

Actor wrestles to top in theatrical ring

Portraits by Alex Miller

"All acting is working together. It's most boring to see actors doing their own individual things on stage and not working together."

And as for playwrights: "So many playwrights think of actors as being on the other side, but they should try working with actors more. A lot of the time the actors can improve the script -- actors can bring new attitudes and feelings that the playwright hadn't seen."

"All acting is, is living truthfully under imaginary circumstances. You can't force it, it has to come spontaneously. You can't be someone else -- you can take on characteristics and feel like the character you're playing -- but I'm always going to be Stephen Black."

Round Six: Black on Television

"A lot of people put down television as a medium, but it reaches the numbers. It's immediate communication."

"The biggest problem with television is that many people who work in it have a second rate attitude towards it. Why are these people doing it at all if they feel that way?"

Black sees endless possibilities for television production, and gives the Atlantis Film company, and the recent CBC production of *Ann of Green Gables* as examples of quality product produced for television. "Atlantis films won an Academy Award for one of its productions. They don't go around thinking they are second rate."

Round Seven: Black on Economics and Free Trade

Does Stephen Black have much hope for the up-and-coming free trade talks? No, and the biggest problem facing Canadians is our lack of confidence. Black thinks Canadians should stand up for their cultural rights.

"American directors rave about the quality of Canadian actors and Canadian production crews," says Black.

Not only does Black think we have the talent in Canada to hold our own in the international movie community, Black also thinks that the money to be made off Canadian movie goes -- some \$97 million a year -- makes us a market that the Americans can't neglect. "We have to stick to our guns in the free trade negotiations."

Canadian insecurity is also hurting the Canadian movie industry in other ways, for example the reluctance of Canadian casting directors to cast Canadian stars as the leads in Canadian productions. "The CBC seems determined to use the same people over and over. American companies are much more open minded. Canada has so many talented people up here, but people are afraid to take a risk. Although lots of money is coming into Canada 90 per cent of the leads are cast in the United States, not because of the lack of local talent, but because of an irrational fear of home grown product."

"Roles are going to Americans because they are American."

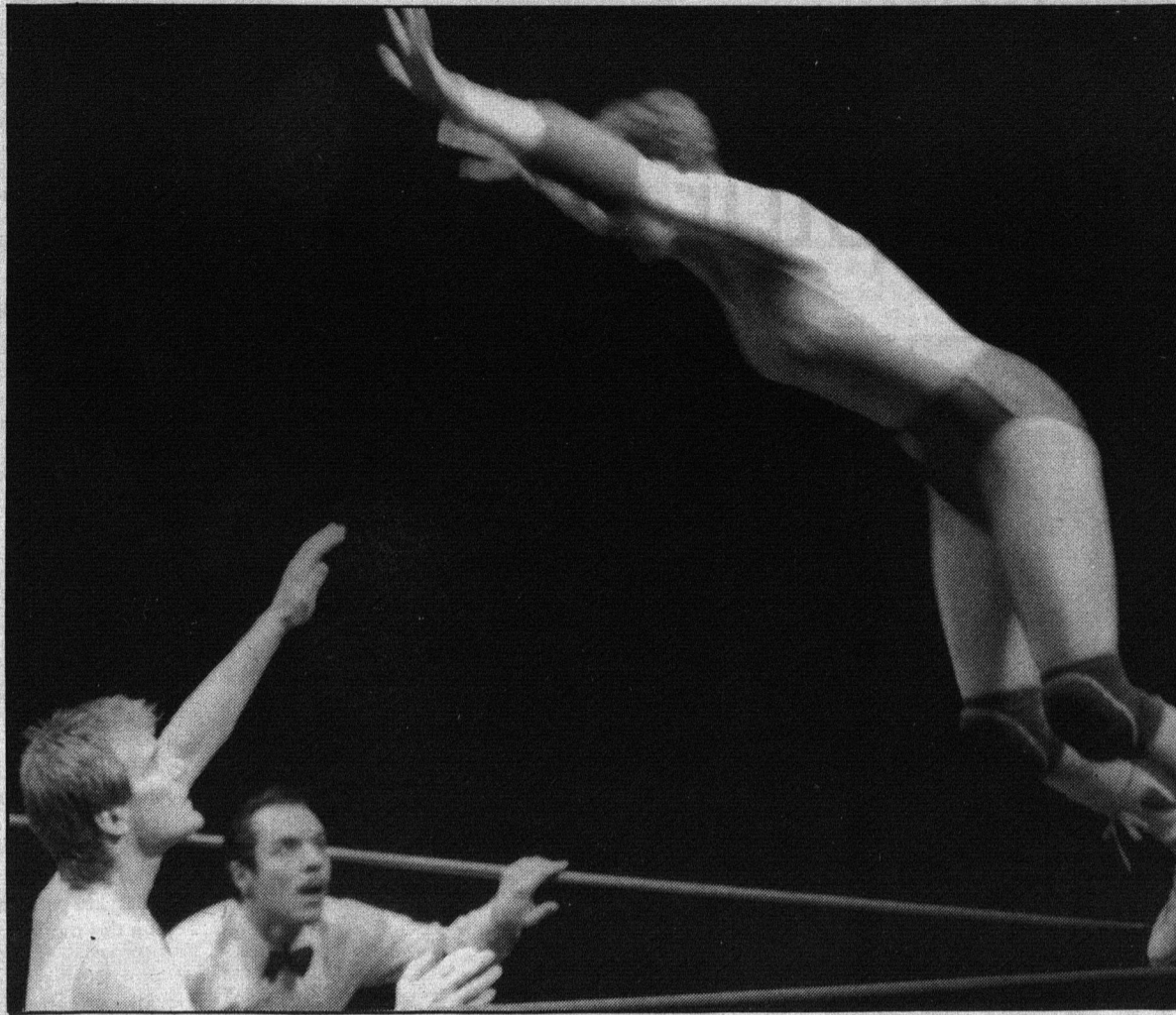
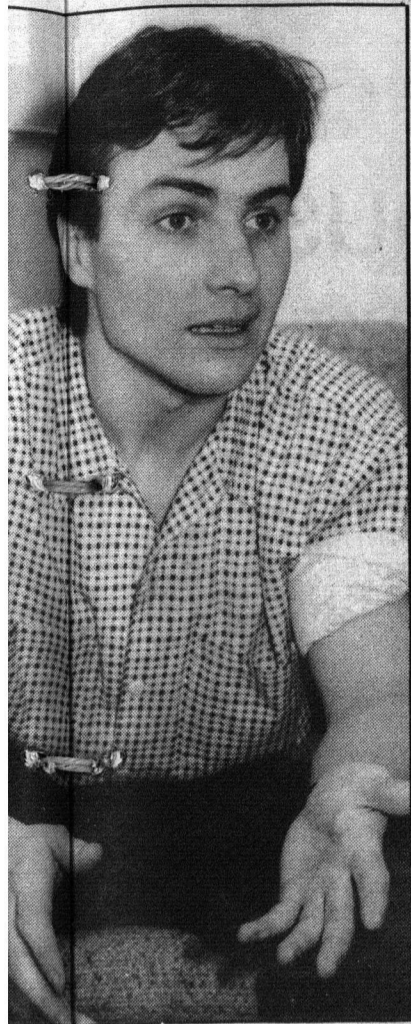


Photo Bill St. John

"Some of the best theatre I've seen has been Canadian. Toronto is the third largest theatre community in the world."

"I don't have much confidence in the Canadian government. They're going to sell us down the river."

"A lot of Canadian films can't find the screens to be shown."

"I'm not a technical actor. When you work from the inside it won't be the same every night. You're hitting the same notes, but the route you're taking will change slightly. If

you follow the same route you're dead -- you're just reading the lines -- the stage manager could be out there reading the play to the audience. 85 per cent of the plays I see

are like this. I'd rather see an actor be totally live on stage, even if he's not doing the play letter perfect, rather than see someone give the play exactly as it was written, but not be totally live."

"I have so much to learn," says Black. "You can never learn everything there is to know about acting. In a play, everything changes every night -- the feelings are different and the actors are reacting in different ways -- your performance has to echo that."

"You shouldn't stop questioning yourself. You can always be better. As soon as you think what you're doing is perfect is when you should give it up. It can always be better."

Round Five: Black on the Theatre Community

"We're all working together in the theatre -- actors, directors, technical people -- yet the atmosphere of the theatre is unenlightened and dictatorial. It's such a dichotomy. Some directors aren't even willing to open their eyes and see."

"You need the director for that one vision of the play, but he must be flexible."

Not that Black lets his peers off the hook:

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