

# entertainment

North York's first repertory company

## "Sound of Music" is the sound of success

By Paul Stuart

A great Broadway musical is a wondrous thing, which surely poses an immense challenge for any theatre group trying to stage it.

North York's first-ever repertory company, Stage Centre Productions (SCP) has chosen Rodger's and Hammerstein's, *The Sound of Music*, for its initial offering and the results are surprising.

The play itself is a wayward thing, set in the Austrian alps in 1938, just before the Nazis clomp onto the scene. Maria Rainer, the character Julie Andrews made so famous in the 1965 film, leaves her alpine abbey to become governess to an affluent, motherless family.

Everyone has a splendid time singing utterly beautiful tunes like "Do Re Mi" and "My Favourite Things". But I'm afraid the prancing about the mountaintops washes away whatever dramatic force the play might possess.

Yet, judging from the audience response at last Sunday's matinee, SCP has succeeded in kicking off with a good, solid, commercial piece of family entertainment. Much of the credit for this goes to the star of the show, Elaine Sargous, who turns in a vibrant performance as Maria.

I suspect however, that most York students will find SCP's forthcoming season more interesting than the present play.

Tennessee Williams' *Summer and Smoke*, Sheridan's eighteenth

century classic *The School for Scandal*, and the play Scottish actress Maggie Smith turned into a personal triumph, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, will be presented by SCP this winter. The season will draw to a close with Arthur Miller's recreation of the Salem witch trials and allegory of McCarthyism, *The Crucible*.

L. Garth Allen, SCP's artistic

director and founder, told me during intermission that *The Sound of Music* has sparked an "incredible response" and that the rest of the run may be sold out. Allen comes across as competent, confident, thirty-five and slick, but he has been around the theatre "since I was four years of age" and seems to have the know-how needed to keep a repertory company going in a

place like North York.

"Eight people have worked ten hours a day to bring this thing off", he said, obviously proud of his company.

According to Allen, a repertory company will give its members optimum conditions in which to hone their technique:

"An actor will have a principal role in one production and go on to

a small role in a different kind of play in the next one, so a member of a repertory company needs tremendous flexibility."

SCP is currently housed in the Fairview Mall Library theatre, near Sheppard and Don Mills Road. If the company's rosy relations with the Library board continue, then it will be around for some time to come. Allen says the company has a "tremendous ensemble feeling", and that there have been no major difficulties so far, except breaking in the library auditorium as a theatre, and "some backstage problems".

However, *The Sound of Music* is not without its onstage problems a couple of child actors can't project beyond the first row during their solos, the brief attempts at choreography are somewhat less than inspired, and the supporting actors who play the Nazis are pretty bad. But when you balance these defects against a fine wardrobe department, excellent casting, and the experience of the players in the principal roles, Stage Centre Productions appear to have a lot of potential.

Eight members of the present cast will be on stage for the entire season. When this company gets past the intrinsic difficulties -- and shortcomings -- of *The Sound of Music*, I believe some good theatre may be in the offing.

### Chorus meets at 5

Stong College will be the new home for the York Chorus, directed by Nick Kaehler. Regular rehearsals will be held on Thursdays from 5 to 7 pm, beginning September 15.

Auditions for new members will be held Tuesday, September 20 from 6 to 8 pm and Wednesday, September 21 from 5 to 7 pm. Both rehearsals and auditions will take place in the Stong Theater (room 112).

All members of the York community are welcome. For further information contact Stong College (room 314, -3062) or the music department (336 Stong, -3654).



Don't get excited. The performers pictured above are not coming to York. They've been here, during President MacDonald's brainchild, the Destiny Canada conference. Delegates were treated to evening entertainment by acts such as CANO, the Franco - Ontarian band which includes Rachel and Andre' Paiement (upper left); Dave Broadfoot (lower left); the folklore group Maple Sugar (fiddler Graham Townsend saws away above, middle); folksinger Edith Butler (upper right); and grown-up child prodigy Shirley Eikhard (lower right).

### CRAP Shots

York Cabaret is open to anyone wanting to tread the boards, light the lights, plumb the depths, or hit the heights. Run by three students from the theatre department, we nevertheless rely on participation from the whole university.

We plan nine shows this season in Mac Hall. The first opens September 29. They are free and licensed.

Anyone interested in acting, directing, writing, or helping out, should contact Kate Lushington, Jamie Pearl, or John Leberg at 667-3775, or turn up at the auditions for the first show at 6 pm next Monday at Bethune studio. All welcome.

Also check fine arts faculty orientation day in Burton Auditorium 2 to 5 pm Monday September 26: *Is There Show Business After Death*, a 15 minute introductory sketch.

The film and television office is now operating in Stong College, providing film and TV periodicals in the Stong library... a non-credit course in "visual art from the bible" is also available at Stong. Call 667-3062 for details.

### CKRY-FM

Martin Aucion will be featuring the sounds of jazz-rock on his show Monday nights, from 8 p.m. to midnight.

Dave Chodikoff's Jazz Notes will be returning this year at a new time, Tuesday nights from 8 p.m. to midnight.

Jazz and experimental music will be the focus of Randy Sach's programs, Tuesday from 1 to 3 p.m. and Wednesday 1 to 4 p.m.

Classes on media, taught by station director Richard Gould will be held starting late September. Anyone interested in attending (or joining the CKRY staff) should drop into the station offices, 258 Vanier College; phone 667-3919, 667-3908.

Watch this column in future weeks for more broadcast listings.

## "Star Wars": Lucas' ultimate matinee

By Colin Smith

Each year heralds the arrival of one singularly special type of film: for lack of any other title I call it the "cult-inspiring" film.

The cult-inspiring film has to satisfy four basic categories to qualify as such: it has to capture or invade the movie consciousness of an entire culture; it has to make the culture feel gratified with a cheerful, upbeat ending; it has to gross tremendous box-office profits; and it has to inspire sequels, more sequels, rip-offs, paperback derivations of said film, T-shirts, etc.

In 1975 the film was *Jaws*. In 1976 it was *Rocky*. This year it is *Star Wars*.

Generally speaking, films like these are over-rated. *Star Wars* certainly is. Serious comparisons between this film and Stanley Kubrick's ambiguous classic *2001: A Space Odyssey* have hoisted many formerly level-headed film critics onto meathooks of verbal idiocy; many going so far as to state that *Star Wars* is the best science-fiction film ever made, when in fact it isn't even science-fiction at all.

*Star Wars* is space fantasy, a term coined by producer Gary Kurtz and writer-director George Lucas (whose previous collaboration was *American Graffiti*). Simply, it is fantasy, a fairy tale, if you like, set in outer space. It has little to do with reality, and even less in common

with Kubrick's humanist intellectual film statement.

What links the two films together, and distinguishes both, is special effects. *Star Wars* is technologically brilliant; Lucas' creation of an entire outer-space culture, replete with blue milk, quarreling androids, aircrafts, laser-light swords, and various races of mutants, is both studious and innovative. The photography (by British ace Gilbert Taylor, who filmed *The Omen* in 1976), John Dykstra's special effects, and the editing are tops. Also superior is the set design, which is

about as thoughtful and expensive-looking as the other technical aspects are. On a technical level *Star Wars* is more varied and progressive than is *2001*, the result of similar fanatical studiosness and the ten years of computer technology that Lucas has over Kubrick.

However, snags abound. Despite that mentioned, *Star Wars* fails to linger in the memory as well as *2001*. Kubrick used his cameras to make a statement, while Lucas is interested only in entertaining the populace.

The plot of *Star Wars*, with its abducted princess, wholesomely dull boy hero, cynical ship commander, wise elderly wizard, black-cloaked villains, is distinctly of a Buck Rogers mentality, and cannot be taken as anything else. While the script contains good elements of humour (particularly between the two androids of the Laurel and Hardy set; the gold-plated C3PO and the coffee-percolator shaped R2D2), and ably mixes diverse elements of science-fiction, fantasy, sly parodies of other film genres, and even the oddest touch of surrealism, it still remains the film's greatest liability. The dialogue is loaded with 1950's science-fiction film clichés ("Run, Luke, run"). The character development is caricaturish at best, despite stylish efforts by a cast that includes Mark Hamill as the wonderboy, Harrison Ford as the cynical captain, Carrie Fisher as the gritty princess, Peter

Cushing as the villainous governor, Alec Guinness as the old wizard, Kenny Baker and Anthony Daniels as the two droids, Peter Mayhew as the wookiee, and David Prowse as the governor's lead henchman.

Because of the slant of the script, *Star Wars* seems oddly dated. Lucas' perfection in trying to recreate Buck Rogers-type fantasy is such that it feels wedded to that ancient serial. Matters are not helped any by an irritatingly clichéd use of colour symbolism (white for heroes, black for villains) that should have died with the '50's Hollywood western. It mars an otherwise considerate use of colour, particularly in the landscapes. Similarly, John Williams' score, while solid overall, gets too lavish for the film's good.

In the end, it is shallowness that mars *Star Wars*. Things are just too easy here. Heroes are unceasingly righteous and wholesome, and villains are etched in one shade of black. Despite a stunning climax (a ten-minute dogfight in outer space) the end is never in doubt. The film is too juvenile in script, execution and lack of theme to qualify as a "great" film; it remains only a good one. George Lucas can, however, be praised for keeping the overpowering stench of commercialism out of his film. *Star Wars*, as commercial as it could be, is an affectionate, earnest and obvious labour of love, however uneven.

