

Arts Editorial; Rebuttal

Last Tuesday, Gateway ran an Arts Editorial by Alan Filewod, which, in part, accused the Citadel Theatre of moving farther away from the people and more towards a "citadel of elitism." In the interest of objectivity (or, at least, fairness), we are reprinting a rebuttal of that editorial, written by John Neville, Citadel Theatre Director. The rebuttal consists of Mr. Neville's remarks at the Nov. 12 opening of the new Citadel Playhouse and a post-script, added after Mr. Filewod's editorial was published.

On this momentous and joyful occasion, I bid you a hearty welcome to Canada's finest, most beautiful theatre complex. I say this notwithstanding the fact that it has been referred to in the recent past as John Neville's big brick warehouse. I am sure this reference has been made with affection and not a little pride. On reflection I am not too offended by the term warehouse, in that it is our responsibility from now on to offer wares, with the greater responsibility to ensure that those wares are of unmatched quality.

I pay tribute to the architects, to the construction workers who were such a wonderful audience to the first performance of Romeo and Juliet last night. They have given us a building so stunning, so imaginative that it will defy the artists who are privileged to work here to embrace mediocrity.

They have given us, and is use the word unashamedly, a temple.

Mr. Premier, Ladies and Gentlemen, as we gather here tonight I am forcibly struck by the thought that from this night on this building can never be the same: and for a very simple reason.

From this night on the building will belong to the playwrights, the actors and above all to the audience.

It will become not just a theatre but a cultural centre. A community place where the best of authors whether living or dead can commune through the actors with their audience: a wide spectrum of audience drawn from all society with no respect of age or class or monetary status.

For as the great French playwright Moliere said: "Cultivated people should be superior to any consideration to sordid as a mercenary interest." He also said in another play "Our minds need relaxation and give way, unless we mix with work a little play." And what a glorious playground we've all been given! We have also been given an opportunity and more important an awesome responsibility.

Artists have always been and will always be the leaders, the provokers, and we who are fortunate enough to work here should not ever take that responsibility lightly. The geographical location of this temple has for me personally a marked significance. As we walk the streets nearby, as we use the taverns, we will be ever mindful of those in our society who are much less fortunate than us. It is my fervent hope that we can make our product good and also that we can make it easily available to those people as well.

It is, let us remember, their place too.

This must be a cultural centre of which all Edmontonians can be defiantly proud. And just imagine — it has happened West of the Lakehead, oh ye of little faith in the East. (I'm afraid I can offer no apology for my personal pride in the place where I live and work.)

Mr. Premier, Ladies and Gentlemen, the theatre is irreplaceable. The live theatre at its best with all its ritual, its laughter and tears thought can prompt us to ask important questions of ourselves — why are we in this world at all? why do we make war instead of love, why do we behave so badly to each other. Why do we live in the poverty that is so near this building?

As our Minister of Culture has said "We no longer believe culture to be a luxury, but a necessity of life," and live theatre is a dynamic part of that culture. Let us rejoice in this night. Let us celebrate.

Hosanna Hosanna Hosanna!

Eugene O'Neill in one of the great plays of this century said "The past is the present. The future too." Mr. Premier, it is a great personal pleasure for me that you are present, and that you are officially opening this centre.

May I crave one indulgence? A little later in the evening I hope we may prevail on you to raise all to raise our glasses in a toast to the brightest most gleaming new jewel in the cultural crown of Alberta.

Postscript:

I have no further comment to make on Filewod's article, except to say that I assume he must be in Edmonton all of 35 minutes and therefore has no conception of the philosophy of the Citadel Theatre and the work it has done in the last three years to attract a wider audience with the advent of Citadel Too (now the Citadel Theatre) with its policy of 75 per cent Canadian plays which attracted a totally new and young audience.

John Neville
Citadel Theatre Director

John Stark
as Stephen Leacock
Performing
in Humanities Lecture
Theatre
last Thursday.

photo Don Truckey



Stephen Leacock visits U of A

by Brent Kostyniuk

On Friday last, the Humanities Lecture Theatre was filled to capacity for a lecture by the noted Canadian professor, Dr. Stephen Leacock. In addition to providing a highly stimulating and educational talk, the professor added humorous anecdotes and stories. This combination of information and levity helped Dr. Leacock to hold the attention of the majority of those attending, for almost the entire evening.

Dr. Leacock who is from Orillia Ontario recounted a number of incidents which have happened to him while travelling on this continent and abroad. His description of the construction of a summer bungalow was particularly funny and had the entire audience laughing...

Over two years ago, John Stark, a Vancouver theatre director needed someone to play the part of Stephen Leacock. When a suitable actor could not be found his wife suggested that he try the part himself. To the great benefit of Stephen Leacock devotees, John did try, and has made a study of the noted humorist since then.

After the performance a small group went for drinks and supper with Stephen - uh - John. While sipping on a gin - what else - he explained what it is like to take on another person's character so fully. "After a while it becomes a part of you. You have to be careful though, on stage you tend to develop a split personality, fluctuating between the person you are playing and yourself. You have to keep a balance, because sometimes you lose yourself and that is a dangerous moment. If you go too much in either direction, the performance is not as good as it might be. You do get slightly schizophrenic."

John Stark has now spend 2 years touring as Stephen Leacock. He has studied old wiring recordings of Leacock to help with his presentation and has talked with many people who knew Leacock. By playing in the same CN and CP Hotels as Leacock did, he gathers even more insight into what the great humorist was really like. Stark spent a year travelling across Canada in a station wagon developing his style. "I used to drive a thousand miles to get to a

performance the next day. I would do it and then be off driving again. Once I spent a 40 below night parked outside a service station in Wawa. I kept the motor running all the time so I wouldn't freeze to death."

As was Leacock, Stark is very nervous before each performance. "I don't know how I do it. I'm absolutely terrified and feel like I'm in a trance."

John lives with his two daughters (like Leacock, his wife died of cancer) on a small farm about 40 miles from Vancouver. He tours during the fall and spring, leaving the rest open for his family and directing. He recently translated a play from Yugoslavian into English.

John Stark has researched and studied Stephen Leacock to such a high degree that his rendition of Leacock is very believable indeed. How believable is hard to appreciate without actually seeing him do it. This well help to explain. Perhaps it was my imagination perhaps it was not, but after shaking hands and leaving the little gathering I had the distinct feeling that I had spent the evening with Stephen Leacock.

ESO celebrates twenty-fifth anniversary

by Les Sheldon

The Edmonton Symphony Orchestra celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary with a special performance Friday night. Maestro Hetu masterfully guided the orchestra through one of its best performances to date.

The CBC taped the concert for its Musicamera series. The performance will be aired December 29, 1976. While they added technical touches such as lighting, their presence was very much a detrimental effect. Long delays, an excessively late start, roving cameras, voices, as well as bright lights blinding the audience detracted from the enjoyment of the program.

The performance was exceptionally fine. It was evident that a good deal of preparation had been devoted to the program. The evening's program was indeed a celebration.

Fanfare — *La Peri* — started the celebration in a fitting manner. Done entirely by brass, horn, and tuba, Dukas' glamorous work provided an atmosphere of public celebration.

The audience was invited to participate in the celebration by Weber's *Invitation to the Dance*. The invitation was extended by cello and answered by flute. The violins provided the lilting strains to which the remaining instruments danced.

Capriccio Italien, by Tchaikovsky, was the longest and most complex work of the evening. The horn introduction gave way to sequential orchestral participation. The gliding movements passed to each instrumental section in turn. The finale was preceded by a

restatement of the theme by horns.

The next dance of the evening was the *Slavonic Dance* by Dvorak. The music described the dance of the country people to their land, and their women. A return to the dance ended the work.

Dancing gave way to organized merry making in *Roumanian Rhapsody* by Enesco. The various activities centered around the fire of the gypsy caravan were described in minute detail.

An excellent trumpet passage followed in an adaptation of *Largo Al Factorum*. The piece was introduced by a short, snappy passage, consisting of repeated phrases. The trumpet star of the piece, immediately stated the theme and proceeded to develop it in a series of figurines.

The Dance of the Hours by Ponchielli, provided a suitable conclusion to the evening. A delicate dance was introduced by a fragile combination of woodwind and flute. The introduction gave way to tremolo of the violins, which carried the melody through the song. The flutes provided a harmonic voice. The interplay of the horns preceded the finale.

The CBC obviously thought that the audience paid up to \$10 dollars per person to attend a concert. They should be reminded that they are obliged to appreciate with the audience should not attend a concert on television unless you are prepared to be a victim of a different producer.