

"With Pierre, I'm still very good friends with him."

Liona Boyd gives up lace for leather

interview by Brad Johnson

Liona Boyd, as a Canadian artist on the international music scene finds, "people are always very interested to hear about Canada. I've been making a point about playing some Canadian music when I tour internationally." Nevertheless, she says, "in music it's sort of international, it doesn't make that much difference really where you're from."

She started playing the guitar when she was 14 years old. Since then she has come to be known as, "the first lady of classical guitar."

"It was a term that was used first of all, I guess, by one of the magazine stories," she explained. "Then the record company picked it up, and they've just kept using it."

Liona has moved from frilly lace to black leather, and her repertoire also includes modern and even jazz-oriented music. Of her present tour, she says, "I like the mix of music that I'm promoting on the tour. It's certainly not a rock show, and it's certainly not a classical recital."

Her latest album *Persona*, which this current tour is promoting, does indeed use a lot of synthesizer and drum machines to back her up. And the music has changed, no doubt about that. She describes this as a "bit of a risk."



Liona Boyd.

In recording the album, she played with Eric Clapton and guitarist David Gilmour, among others. "I was very lucky to work with Michael Kamen," says she of the producer/musician who has backed up David Bowie and the Eurythmics. She also has a new manager, Bruce Allen, of Loverboy and Bryan Adams fame.

As for future changes, she said "No, I really enjoy what I'm doing."

Boyd counts Al Stewart as one of her favourite mainstream artists. She also likes a

lot of the "new age" music coming out, such as that on the exclusively instrumental Windham Hill label. (In fact, her new album is considered by some to be of this genre.) She dislikes, however, the more "avante garde" contemporary classical music.

Boyd has played nearly everywhere worldwide. From Europe to Asia to North and South America, she packs concert halls and theatres everywhere. But especially, she says that in "all of South America the audiences are just great." She always enjoys playing her home town of Toronto, though.

"It was amazing how many people already knew me," she says of her China tour. "In Peking, for instance, I thought nobody would know me at all, and they came out with my records." More forgettable instances include having to play on student instruments because her personal guitar was misplaced in transit.

"I think I enjoyed playing with David Gilmour, that was really fun," said Boyd. "I'd say the most, because we went down to his house in the country and he has a whole studio in his home, and we spent a whole day there. I'd play something and he'd improvise around it, and we came up with a whole bunch of neat ideas."

Boyd also found it interesting to have worked with country guitarist Chet Atkins. She plans to appear on a special sheet music feature in "Guitar Player" magazine beside Rick Emmitt of Triumph, Alex Ryson of Rush and jazz guitarist Ed Bickert.

"I just recently won the 'Guitar Player' poll again. It's the second year in a row, best classical guitarist," she added. "It's thrilling that the other musicians obviously appreciate my playing."

On a more personal note, she is no longer involved with Pierre Trudeau. "It's sort of past history now," she says, "I think everybody knows about that. I'm engaged now to Joel Bell, who was actually his economic advisor for many years, and we just got engaged a month ago."

"With Pierre, I'm still very good friends with him," she said.

Due to change in management and subsequent change of concert dates, her Edmonton concert will wind up being in S.U.B. Theatre. "But it's actually great from the audience's point of view," she said. "I mean, playing in the S.U.B. Theatre, they'll probably never ever get to hear me there again... I always think the people in the smaller theatres get a much better deal."

Liona Boyd will be playing two shows this Friday at S.U.B. Theatre.

This Traveller takes philosophic turn

Traveller in the Dark
The Citadel

review by Mike Spindloe

The first thing that one sees upon entering the Citadel's Shocter Theatre to view Marsha Norman's play *Traveller in the Dark* is the visually stunning, almost surreal looking set. The scene is the backyard of an old woodframe house, steeply raked and divided into two sections by a crumbling wall of stones. It's a provocative image and one can imagine just about anything taking place there; anything, in fact, but what actually does happen.

What does ensue is something like the longest combination philosophy/theology lecture you'll ever sit through.

The philosophy part is courtesy of Sam, a renowned surgeon who has just failed, or perhaps chosen not to save the life of a childhood friend.

The theology part comes from his fundamentalist bible-thumper father Everett who can answer any question with some variation on the phrase, "It's just God's will."

Sam's problem is that he doesn't believe in anything: his reputation as a surgeon, his marriage, his father all seem to mean nothing to him. He's played convincingly by Eric Schneider but is not at all a likeable character. He and his father are alienated by hopelessly opposite philosophies, as the immediate tension between them well illustrates.

The occasion for all this angst is the funeral of Sam's aforementioned friend, a girl who, despite his having married the rich girl from down the street, has stuck by him as a friend and become a nurse to help him with his operations as well as, more importantly perhaps, being the bridge between Sam and his father (Murray Westgate). Along for the ride are Sam's wife Glory (Pamela Brook), whom he asks for a divorce early in the play, complicating things further, and his son Stephen (Randy Ganne).

Act One takes place in the afternoon before the funeral and Act Two in the evening following the funeral. The action, completely verbal in nature, centers on the conflicts between Sam and Everett and Sam and Glory, with poor Stephen caught somewhere in the middle of both. Sam has finally reached the point where his negative attitudes have convinced him that he doesn't want anything to do with anyone, except perhaps his son, who nevertheless tests his short patience with leading questions about various fables (Humpty Dumpty, The Frog and the Prince,

etc.) thus setting up Sam's seemingly endless arguments with his father and wife.

If all this sounds rather ponderous to you, that's probably because it is. *Traveller in the Dark* is not about conventional theatrical entertainment. Rather, it strives to make deep observations about religious beliefs, mortality, relationships between people and life in general. These subjects, while thought provoking, are hardly entertaining in the context of the play which is why it ultimately drags on like a three hour lecture. Despite our willingness to learn, by the time its over you've had more than enough proselytizing and you're ready for a good joke or two (or a stiff drink).

What humour there is, is as heavy handed as the plot and usually takes the form of a wry or sarcastic observation from

Glory upon Sam's pessimistically nihilist outlook on life. Sam may be something of a realist, but he's simply too negative to live with and, ironically, he seems to be the first one to realize it.

Although the play is ultimately about him, its unfortunate that Glory's character is not developed more. Far more interesting than some of the obvious questions raised by the plot (ie. will Sam and Glory stay together, who will Stephen stay with if they split up, etc.) are those that remain unanswered by Glory like, "Why did she marry this schmuck in the first place" and why her curious non-reaction when Sam tells her that he wants a divorce, except to say, "You need me, Sam. You don't know it yet, but you need me."

If you do see *Traveller in the Dark*, take

comfort in the fact that the Second Act is more interesting than the first, if only because some of the more conventional questions raised by the plot are finally answered. Forget about the moral and philosophical ones, though. It's hard to say what kind of audience to recommend *Traveller in the Dark* for; perhaps philosophy and theology majors, not to do them any discredit.

But as it was, the well-coiffed crowd of Edmonton's upper crust who attended on opening night merely applauded politely at the conclusion of each act. And, as one woman stated to me in the lobby afterwards, "This is just too heavy for a Wednesday night." A shallow comment on one level, but perhaps more incisive than any detailed analysis could be.

Overacting is the real crime here

Crimes of the Heart
Studio Theatre

review by Suzanne Lundigan

Crimes of the Heart is three acts loong and two intermissions short. The couple behind me left after the second act. I stayed on, hoping for a reprieve. No such luck.

Beth Henley's Pulitzer prize-winning play draws heavily on the Tennessee Williams/Flanner O'Connor tradition of exploring the tawdry goings on in small town Southern U.S.A.

Behind the mint-juleps and front porch swings of Mulhurst is an attempted murder. Babe Botrelle has shot her husband. Her sisters Lenny and Meg rally to her side to help her through this bad time.

Unfortunately on the Studio stage, *Crimes of the Heart* didn't look like Pulitzer material.

What went wrong here?

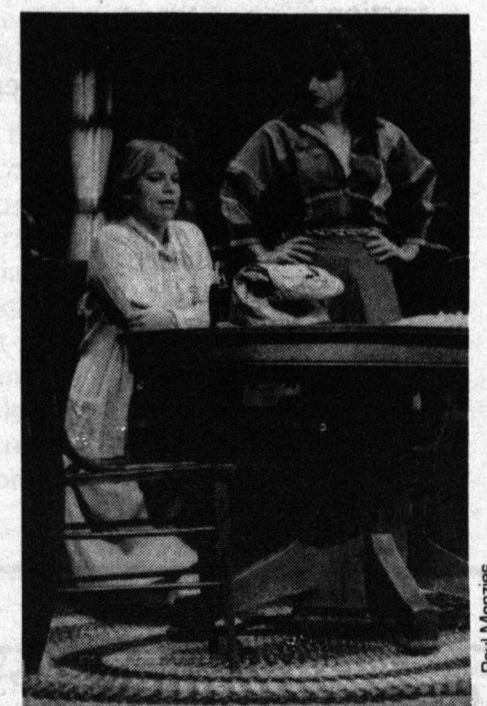
Look first to the director. The actors were pushing their roles... moments of gay frivolity were played with teeth gritted and leaps a mile high. "See," screams out this approach, "we are extremely happy! See huh huh." Overacting was a major flaw and one the director could have eliminated.

No doubt the actors were capable. At moments their talent shone through the murk of excess emotion and motion. Jacqueline Dandeneau as Lenny Magrath was terrific at times. Her costume and ever-furrowed brow suggests to the audience

the Lenny Beth Henley intended. Here is the martyr/spinster sister who must compensate for the faults of all those around her. Unfortunately too much handwringing, sobbing and frenetic movement muddy the character making it closer to a caricature. On the up side, Dandeneau's handling of the birthday candle scene (no one has remembered Lenny's birthday so she sticks a candle on a cookie) was very good. Unfortunately these moments are too few.

Meg McGrath played by Michele Muzzi suffers a similar fate. Muzzi is good. Her wisecracking portrayal of the worldly sister was often so accurate that she stole scenes... but again the notes of despair in her voice would too often get cranked up to a level where they became strident rather than heart-string tugging. One was aware of Meg's despair; it certainly reached the ear but not by way of the heart. Timing was a problem here as well. Sometimes Meg's best lines were obliterated by too eager follow-ups and the humour of the moment was lost.

Of the three women Babe Botrelle is handled the worst. The actress didn't seem to understand the role. She made transitions from a distressed woman to a carefree child abruptly, leaving the audience scratching their heads. Granted, the juxtaposition of her emotional states served to emphasize her unstable state yet, the way in which these were handled really tried the audience's patient. Babe was not a character which one could grasp. She remained elusive and thereby impossible



The Magrath sisters rallying around to sympathize with.

This production had potential. The actors in it have potential... and talent. Mishandling left all this to naught.