

"Susanna Moodie" displays versatility

By ROSEMARIE HOPPS

After we had crossed long illness that was the ocean, we sailed up-river
On the first island the immigrants threw off their clothes
and danced like sandflies
We left behind one by one the cities rotting with cholera, one by one our civilized and entered a large darkness
It was our own ignorance we entered... ["Further Arrivals"]

Mary Lou Rockwell, as the narrator in Mermaid Theatre's presentation of "Susanna Moodie" by Donna E. Smyth, spoke these and other lines from Margaret Atwood's *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*. Atwood's poetry provided the basis for Mermaid Theatre's production.

Margaret Atwood wrote *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* after becoming intrigued with Moodie's own writings about pioneer life in Canada, contained in such books as *Roughing It In The Bush* and *Life in the Clearings versus The Bush*. There was a distinct change in Susanna Moodie's attitude toward Canada. *Roughing It In The Bush* was a "melancholy narrative" given "to the British public" in 1852 in "the hope of deterring well-educated people, about to settle in this colony," from settling "in the Backwoods" (italicized

sections from *Susanna Moodie Life in the Clearings*, p. xxix) In *Life in the Clearings* Moodie attempted to show the "Real benefits to be derived from a judicious choice of settlement in this great and rising country." (*Life in the Clearings*, p. xxix)

Although Susanna Moodie hated this country when she first settled, she grew to accept it and love it. Mermaid Theatre's production dwells primarily on Susanna Moodie's fears and confusions, but allows enchanting glimpses of her personal sense of humour. Skai Leja, who played Susanna Moodie, has a finely etched face which showed Moodie's reserve as well as her confusion and pain. When Ms. Leja smiled, however, the audience was delighted to share with her moments of humour in Susanna Moodie's situation.

There are ten actors in the cast of Mermaid Theatre, three of whom were cast in unchanging roles, those of Susanna Moodie, Mr. Moodie and the Narrator. The remaining actors shared thirty-eight acting roles, as well as dancing roles as the bush dancers, fire dancers and the animal spirits. The outstanding actor was Suzanne Guillemette who played six parts, varying from "Mrs. Mason" a yankee homesteader who drank copious amounts of rum to "Grace Marks" a mad woman in an insane asylum. Patricia Lane was a charming "Jenny", the Moodie's maid. The set for "Susanna Moodie"

looked deceptively simple. As the play progressed the organization of the set became evident. The set was changed smoothly and quickly to give the appearance of the rustic cabin in the bush, the elegant parlour in Belleville, the pictorial representation of modern mechanical wonders and finally, the face of Susanne Moodie.

Sound effects, arranged by Tim Depue, Paul Niemisto, Tom Miller, Mary Lou Rockwell and Herb Lewis were well integrated with the action of the play. They were effective in heightening suspense, as in the sequence involving Susanna Moodie's fear of the dark and of the fearful creatures in the woods around her.

Lighting was used to express passing of time and changing of scenes. Perhaps because the lights dimmed so often, when scenes changed or to increase the drama of a particular moment, their effectiveness became diluted.

Costuming for "Susanna Moodie" tended to be dark. The costumes combined with the blacks and browns predominant in the set created an atmosphere close to gloom for most of the production. Since the play was concerned primarily with Susanna Moodie's darker thoughts, the drabness of set and costume created an integrated effect.

"Susanna Moodie" concluded with the heroine being surrounded by flats depicting the mechanical monsters of present-day progress, trains, turbines and the accoutre-

ments of construction work. The wilderness of Susanna Moodie's time was replaced by a wilderness of steel. A portrait of Susanna was placed on the stage. Modern Man, in the guise of construction workers, pulled at the flesh of her face, stripping it. All that was left on an otherwise dark stage was an outline of Susanna Moodie's face looking almost like a view of the galaxy. She had no outlines, but her features were visible. It was as though they were saying that the flesh and blood Susanna Moodie was gone, ploughed under by the "inexorable march of time" yet her spirit the spirit of the pioneer, was and is still present among us. They might also have been saying, that although her particular poetic inspiration, life in Canada in the 1830's to 1850's is gone, the poetic spirit will find a subject over which to wax poetic, or that the past is still with us in the present.

"Susanna Moodie" closed on a dark set with the words, "God is not the voice in the whirlwind, God is the whirlwind. At the final judgement We will all be trees."

Mermaid Theatre's "Susanna Moodie" showed the versatility of members of the cast and of the designers. The director of Mermaid Theatre, Evelyn Garbary, and the writer of "Susanna Moodie", Donna E. Smyth, created a worthwhile production. The company hopes to present "Susanna Moodie" across Canada in the near future. They should be well received. They are presenting to the public a perceptive representation of the conflict in the mind of a woman who came to break ground in a new and harsh country. Although Susanna Moodie and her husband were not particularly successful farmers, Susanna has left us a chronicle of her life upon which Mermaid Theatre has built a convincing dramatic work.

What's happening At the Art Centre

The Brunswick String Quartet has announced dates for its 1976-77 concert series being given in Fredericton at the Playhouse

The first concert will be given Tuesday, October 26, at 8:15 p.m. The program consists of the Mozart String Quartet, K. 458; the Debussy String Quartet, Opus 10 and the Schubert String Quartet entitled *Death and the Maiden*.

The second concert will be given November 30 and the third is planned for February 15.

Tickets at \$7.50 for three concerts or \$3 for single tickets are on sale at the UNB Art Centre, Memorial Hall or at the Playhouse prior to each concert.

Students and senior citizens are welcomed to all concerts free of charge.

The Brunswick String Quartet is the resident ensemble at the University of New Brunswick consisting of Joseph Pach and Paul Campbell, violins, James Pataki, viola and Richard Naill, cello.

Ballet, 13th Century musical comedy, a brass quintet and two recitals by string virtuosos are lined up for the 1976-7 Creative Arts season at UNB Fredericton.

The series tickets are available to the public at \$10 for single membership and \$4 for senior citizens or fulltime school children, at the Art Centre in Memorial Hall.

Students of Saint Thomas and UNB are entitled to pick up individual tickets to each event free of charge. All events begin at 8:15 p.m. at the Fredericton Playhouse.

Opening the series will be Ballet *Ys* on Tuesday, Nov. 2.

Ballet *Ya* Celtic word meaning "of the times" is a minigroup of seven dancers who combine classical and modern dance techniques. They use original Canadian choreography exclusively, most of which is commissioned by the company.

A preview of the 1976 Cape Dorset Eskimo print and engraving collection will be on display Oct. 24-31 at UNB's Art Centre in Memorial Hall, Fredericton.

Arranged in cooperation with the Sea Captain's Loft in St. Andrews, the official New Brunswick dealer, the display can be seen weekdays from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. and on Sundays from 2 until 5 p.m.

The collection goes on sale Nov. 1 in St. Andrews.

The exhibit will feature stone cut prints, engravings and lithographs by wellknown Eskimo artists of Cape Dorset, an area inhabited by 340 Eskimo people on West Baffin Island.

The collection displays the Eskimo concepts of space, time and purpose in the subjects of birds, animals and humans as isolated images in space.

The creative process involves ink made of seal oil and lamp black which is applied to serpentine, a closegrained stone unique to the island. Fifty copies of each print are made before the stone is destroyed.

Check-mate

Report from your roving chess reporter

(Interview at the UNB Chess Club, Oct. 18, 1976)

Reporter: What about rumours that some people who can't possibly know how to play chess are pretending to play chess in areas such as the Blue Lounge and other murky hangouts?

Tim: They're not true!

John: Not so! They were worshipping the pieces. Did you see the Queen?

Reporter: The chess club president is certain that it can't be. No one's been to the club in months and how could anyone have learned?

Tim: There is also a vicious rumour that the "stoned ranger" is going to play a simultaneous chess match. But it's not true. We haven't seen the ranger in four years. But there is this fellow G.C. Superstar. He's good. He works miracles and here is the plan. On November 8 at 7:30 p.m. the mysterious fellow will play all university types excepting present and former chess club members (but since these are all long extinct it's not likely they'll show anyway). That's Monday night, Room 26, SUB.

Reporter: Any student can play?

Tim: Yes.

Reporter: Is there an entry fee?

Tim: No. No. No. But if you bring money, bring enough for everyone.

Robert: They had a beauty contest in Newfoundland ... nobody won.

Reporter: Did we miss any important details prospective participants should know?

Tim: No. Just remember that serious chess players are often taken to be snobs. But it's not necessarily so, is it?

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By ROSE

D.H. Lawrence "In-Law" is prevalent in Daughter-in-Law mining community England, surround Lawrence from struggle in this haughty daughter women are fi over the son. mother cont making him women, is often in Law example, "Haystacks" or

Joan Orenst powerful wom voice and confidences ar of fear to Nual daughter-in-law clusion of the from the po created from Naula FitzG the proud, ha

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"A Carabr Gilbert and S UNB's Dr. Ed performed by Gilbert and 5 Fredericton, O and 13 at 8 p.m. the UNB c transformed cabaret for the production fee from the va Sullivan opera dialogue about collaborators' available from Mazzuca's, or On campus English Dept. Aitken House

Anyone int drama (i.e. welcome to rehearsals for and Sullivan o Oscar Wilde will be done a March 17, 18 can read mus our chorus Rehearsals at George St. J cafeteria at 8 week in Dec and Sullivan 5 stage rehears January. Com more inform Mullaly in th David. Michae rison House Aitken House.