

Theatre in progress

John Juliani's plan for a new York life



By AGNES KRUCHIO

York is starting off a major adventure-experiment this fall in the shape of a new graduate programme in theatre, headed by Vancouver director John Juliani.

Should the aims of the renowned director and enfant terrible only half succeed, the York campus would be transformed into a place to be

instead of a place to leave at 4 p.m. for most of the student population.

Juliani, 34, was born in Montreal and has a distinguished career in the theatre and, just as significantly, in Canada. He was one of the first graduates of the National Theatre School and understudied John Colicos and the late Leo Ciceri with the Stratford Shakespeare Festival.

He was resident-in-theatre at Simon Fraser University, where he evolved a concept of the theatre that was all-encompassing. The Savage God Theatre concept grew out of

his personal situation, but Juliani finds that it applies increasingly to theatre in general.

"In an age when half the population of the world is starving, theatre itself becomes irrelevant," he said in an interview with Excalibur. "Except, perhaps as religious drama."

The Savage God theatre concept encompasses all aspects of life that involve 'roles': film, therapy, social animation, dance, mime community, information service, poetry transformed according to the needs of the moment and the particular situation.

York's new two year's master's programme in theatre, to be introduced under Juliani, is unique in Canada, in that one needs an Honours B.A. or its professional equivalent to be accepted. Its institution has been delayed due to various bureaucratic negotiations, but it is finally "opening up" on September 16.

The programme will be housed in one of the common rooms at Bethune, with 15 members whom Juliani has hand-picked from among 70 hopefuls on his tour across Canada. There is a cross-section of Canadians among those chosen: six Ontarians, four or five British Columbians, and one from Montreal. Among them are three playwrights and a directing student; the rest are actors. They will function as a troupe and "learn in the process of doing".

"Many of these people are already in the profession, and all we are doing is giving them an opportunity to grow among their colleagues," said Juliani. "It is not an academically oriented programme at all.



Director of York's M.F.A. Programme in Theatre John Juliani explains his ideas to change the face of York campus.

Escape to Mariposa

By TED MUMFORD

Sooner or later everyone gets weary of concerts typified by deafening noise (music?) no-shows, delays, and the antics of pre-pubescent loudmouths. If you have reached this stage you are ready for the Mariposa Folk Festival.

Over its 14-year existence, Mariposa has been held at several locations, most recently on the Toronto islands, this year from June 21 to 23. Its location isolates it from the insanity of downtown (or suburban) Toronto. A visitor at Mariposa is free to wander in a wonderland of fine music, sun and crafts displays.

Besides the fascinating crafts area there are eight stages, six of them devoted to professional acts of varying degrees of fame — Pete Seeger, Bruce Cockburn, Steve Goodman, and John Hammond were among the better known people — another to

amateurs, and another to native music and dancing.

Many of the best things at Mariposa are just unscheduled folk happening "under the trees". Steve Goodman and some other guitar hotshots were seen with a kid for example with a bell on his bike jamming to an impromptu number entitled Those Bicycle Bell Blues. At Mariposa, the person playing on the stage at one moment may be sitting next to you the next, digging something else.

There is something for every taste at Mariposa, from Pete Seeger giving a lecture on how to make your own bamboo flutes to les Danseurs de St. Laurent trying to level every stage in the place with their vigorous square dancing. But nowhere was there a single freaked out 14-year old. At Mariposa there is something to make everyone happy, but nothing to bring anyone down.

York Cabaret's new season:
A bit of zest goes a long way

Their motto is: if there's anything you ever wanted to do in theatre and never had the place, time or courage to do, now is the time and this is the place.

The place is Cabaret, which describes itself as a "co-curricular", experimental theatre group, and is being run with the help of the theatre department. It's open to the greater York community — as a matter of fact, the greater York community and all those theatre students who want to do something other than their assignments.

Artistic director Sky Gilbert told Excalibur that Cabaret wants and eagerly looks forward to just about any kind of material, from folksinging, juggling and playlets (yours and others), to theatre of the absurd and poetry. If you have an idea, any idea, contact him at 667-3970 or 661-4973.

Cabaret, founded two years ago, has been operating out of the Open End coffee shop in Vanier, where they have been performing and will continue to perform every second week on Thursday and Friday nights.

Their first humour-extravaganza this year will be Goldiggers of 1898, to be presented in the third week of September. It is a musical satire of the old style melodrama, a bit of Old Canadiana written by Matt Walsh and Sky Gilbert. What it is, Excalibur has been told, is a send-up based on that old favourite of all highschool poems, The Shooting of Dan McGrew, by Robert Service.

"We have two major orientations," said Gilbert. "One is towards our actors, to give them an opportunity to perform; and the other, of which we never lose sight, is towards the audience. Anything we do must be entertaining to watch."

In the past they have tended to do a lot of standup comedy, and that will be modified somewhat this year, said Gilbert. They also hope to do more serious material and environmental theatre. They are open to new ideas, and await your suggestions.



Dramatic moment in one of the many Cabaret skits last year. L to R Ashley Deans, Peter Bos and Laurie Fyffe.

"There will be a heavy schedule of workshops; actors inevitably must dance, and they should know to read music, and learn skills like sign language, singing, therapy techniques and counter techniques ritual, and a whole section on mime. "I hope to line up exciting people to teach as, theoretically, there should be a turnover of good people in any theatre department.

"The programme will be a launching pad of people into the profession, and will work in close contact with the undergraduate theatre section, as a source of motivation for the students.

"While we have no permanent facilities — we don't even have a theatre — the important thing is that the 'vibes' have been very good. P.E.A.K. (Performance, Example, Animation, Katharsis (sic) as the programme is called, will be an ongoing process, and will appear all over university — "here there, everywhere". "We would like to present open rehearsals, and open up the creative process to the York community," explained Juliani. "Hopefully, it will change the very face of campus life".

The programme has not been without its fair share of problems. Money — that root of all good and evil — has been short for the students. At most they can get \$2,400 for the year, and to live on that is im-

possible in this day and age in this city. Moreover students cannot even work part-time owing to university regulations; and in any case, a heavy six-day week would make it simply impossible.

Another problem has been the evaluation of the student who has no honours degree but is nonetheless very talented, and who has sufficient experience in the theatre.

"The question then becomes, does he have the maturity and the discipline to handle the reading and academic work that we will give him?" The problem very often is that even MA's do not have sufficient practical experience to be allowed into the programme.

"It is a vicious circle for the students concerned, but letting them into the programme would lower the standards," said Juliani.

He is also planning a summer programme, after which he hopes to move the company right outside the province.

"This sort of touring would give the company and its members flexibility. We in the theatre must reflect the geographical realities of Canada," Juliani said.

P.E.A.K. will be appearing all over the campus during the year — "here, there, everywhere". If you see people with white faces running around, it's not a Martian invasion, but a quiet revolution. Watch for it.

Sight and Sound

Christie in Don't Look Now

Little figures in red coats and weird accidents in the damp streets of Venice mark Nicholas Roeg's Don't Look Now, the season's opener at the Bethune film series. This visually beautiful film stars Julie Christie and Donald Sutherland. Pay \$1.25 general, \$1 for Bethune students, Saturday at 6 p.m. and Sunday at 8:30 p.m. in Curtis LH-L. Next week: Al Pacino in Serpico.

Italy's Conformist on view

Jean-Louis Trintignant and Dominique Sanda saunter through the idyllic fens and forests of war-time Italy in The Conformist. Director Bernardo Bertolucci, the man who has since brought you Last Tango in Paris (Herman Weinberg's favourite film), leads the viewer through a fascinating study of human relationships amid depravity and decadence. Winters opens its film season with this one, Friday and Sunday at 8 p.m., in Curtis LH-I for \$1.25 general, \$1 for Winters students.