normal characters become visible through the reactions to Malin. She is unaware, or at least unresponsive for the

most part, and continues to dance in her solitary world.

*Ballerina* is at the Shoctor Theatre until November 23. The play marks Peter Coe's departure from the Citadel.

# de Burgh's new sound disappoints

Concert Review by Sue Jurczak



"Rock and Roll" cried someone in the audience. "I'm sorry," replied the singer, "but you've come to the wrong show." The singer was Chris de Burgh on his first Canadian tour. Now, two years later, he has given in and is complying with that request. In the past the Irish

balladeer has delighted his small following with tales of the medieval, the religious and the romantic, all of which were inspired by his unique heritage.

Although born in Argentina, de Burgh's background is firmly rooted in the British Isles. His ancestry can be

traced back to Richard the Lionhearted and both the ancient Kings of Ireland and the Barons of Normandy can be found in his family tree. He was educated in Marlborough, England, and Trinity College in Dublin where he studied the folklore of the British Isles. It's not surprising that the charmingly eccentric musician makes his home in a medieval Irish castle, although he's now spending more and more time in Toronto.

His change in style resulted from the concert tour he did in the U.S. last year with Peter Frampton. It seemed the audiences didn't understand his music so he has attempted to remedy this by adding more rock and pop tunes to his repertoire. Several of these songs can be heard on his latest album *Eastern Wind*.

Although even though he finds the air here "very strange" this October 30th marked de Burgh's third appearance in Edmonton. His first performance was in the spring of 1979 at the SUB Theatre. He returned just four months later to open for Super Tramp on the western section of their tour. The concert last Thursday was staged in the coliseum "Mini-Bowl" - a new concept in seating pioneered by Brimstone Concert Productions. Only one quarter of the coliseum was used which created an intimate atmosphere and surprisingly good acoustics.

The initial appearance of de Burgh proved to be a bit of a disappointment. Gone was the silver-laced cavalier shirt and in its place, to enhance his new image, was a striped rugby shirt. However when he started in with his favorite opener, *Carry On*, from the *Crusader* album it became evident that some things never change.

The trans Canada tour, a promotion for *Eastern Wind* began in Atlantic Canada early in September but de Burgh decided to take a break before continuing on to the Western provinces. He appeared well rested and performed without the benefit of a warm up band.

Although his latest album was featured he offered a cross section of material from his other four. It was the

old favorites from his first album that received the most response. When treated to the brilliance of *Spanish Train* (a tale that shoots a hole in the theory that virtue always triumphs over evil) the audience gave de Burgh the first of several standing ovations. Among other selections from *The Spanish Trains and Other Stories* were *A Spaceman Came Travelling*, a song prophesizing the second coming of Christ; *Patricia the Stripper*, which needs no explanation; *Old Friend*, a song for the sentimental, the haunting and mournful; *Lonely Sky* and *The Painter*, which displayed his new trend toward rock and roll. For the first time de Burgh abandoned his acoustic guitar in favor of an electric one and added some updated instruments that detracted from the original flavor of the song - a story of an insanely jealous medieval King.

Lauded as a chanteur, de Burgh displayed his talents several times during the evening. A good example was his performance of *Crusader*, his own *mini-movie* which condenses over three hundred years of history into five minutes.

From the *Eastern Wind* album came *Tonight*; which accented his flair for the romantic; *The Traveller*, which has been given considerable air play in Edmonton and was therefore well received, and, of course, the epic title track inspired by the problems in the Middle East and dedicated to the hostages.

Also from the same album came *The Record Company Bash* and *Shadows and Light*, which illustrated de Burgh's new direction, and sounded a little foreign. His back up band - a group of Eastern Canadians and a L.A. drummer - did their job well. However, de Burgh was at his best the few instances he performed alone with his guitar or at the piano. Only then, did his expressive voice and captivating lyrics really shine.

Edmonton was ready for Chris de Burgh this time around. There wasn't a ticket left to Thursday night's show at the Coliseum and the concert was a sellout in more ways than one.