

# Vivid rendering of Leacock humour

By NANCY KEMPTON  
Brunswickan Staff

Upon leaving The Playhouse at 10 p.m. October 29 one was not sure if one had just witnessed a comedy routine, an eccentric lecture, a rehearsed act or an off-the-cuff monologue. John Stark's portrayal of Stephen Leacock filling all of the aforementioned roles basically left one unsure of the bounds of rationality. The Canadian actor shuffled to the center stage and instantaneously abandoned his profession to become, very convincingly the late humorist/professor/author so

renowned for his satirical wit.

The atmosphere reminded one of an old cigar smelling study of a slightly neurotic British academic. Stark's dress consisted of an oversize pin-stripe suit, rumpled at the cuffs, collar turned awkwardly upward, and wrinkled academic gown hanging haphazardly over the shoulders. His tousled hair and frumpy moustache gave more credence to a careless attire. The dim lighting and antique accoutrements of upholstered chair, cocktail table and lecturn draw one into the realm of the true Stephen Leacock several decades ago.

Stephen Leacock, from Orilla, Ontario lived his life a world resident until his death in 1944. He travelled extensively, gaining insight into the peculiarities of people and their cultures wherever he went. From this knowledge he was able to adapt himself to any situation from telling dirty jokes in the back street bar, to associating with royalty.

For many years Leacock lectured at McGill University under the guise of a professor of economics. However, the infinite sources of humour surrounding him prompted his shift to comedian and

author. In 1935 Leacock won the Mark Twain Medal for his outstanding success in this area.

John Stark was born in Rossland, B.C. in 1936. He began his distinguished acting and directing career with free lancing for the CBC. From there he began his long list of successful performances with the BBC, film and live theatre. In 1973 Mr. Stark gave his first rendition of Stephen Leacock and has improved his style steadily since then. Now in 1980, the two blend wholly into one man on stage.

One could easily believe they were witnessing a ghost as Stark/Leacock commences his monologue with slightly off-centered voice and gestures. The man on stage mimics the characters he is talking about, borrowing their voices and habitual quirks as he steps into their roles. The stories he relates range from a tale about a haunted house in England, to the building of a summer bungalow from tin cans and newspaper. The blind, self-centered American to the clueless high-society Brit are all subjects of



John Stark

Stark/Leacock's gentle satire. The stories possess elements of both the real and fictional but are reenacted with such charming eccentricity one is left wondering what the definition of reality an excellent show!



## Ladies Choice plays bluegrass

By DUKE BRANSCOMBE

The Ladies Choice Bluegrass Band will be appearing at d'Avray Hall, Monday, November 10 at 8:30 p.m. Tickets are \$3 at the door.

The group, which is being sponsored by the College Hill Folk Collective is one of the hottest bands in the country. They offer a fine selection of music ranging from hard core bluegrass, traditional Irish-Scottish fiddle tunes and ragtime instrumentals to some

very well thought out original material. They have produced an album entitled *First Choice* and are presently finishing up a tour of Upper Canada. Ladies Choice is no stranger to this area. Skip Holmes, the group's banjo player par-excellence is a former student of UNB.

Group leader Gordon Stobbe, who can talk almost as fast as he plays (mandolin, fiddle), will dazzle the mind with his spontaneous interjections between songs. Gordon is among the vanguard of

young bluegrass musicians who regard the music with a reverence. He persists in creating a pure, acoustic, traditional sound while maintaining a mood of beauty and joy with which the music was meant to be played.

Other members of the band include Irish York on vocals and fiddle, Bill Doucette vocals and flat pick guitar and Walter Jakeman holding the bass-ics.

So if you would like some real, home-grown grass, don't miss the Ladies Choice Bluegrass Band.

## Show of local artist

This month the Faculty Club hosts *Fall Fare*, a series of paintings and drawings by Keith Eldridge on the subject of autumn.

Mr. Eldridge was born in St. Stephen in 1921, received his first art training at the Nova Scotia College of Art in Halifax, N.S. and at the Ipswich School of Arts and Crafts, Ipswich, England. He was

apprenticed to a commercial art studio in London and continued there until joining the R.A.F. in the early days of the war.

After the war Keith returned to Canada where he continued with commercial art in Toronto and in various parts of Atlantic Canada. During a stay in Newfoundland Keith decided that he must finally "come to grips" with a life-long

desire to paint and draw seriously. He now lives in Lincoln, New Brunswick and is painting full time.

He has had one man shows in Halifax, Moncton, Saint John and Fredericton. His work is represented in collections in the United States, Canada, Africa and India. He is a member of the Canadian Society of Painters in Watercolour.

## Dancemakers to perform

Since its inception in 1974 Dancemakers has brought high calibre, high energy performances to communities throughout Canada. Dancemakers as a repertory modern dance company, has continued its original policy of commissioning a wide range of works by both international and Canadian choreographers. These

include the 1963 Capezio Award winner, Donald McKayle; Norman Morrice, Artistic Director of the Royal Ballet; Rober Cohan, Artistic Director of London Contemporary Dance Theatre; the 1979 winner of the Jean A. Chalmers Award in Choreography, Anna Blewchamp; Nina Weiner formerly of Twyla Tharp Dance Company; Barry Smith, Canadian dancer and teacher; and Mitchell Rose, New York dance humorist.

The Company wants to assist audiences to better understand the modern dance art form and to introduce its best aspects to the widest possible audience, as a means of making contemporary dance a vital part of the cultural life of Canada.

Members of Dancemakers are representative of a new approach to dance training that has emerged in response to the increasing cross-fertilization of ballet and modern dance. Whereas 20 years ago there was a great difference between the balletic and modern forms of dance, nowadays, the difference is often more one of emphasis than anything else. This is especially true in the case of Dancemakers, where all the dancers have had both ballet and

modern training, and where what is prized most, is a trained body capable of great interpretive

flexibility. In other words, the dancers are not "locked in" to a particular training mode or technique and are able to draw on a large dance vocabulary. Thus, the repertoire contains works by choreographers coming from dance

traditions as diverse as modern ballet, Martha Graham, Jose Limon, social dancing, Twyla Tharp and Alwin Nikolais. An audience at a Dancemakers concert may see, in the same evening, ballet turns and jumps, modern dance "falls", mimetic gestures and social dance steps. Dancemakers has developed a style which combines all these elements so that nothing looks out of place.

The artistic thrust of the company has two separate but related aspects. First it is to present the very best of the most current work being done in modern dance, and second, it is to introduce the widest possible audience to the

modern dance form in a way which will contribute to a more general understanding and appreciation of it. The emphasis in Dancemakers is on *dancing* and the repertoire reflects this fact, while in content and style, works may range from the abstract to the dramatic, from humorous to lyrical or serious, or from balletic to various kinds of modern. William Littler, of the *Toronto Star* has said "Dancemakers are movers," which is a very apt phrase for this dynamic company of individuals.

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