

News of the arts

Canadian playwrights on tour

Five Canadian playwrights recently toured Australia and New Zealand to introduce and promote English-Canadian playwrighting.

Playwrights Carol Bolt, Chris Brookes, Erika Ritter, Sheldon Rosen and George Ryga illustrated the diversity of the work being done in English-speaking Canada through selected readings and general discussions. They visited Adelaide, Canberra, Melbourne, Sydney, Newcastle, Wellington and Auckland. Readings were presented by the playwrights at professional theatres in Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney and Auckland. They also held discussions with organizations such as the Australian Writers' Guild, the Victorian Arts Council and, Playmarket, an agency for New Zealand playwrights.

In Canberra, the Canadian playwrights attended the Australian National Playwrights' Conference. A reading by Australian actors of one of Carol Bolt's works was staged at the conference and, during scheduled seminars and meetings she discussed the state of Canadian playwrighting.

The Australian and New Zealand tour, organized by the Department of External Affairs and the Guild of Canadian Playwrights, followed a successful tour in Britain last year by Canadian playwrights and is part of the Department's program to promote Canadian playwrighting abroad.

CBC buys rights to Vietnam series

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation has bought Canadian rights to the first television history of the Vietnam War, featuring battle film never before seen in the West.

The Canadian-made series, *The Ten Thousand Day War*, tells the story of the conflict from the opening of the French Indo-China war in 1945 to the fall of Saigon in 1975. It is based on 90 original interviews with top Vietnamese, American and French figures. Episodes will be aired starting this autumn.

The \$3-million production was devised by ex-Vietnam correspondent Michael Maclear, now executive producer with TDW Productions Ltd. of Toronto, which will release the programs internationally later this year.

Program to aid writers

Astral Film Productions Limited of Montreal plans to organize a program aimed at discovering and developing Canadian screen writers.

"As a Canadian entertainment entity, we acknowledge and appreciate that the development of Canadian talent is essential to the continued growth of the film industry," said Astral President Harold Greenberg.

Mr. Greenberg said that Astral was also looking into the possibility of instituting an annual seminar on film-making: the creative side such as writing and directing, as well as the commercial aspects.

Astral Film Productions Ltd. is a subsidiary of Astral Bellevue Pathé Ltd., Canada's largest, fully-integrated motion picture organization.

New musical instruments created

A Toronto musician has designed and built two new musical instruments which she calls the columbine and the amaranth.

Gayle Young, a 30-year-old composer-performer, explained that she is particularly interested in "special tunings". The columbine, a percussion instrument resembling a vibraphone, is tuned in such a way that it has 23 pitches an octave. It is made of strips of three-quarter inch steel tubing mounted to a frame. There are 61



Gayle Young with her columbine, the percussion instrument she created.

notes in all.

The amaranth has 24 strings which can be bowed or struck with mallets. It is approximately four feet long, 20 inches wide and about the height of a table.

Miss Young explained that it has several movable bridges, so it can be adapted to different systems of tuning.

She says she is interested in electronic music and over the past 18 months has worked on the "Lecaine project". She has been compiling data on the electronic keyboard instruments built under the supervision of the late Dr. Hugh Lecaine of Ottawa.

She has created musical environments for sculpture exhibitions given by Reinhard Reitzenstein at the Carmen Lamanna Gallery in Toronto.

Humour award presented

Donald Jack of Lindsay, Ontario was recently presented the 1980 Leacock Award for Humour.

He also received a \$2,000 prize donated by Hudson's Bay Company for his book *Me Bandy, You Cissie*. A prolific author of radio, television and film scripts as well as four books in the *Bandy* series, Jack is the second three-time winner of the Leacock award, winning it in 1963 for *Three Cheers for Me*, and in 1974 for *That's Me in the Middle*.

The award was presented at a banquet in Orillia, where Leacock had his summer home.

Arts briefs

The largest single gift ever received by the Canadian Opera Company from a corporate sponsor has been donated by American Express Canada, Incorporated. The contribution of \$60,000 is also the largest ever made by American Express to a North American performing arts organization. It will be used to help sponsor special performances of Bellini's opera *Norma* in April and May 1981.

Writer Roch Carrier has been awarded the City of Montreal's grand prize for literature. The prize and a cheque for \$3,000 was presented for Carrier's collection of short stories entitled *Les enfants du bonhomme dans la lune* (The Children of the Man in the Moon). A panel of judges considered 83 literary works.