

review and interview: Kelly Rebar's *First Snowfall*.

# First Snowfall warms up audiences

**The First Snowfall**  
Theatre Network  
Through Dec. 16

review by Gilbert Bouchard

I liked *First Snowfall*. The play is an entertaining, well-paced and intelligent work of theatre.

The play chronicles three generations of the Granger and Caldwell families over the span of four decades.

In 1948, we have the courtship of Clyde Saskatchewan, of young June Caldwell and Myles Granger (played by Marianne Copithorne and Robert Winslow).

In 1968, we see the widowed June Granger (played by Susan Snearth) living with an eccentric Aunt Louise (played by Anne McGrath) in Calgary and coming to grips with her two estranged teenagers (Robert Winslow and Marianne Copithorne). And finally in 1978 we see the whole family coming to a shakey reconciliation.

Probably the most memorable line in the play (and certainly the most apt) is when aunt Louise blurts out: "Nothing less than the Rocky Mountains should separate a person from his family." And that's what *First Snowfall* is all about.

It's a family coming to grips with each other, and in some cases, not coming together at all.

The whole Theatre Network season to date has been highly entertaining, and *First Snowfall* is no exception.

The script could have used a bit of editing here and there but was still very witty and light. Rebar resists the temptation to preach and avoids being condescending. It's one of those plays that inspires discussion and thought after you see it.

Raymond Storey's direction was natural and smooth, and Daniel Van Heyst's set design was both functional and aesthetically pleasing.

The cast of *First Snowfall* was also more than adequate. Ann McGrath was hilarious



Kelly Rebar, author of *First Snowfall*, playing at Theatre Network through Dec. 16.

as Aunt Louise, and Robert Winslow is developing into one of Edmonton's finer young actors. Marianne Copithorne pulled off her double role with grace and charm and Susan Snearth performed adequately but came off as a bit too contrived at times.

interview by Gilbert Bouchard

"There's nothing autobiographical in *First Snowfall*," said Kelly Rebar, "it's all fictional."

In fact Rebar doesn't even have relatives in Saskatchewan, where a good portion of the action in her play originates. "There is probably the odd similarity between some people I know," said Rebar, "but on the whole the play is completely fictional."

Rebar's play was first presented at the new play festival held here on the U of A campus last spring. "Out of that reading of *First Snowfall* Theatre Network asked me if they could put on the play."

"*First Snowfall*" was a challenge for me to write, but I wanted to do something challenging," said Rebar.

As for the play's use of flashbacks Rebar explains that *First Snowfall* is "Three time periods that mesh together, one into the other. At any given time there are two things going on in any two time periods."

"Let's say something big happens in your life. In five, ten, or fifteen years from now something may trigger the memory of that event, and it feels like you're right there again," said Rebar, "that is what happens to the characters in my play."

Rebar also writes screen plays. "I studied film at York University, and I start shooting a film in Montreal in January."

The film will be a docudrama, taking a look at the right to refuse treatment. "It's based on a case history, but a lot of liberty is being taken," said Rebar.

The film is being produced by the NFT for the Bioethics Organization in Montreal. "The film will be used for university and High school kids. The film presents a question; a question we won't be answering."

Another of Rebar's works will also be leaving the province. *Checking out* her play about a grocery check out person which was first produced by Northern Lights Theatre here in Edmonton, opens December 4 in Winnipeg.

"I wasn't able to go to rehearsals, but they have gone over well. I've rewritten *Checking out* several times but it seems to be at a stage where the play seems to be standing on its own."

Photo Bill St. John

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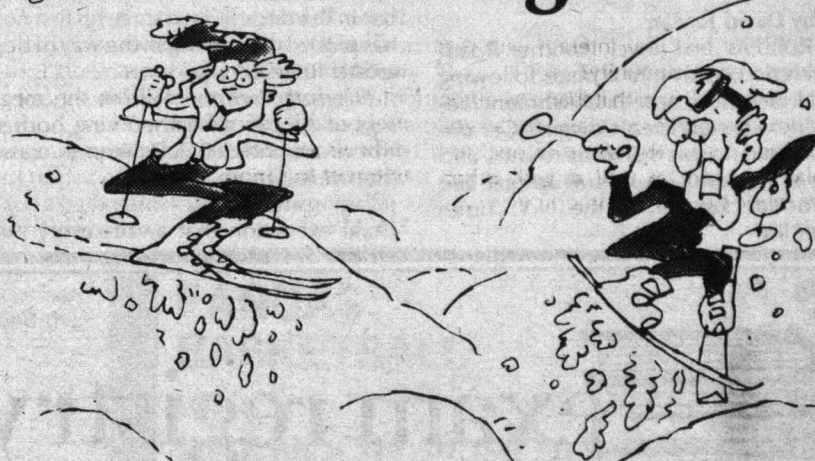
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