

ARTS

"Let Us Choose" brings home conscription issue

By CATHI GRAHAM

Performance art? Okay, maybe once, just to see what it's all about.

What it's about is communication, as Scott Marsden demonstrated when he performed "Let Us Choose" at the IDA Gallery here on campus November 8. The twenty-minute piece of multi-media art brought home the issue of conscription in South Africa to an audience of approximately fifty people. The crowd, although small, watched the relay of visual imagery intently.

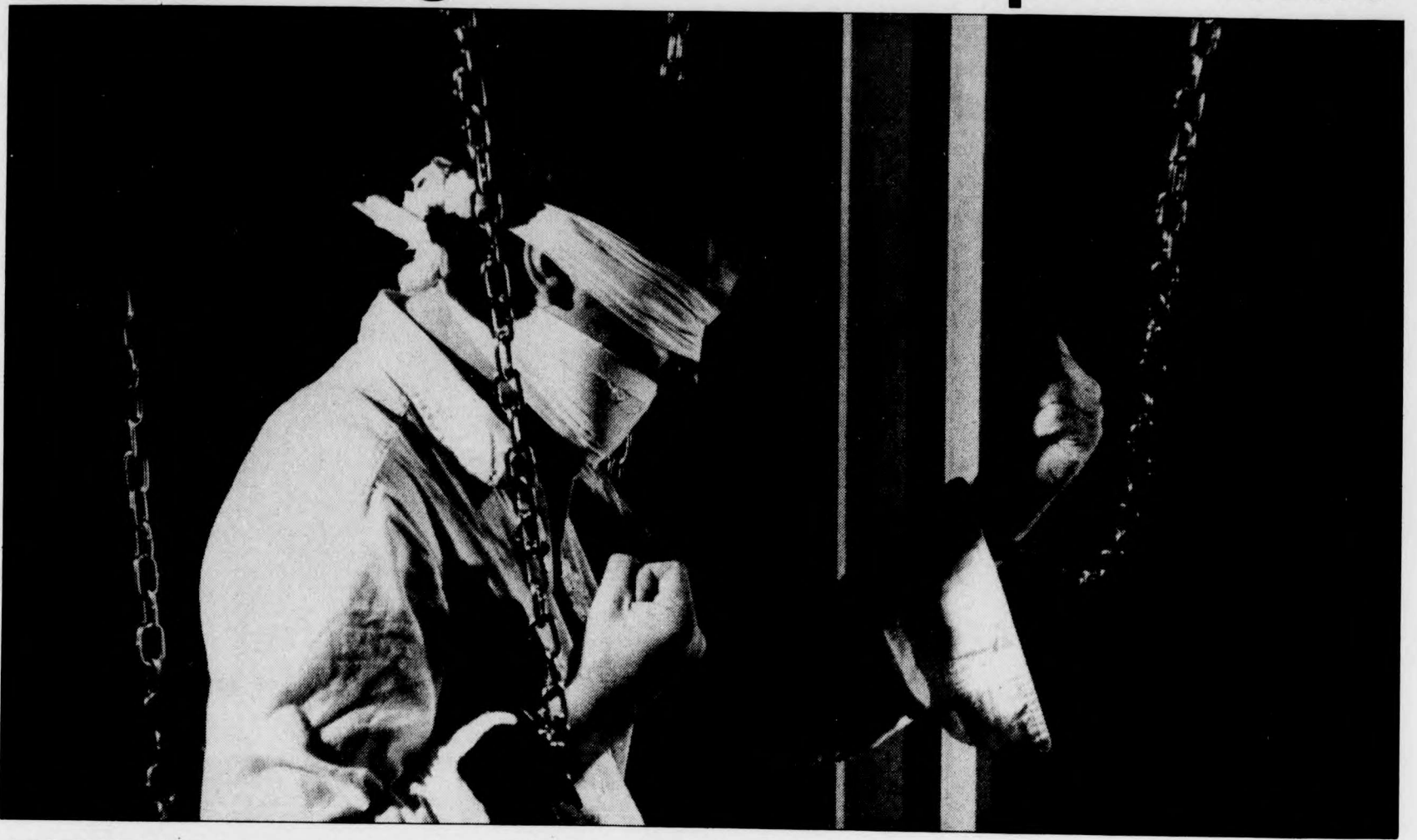
Marsden, a graduate student in Fine Arts at York, began his performance by stepping forward and stating as though it were nothing extraordinary, "I will handcuff myself now." Once bound and gagged, Marsden's body became his only source of expression, aside from the dual slide images and tape-recorded voices which accompanied the performance. Within a cage-like structure he strutted and posed to beat of Afrikan voices expounding upon the violence in black townships. The taped messages continued, oscillating between militant assertions, alien feminist voices criticizing the dynamics of power, and more analytical statements about the state of affairs. As these audiotro signals switched, so too did the slides and the poses of our "captive" to maintain an overall, fast-moving. Within this context of multi-media, the essence of the piece emerged.

Since 1961 there has been conscription in South Africa. All men must serve two years as members of a military which maintains apartheid. Conscription begins at the age of 16 for these men, unless they choose to go to college, in which case their service is deferred until their education is complete. Those who choose not to serve the term face excommunication, imprisonment, or worse. "I'm leaving the country because I don't want to fight in the army. I don't know if I can ever come back," declares the voice of young man during the performance, crystallizing Marsden's point.

A serious political artist, Marsden chose performance art as the most viable means of expressing his views on the issue. Understandably so, performance is as close to the real thing as some people will let themselves get.

At the end of the performance, Marsden unlocked his handcuffs mélange of projected voices chanting, "We call for an end to conscription. We call for just peace in our land." The last, lingering image with which we were left, was two handshakes on either side of a newly freed man facing a blinding white light. A ray of hope at the last.

As the lights in the gallery came up, Marsden asked if there were any questions. His audience responded with wry laughter.



MAKING HIS POINT: Bound and gagged, performance artist Scott Marsden criticized South Africa's policies in "Let Us Choose".

Season opens with an 'industrial' sound

By LEO MACDONALD

SOUND PRESSURE
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Sound Pressure opened its season November 12 with "industrial strength" music that ranged from offensive to innovative.

The concert showcased works composed by York professor James Tenney, as well as offerings by Michael Bussiere, Jeffery Brooks, and John Cage.

The first piece, a world premiere entitled "Eldorado Nuclear," began with a recorded excerpt from the House of Commons Question Period. One minister was asked why

low-level nuclear water is being indiscriminately dumped in southern Ontario.

The standardized answer was, of course, that a commission had been appointed to investigate the problem. Then the work began with a violent, explosive crescendo that jolted us to attention. The piece continued with discordant violin notes,

accompanied by bassoon (Shanon Peet) and baritone sax (David Mott) arpeggio flourishes. Bruno Degazio's synthesizer generated a wavy background vibrato.

The second work, "Koan For String Quartet," composed by James Tenney, was less provocative. Played on a hexagonal Raad violin, the piece involved a bowed tremolo progressing through a series of micro-tonal intervals on to a progressively higher pair of strings. The resulting sound was like a European police siren that revolved in and out of tune.

If this sounds too experimental for your taste then perhaps you would have preferred John Cage's "Three Dances For Two Pianos." A unique sound was produced by screws, bolts, and plastic and rubber washers fastened to the strings of a grand piano. The piano became a percussion orchestra of steel drums, gamelans, rattles, and low congas. Casey Sokol and Christine Petrowska pounded out the rhythmic collage of jungle beats.

The final work, "Pieces of Lead," was absolute hell. According to Jeffery Brookes, the composer, the

cont'd on p. 18

Music awards honour talent

By HOWARD KAMAN

Toronto's many talented musicians don't get the credit they deserve, let alone a Grammy or Juno. So, Toronto honoured them with its own local awards show last Friday.

A packed crowd at Massey Hall witnessed the second annual Toronto Music Awards, honouring the city's best and brightest talent.

The audience included a large portion of Canada's rock royalty. While old masters, such as Rush's Geddy Lee, were honoured with nominations, the roster was largely filled with new musicians.

From performances by Micah

Barnes, to The Tragically Hip, the show ran the gamut of musical variety. Despite the variety in music, only a few bands — particularly Blue Rodeo and Jeff Healey — dominated the awards.

Healy, who performed at last year's show as an unknown, is on the brink of stardom.

Blue Rodeo's Jim Cuddy, the voice of the group's ballads, easily picked up Best Male Vocalist. It seemed unfair that the band collected prizes for Best Local Success and Best International Success, even though they faced capable competition from such groups as Triumph, Frozen Ghost, and Eye Eye.

The Jeff Healey Band was an

obvious choice in the Best Blues Group Category. Yet, unlike Blue Rodeo, Healey did not win every category he was nominated for. He was beaten out for the Rising Star Guitarist Award by Greg Fraser, the lead player in Brighton Rock.

Healey's performance set the place on fire. He played an astonishing set from his *See The Light* album, including his cover of John Hiatt's "Confidence Man." Healey closed with his trademark wild antics on the album's title track.

Healey gave up the Carson Show to do the Toronto Music Awards because he couldn't pick a talk show over his hometown. And his performance didn't waste the opportunity.

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