

# Stratford is more than just theatre

by Azed Majeed

When it comes to theatre I have mixed feelings. On one hand, theatre can be an extremely profound experience. One need only look through history to find numerous examples of its immense power.

On the other hand, there are few things more frightening than an evening of Andrew Lloyd Webber.

While New York immediately comes to mind whenever good theatre productions (or brutal ritual slayings) are mentioned, Ontario has some damn fine options for theatre lovers to choose from. The most famous of these is the Stratford Festival.

This summer, I went to The Stratford Festival to see Moliere's *School for Wives*, starring Brian Bedford and Colm Feore. The last time I attended Stratford was a high school field trip, an experience most Ontario schoolkids have had. On that particular visit, the play was Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. I can't elaborate on that play, though: during acts three through five, I was off smoking cigarettes in the parking lot with some other idiots.

On this recent visit, I was able to remain in the theatre until the play was finished. And am able to bring you my day at Stratford.

## The Arrival

Leaving the smog-filled congestion of Toronto, my companion and I headed for the pastoral beauty of Stratford. Our travels took us through wonderful Oakville, picturesque Hamilton and the town that smells



A book of verse beneath the bough. A jug of wine, a loaf of bread and thou. Singing out into the wilderness, of wilderness were paradise now, baby. Artist's impression. Not shown in actual size. Some assembly required.

## theatre

*School for Wives*  
directed by Richard Monette  
starring Brian Bedford and Colm Feore  
Produced at the Stratford Festival

like potato chips, Kitchener.

Then we got lost.

Amid the farms and long, winding roads, we came upon a local who gave us directions. As he was giving us directions, I swear we could hear "Duelling Banjos" in the background.

We finally got to Stratford. A lovely little town, Stratford boasts a beautiful picnic area along the Avon river.

## The Lunch

Our outdoor lunch was nearly perfect. A beautiful day, good food, good wine and a volume of classy poetry all contributed to the aesthetic experience.

Everything was fine until some large swans, mistaking us for Americans, began hissing at us. We

ended up running away, screaming for our lives.

## The Discovery

It was approximately one hour before showtime when I felt a biological need to...uhh...euphemism. As I made my way through the various parking lots, I noticed something strange. The licence plates on most of the cars were unfamiliar. Detroit, Illinois, New York, San Dusky...it was weird.

So, there I was, surrounded by Americans, listening to "Duelling Banjos" once again.

## The Play

Entering the Avon Theatre, it seemed for a moment that we had mistakenly stumbled upon the regional bingo finals. It dawned on me that these were not just Americans. They were rich, retired Americans.

The show began, and the audience promptly fell asleep.

Moliere's *School for Wives* is a comedy, the kind where the non-sleeping audience waits for the cue and guffaws without shame. I, however, was not laughing. Experiencing the humour in this play was like watching Three's Company with better writers.

The story revolves around Arnolphe, a middle-aged bourgeois who fears being cuckolded. He becomes the guardian of a four-year-old child, Agnes, with the specific intention of making her "the perfect bride." He hopes to accomplish this by keeping Agnes ignorant and stupid.

When the play opens, Agnes is a grown woman and Arnolphe is pleased with himself at the supposed success of his experiment. However, despite Arnolphe's attempts to shelter and alienate her, Agnes finds true love with the younger Horace, who happens to be the son of Arnolphe's best friend, Orante.

The comic elements of the play all germinate from mistaken identities,

as Horace, unaware of Arnolphe's relationship to Agnes, confides all of his plans to the treacherous Arnolphe. The play continues on in this fashion until you want to yell "Hey idiots! Wake up!" not only to the sleeping patrons, but also to the characters who can't seem to figure out the very simple idea which would enable them to move forward.

I kept asking myself during this performance: why would Stratford mount this play when there are so many great ones to choose from? The answer: *The School for Wives* has a very slight feminist slant which renders it, at least in the minds of Stratford creative directors, politically correct. The actors seem to have realized this and pushed their performances toward parody, basically 'winking' at the audience to emphasize certain lines.

The performances were generally good. Brian Bedford's Arnolphe was played with energy, but he looked out at the audience way too much — you know, like Jack Benny. Maybe he was checking to see who was awake.

Colm Feore was pretty good in the extremely boring part of Horace. Ann Baggley played Agnes with a good mixture of innocence and wile.

## The Conclusion

Driving back to Toronto, the day's events flowed through my mind like a cheesy montage from a B movie. The hissing swans... the geriatric Americans... the Stratford Festival... I felt an inner peace spread over me and thought to myself that it wouldn't be long before I returned to my beloved Stratford...

Actually, I have no choice. I drove off in the wrong car.

**GICs**  
**T-BILLS**  
**STRIP BONDS**

**All Eligible For Our NO-FEE Self-Directed RRSP**

Richardson Greenshields offers the only No-Fee Self-Directed RRSP.

- ◆ No fees to pay
- ◆ Competitive rates — choose from 19 GIC issuers
- ◆ A maximum choice of investments — A minimum of administrative details
- ◆ Strip Bonds — Quadruple your money by 2006

Join our satisfied clients. Contact **Bill Bristow** or **Diana Bristow**. Fax this coupon to (416) 365-9990 or call (416) 365-5555/Toll Free in Ontario at 1-800-268-8506.

Tell me more about Richardson Greenshields' No-Fee RRSP.  
 I would like information on your self-directed RRIF.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

**ASK US About MUTUAL FUNDS**

**RICHARDSON GREENSHIELDS**  
Investment advisors to Canadian enterprise and enterprising Canadians  
390 Bay Street, Suite 1100, Toronto, Ontario M5H 2Y2

順來風飯店  
小菜、粥、粉、麵、飯、堂食、外賣

**THE WINDS RESTAURANT**

SUPERB CHINESE FOOD  
DINING, TAKE-OUT & HOME DELIVERY  
UNIVERSITY CITY PLAZA  
59 FOUR WINDS DR., DOWNSVIEW, ONT.  
PHONE: 738-4848  
SUN-THURS, 11:30 a.m.-12:00 midnight  
FRI & SAT, 11:30 a.m.-1:00 a.m.

Buy a Commodore MS-DOS or Amiga computer system!

# Computer Purchase Plan

- low plan prices
- wide selection of systems
- FREE software included with each system

All students, faculty and staff of Canadian schools, colleges and universities are eligible.  
Plan runs Aug. 15 - Oct. 31, 1991

See the entire Commodore line at  
Micro York  
York University, Bookstore  
York Lanes

**Commodore SL386SX-20**  
Slim-line desktop 386SX/20MHz, 1MB RAM, 52 MB HDD, 3.5" FDD, VGA colour monitor, MS-DOS V4.01, Microsoft Works software  
**\$1,799.00**

**Commodore C386SXL Notebook**  
386SX/16MHz, 1MB RAM, 40 MB HDD, 3.5" FDD, backlit VGA display, removable/rechargeable battery, AC adaptor, soft carrying case, MS-DOS V4.01, Microsoft Works software  
**\$2,569.00**

**Commodore Amiga 3000**  
Motorola 68030/25MHz, 2MB RAM, 52MB HDD, 3.5" FDD, multisync colour monitor, AmigaDOS V2.0/1.3, AmigaVision and Amiga Professional software  
**\$3,729.00**

Many other systems available at similar savings  
Certain restrictions apply -- see your Dealer for complete details.

**Commodore**