

Another chapter of Simon's life

Movie review by Marni Stanley

Chapter Two could have been a good movie if it had gone comic or straight, but it tries to go both ways and the strain is too much. Celluloid doesn't stretch apparently.

Chapter Two is the story of Jennie McClean (Marsha Mason) and George Schneider (James Caan) and when boy meets girl, after a number of cute delays, it is love and marriage all the way. Or at least it would have been except that George, recently widowed, marries before he has dealt with his wife's death and his emotional confusion puts the couple on very shaky ground. Fortunately they seem to have the money and the leisure to indulge in lengthy soul searching — ah, the pleasures of the rich.

Balancing their relationship is the side plot of Teo (Joe Bologna), George's brother, and Faye (Valerie Harper), Jennie's best friend. Their aborted attempt at marital infidelity, he apparently did not require much practise, is slightly amusing but I failed to see the point.

Although the film begins on a dramatic note it quickly shifts to the fast-paced style of oneliners that worked so well for Simon ten years ago. In the second half it goes back to being dramatic and pacing disappears. This uneasy vacillation between comedy and drama spoils the film; it just isn't focused enough to keep the audience engaged. Most of the comic material is quite good and probably could have been expanded into a full script, but personally I would have liked to see Simon try it as a drama. The kinds of

emotional and sexual problems that accompany George's dilemma are suggested in the film but they are not drawn with enough detail to engross us. We are tantalized by two genres and then fed neither.

In spite of all the on-location shots one can not help feeling that they are watching a play. Watching the main characters shop on New York street markets or do it 'better in the Bahamas' while Marvin Hamlisch musack fills the theater does not reassure me that this is really a movie. A number of scenes, the telephone conversations for example, would actually work better on a stage. They seem vapid on screen.

Mason plays an actress and her performance is interesting but a little short of Oscar material. Of course, she is forced to repeatedly utter such gems as "I want to give you everything" and "I over motivate". Neil Simon, Mason's husband, apparently scripted the role for her and it is as close to autobiographical as he is likely to get. Caan is strangely uncomfortable in his role as the intellectual writer; his George is stiff and unconvincing. One suspects that he hasn't published in spite of evidence to the contrary.

Robert Moore directed this film with a slickness that almost manages to camouflage why so many of the throw-away lines are throw-aways. He treats the camera merely as a recording device and that also contributes to the 'watching a play' effect.

If you're in the market for some cute comebacks take in *Chapter Two*. It's really not a bad movie, just uninspiring — somehow I don't think I would have finished chapter one.

Myth-maker from the Island

Jack Hodgins, the Vancouver Island writer who has become famous by making famous his own little patch of ground — Vancouver Island — is the final reader in the series of readings sponsored by the Canada Council and the English Department at U of A.

Hodgins' first book, the story collection *Split Delaney's Island*, won great praise when it was published in the mid-seventies. The brilliant and outrageously mythic *The Invention of the World* followed soon after and secured Hodgins a large and delighted following. Here's what *Weekend Magazine* said of it: "*The Invention of the World* joins Robertson Davies' *Fifth Business* as the decade's most distinguished Canadian novel and establishes Jack Hodgins as Canada's most exciting new writer!"

In the fall of 1979, Jack Hodgins published his second novel, *The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne*, to continued critical praise. It's the kind of book, says Robert Harlow in *Books in Canada*, that has energy and spirit and the essence of that life yearned for in everything Jack Hodgins writes.

This Thursday, Hodgins will be reading at 12:30 pm in AV L-3 of the Humanities Centre.

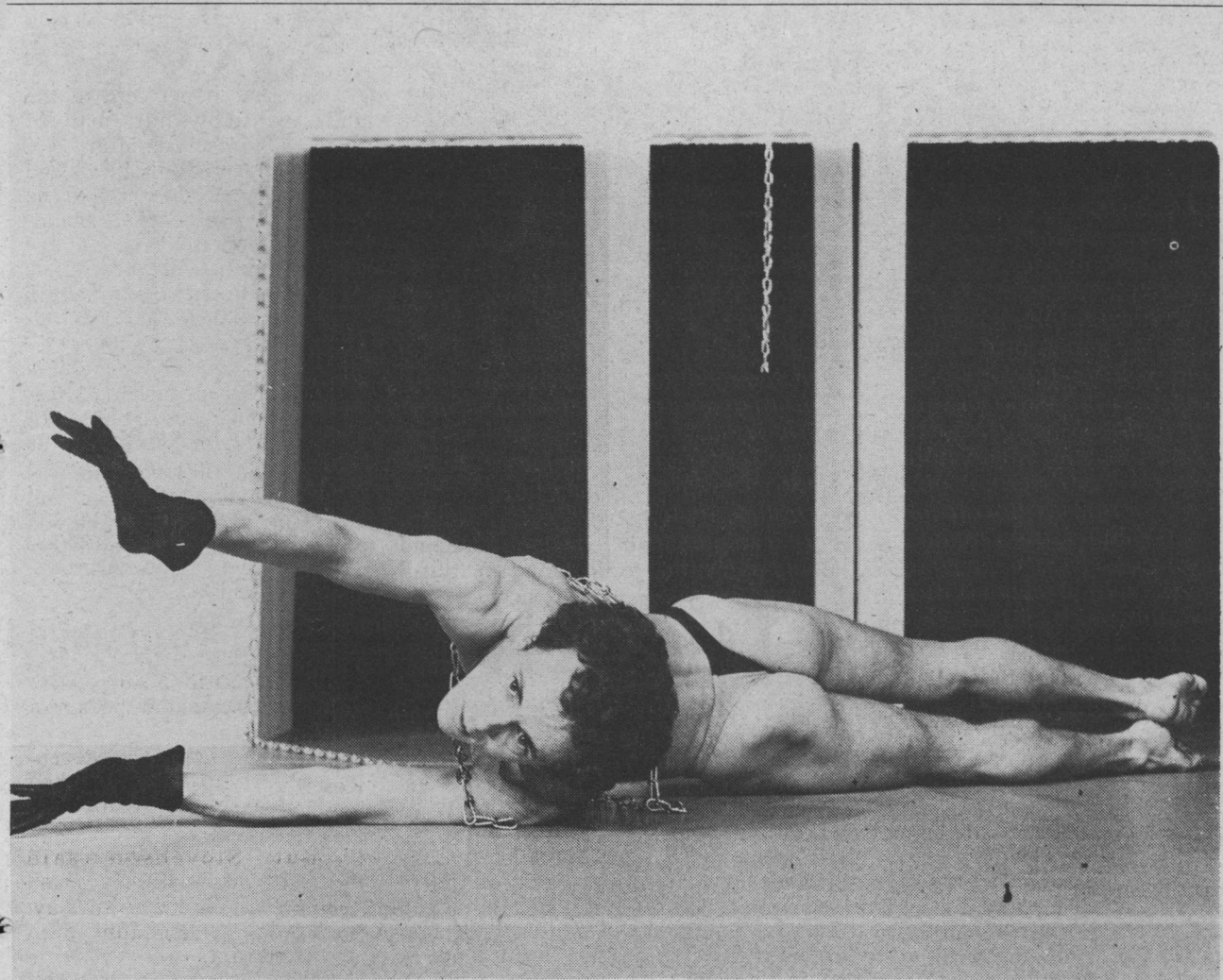


photo Terry Grinevitch

Some guys get so tied up in their work they have no time for anyone. But not Brian Webb. He and his dance company are celebrating their first anniversary March 20 and 21, with a program in SUB Theatre. Webb will be collaborating with local visual artists and musicians as he explores the sensual, physical and spiritual with wry humor and a fine disregard for convention. Tickets for the 8 p.m. shows at Mike's, HUB and the door: \$4.50 for students.

New theater group going for message plays

by Julie Green

Caliban, Edmonton's newest theater group, wants to perform necessary and accessible plays. "If only two per cent of the population goes to theater regularly, it is obvious that theater is inaccessible or not appealing to most people," says Jane Heather, a member of Caliban's artistic steering committee. "There is a myth that you have to have some special knowledge about plays to enjoy seeing them and such is not the case."

Filling this gap which the commercial theater ignores is part of the reason that Caliban was formed. Caliban doesn't assume the pretensions that other theaters do. They shun flashy theater and the media's myth that actors are extraordinary. Caliban clarifies the question of whether theater can be about politics and the "real" world, says Heather.

Performing political plays was a decision of Caliban's members. "The theater is a powerful means of communication," says Heather, an actress by

Ooops, we're sorry

The production of *The Murder of Auguste Dupin* takes place at Corbett Hall, and not at Northern Light Theatre, as erroneously reported in the *Gateway's* "Thursday Thursday" column.

Slugs dance Dinwoodie

Having a hard time lately finding a band you can dance to? Doug and the Slugs should be the answer to your problem.

The Slugs are Vancouver's most popular dance band and you can find out why this Friday in Dinwoodie.

The Slugs aren't new wave and they aren't rock and roll, they're everything in between. Reggae, rock, swing, calypso, Tex-Mex and a lot of rhythm and blues; the Slugs in good old dance time.

Tickets for the eight o'clock show are available for \$6.30 at HUB and Mike's.

training. "One can choose what to portray and we want to portray drama which relates to people as they truly are."

Caliban wants to deal with the question of what is true development at the state, local and home levels. "Society is underdeveloped as demonstrated by the sexism and discrimination that is present. At a higher stage people maintain their human dignity and are guaranteed useful work," says Heather.

Caliban was formed in the spring of 1979, though the theater did not gain momentum until the fall. Their activity peaked last month with the production of the play, *Fanshen*, by David Hare. The word fanshen means to turn over, to completely change values and behaviour. The play is about the final four years of a village's conflict with the Kuomintang government, during the peasant struggles of the 1940's.

About 300 people attended the six performances at Espace Tournesol and Garneau United Church. Members of the audience were invited to remain after the performance for an informal question and answer session with the cast about the play.

Under the direction of Heather, about 15 people performed *Fanshen's* 34 parts. "It is very difficult to get staff for a volunteer project because the production is so time consuming," she says. Advertisements for auditions brought students, professionals, a social worker, a carpenter and a designer from the Citadel, among others, to participate in the play.

A grant from CUSO gave the group the needed financial support to do a play, and Caliban looked at several scripts before deciding on *Fanshen*. Eventually Caliban would like to develop their own scripts as the strength of the troupe grows.

"It would be difficult for the theater to continue unless we can live on it because the production of a play is so time-consuming. Nearly everyone who worked on *Fanshen* turned down or quit jobs," says Heather. Nevertheless, encouraged by the success of *Fanshen*, the company would like to do more plays.



photo courtesy of the Journal

A scene from Caliban Theatre's first production. Lee Anne Pellerin raises a gun in last month's production of *Fanshen*.