

Thematic content minimal; but plays deserve credit

by Wayne Kondro

Carol Bolt, *Playwright's in the Series*, Playwright's Co-

1976
An old idea being kicked around these days is that a play should not be judged without having seen a splendid performance of it. Opposition to this view implies that drama is simply a form of literature. There are arguments in support of both viewpoints, however one of the advantages of seeing a play is that one cannot be misled by techniques which are more theatrical than dramatic.

In this day and age one does not discuss the theme of a play or its philosophical significance. One may have. Rather, we are asked to 'experience the various particulars', feelings rather than thoughts. This avant-garde implies what actually happens in the play is not meant to have any overt significance.

The first play, *Buffalo Jump* is the end result of the 'collective creation' process experienced by the Toronto's Theatre Passe Muraille. A local writer, Rudy Wiebe, is currently undergoing the same experience. Wiebe's play will premiere at Theatre 3, in part of preliminary Philadelphia production prior to the big opening at Toronto's Broadway. The collective creation approach presents plays utilizing the

creative and theatrical abilities of a number of people rather than of the traditional single playwright.

In *Buffalo Jump* a group of desperate men, in the Depression year, find themselves working in relief camps set up by the government. They rebel against the conditions they live in and organize workers unions with vaguely emphasized communistic leanings. Eventually the 'On to Ottawa Trek' is organized, only to be thwarted by the powerful by unsympathetic society. Any thematic content is minimal. The omniscient social forces squelch individual solutions and aspirations amid juxtaposed predeterminism, cascading waterfalls, and guitar tunes. To the playwright's credit there is the occasional scene which is very humorous. In one, R.B. Bennett is presented as a bull whom Red Evans, the worker's leader, rides only to be thrown and challenged by the bull's obstinate and tough nature.

The remaining two plays are a departure from the vague historical narrative of the first. Consequently, they do not contain any unified narrative action. Both involve the juxtaposition of image, people, place and time but on a less spectacular level. The second play: *Gave* presents a modern-day Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont at Batoche

attempting to attain the heroic status of their mythological counterparts. To avoid confusion when reading this play you must remember there are two Louis' and two Gabriels. However, using this approach you violate Bolt's intention of presenting assimilated present and past. The consolation is in being able to discern the differences between the present-day Metis Louis and Gabriel and their historical counterparts.

Red Emma, the third play, is by far the best of the three. The focal point is the revolutionary Emma Goldman. The early part of her political activity, is played down as Bolt extends Emma's dynamic character into the more private aspects of her life. Unfortunately, Bolt has a tendency to romanticize Emma, but the play is saved by her idealistic enthusiasm. As well, it is more singularly focused than the first two plays in the collection.

On the whole, Bolt deserves credit for the stylistic experiments she attempts, although this experimentation often loses sight of unified intent. As a result, the plays become more of a loose connection of parts. In light of the direction some modern drama is moving in, this would probably make the plays successful theatrical drama.

Farmers battle strip-mining

Theatre 3 to premiere play

Theatre 3 Artistic Director Mark Schoenberg has announced two major changes in the 1977 season, opening January 15, which include addition of a play co-authored by U of T English professor Rudy Wiebe. The third production in Theatre 3's season will now be the premiere of a major new play to its Toronto run. Theatre 3 Toronto's Theatre Passe Muraille will co-produce an as-yet-untitled work in the "collective creation" style. Rudy Wiebe Theatre Passe Muraille Artistic Director Paul Thompson work with the cast of 10.

Wiebe says the play focuses on the battle being waged by farmers south of Edmonton to save their land from strip-mining. Mark Schoenberg comments that Theatre 3 has always worked to

concern, and we're very proud to be premiering it here.

The fourth of the six productions planned will now be a triple-bill of three Chekhov farces - *The Marriage Proposal*, *The Boor*, and *On the Harmfulness of Tobacco*.

These two productions replace the previously announced *Candida* and *Festival of New Canadian Plays*.

The Theatre 3 Performance Centre opens with Brendan Behan's *The Hostage* (Feb. 15-26). Also scheduled are *Long Day's Journey into Night* (Mar. 15-27), *La Ronde* (June 14-25), and *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid* (July 19-30).

Subscriptions are available at 426-6870, and all Bay outlets.

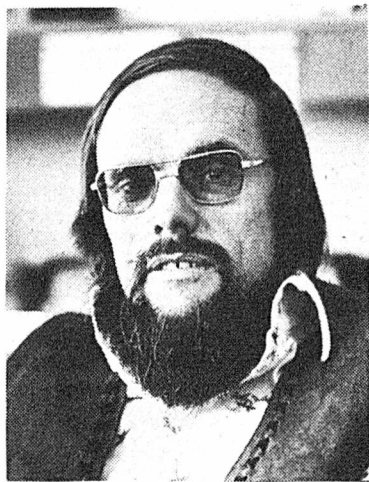
Theatre 3 officials have also announced that construction of their new theatre in downtown Edmonton is ahead of schedule.

Theatre 3's technical staff moves into the new premises this week to begin work on the inaugural production of Brendan Behan's *The Hostage*. Contractors are meanwhile installing the theatre's sophisticated lighting and sound systems, and laying in new flooring.

The \$625,000 renovation project at 10425-95 Street, designed to allow fully flexible stagings, began in early October.

General Manager Stephen Gentles reports that the theatre will be substantially complete before the end of January. "We're fortunate to have some leeway in getting the building fully ready

for the public for our opening next month," he adds.



Rudy Wiebe

Theatre 3 Board President Michael Liknaitzky says that he is encouraged by initial response to the theatre's fund-raising campaign from the corporate community.

He says a number of substantial contributions have been received from major corporations, and more are expected in the near future.

Liknaitzky adds that with this first phase of fund-raising successfully underway, Theatre 3 will now canvass the general public to help complete financing. "Our audience in particular continues to be most supportive of the campaign, and that audience is larger this season than ever before."



Paul Thompson

present theatre of real impact to Canadians. This is a production of national note and local

We still have 20 (count 'em, 20 two-zero) application forms left for the position of Gateway editor 1977-78 (that's how many we began with when we opened nominations two weeks ago). So get yours quick, before the rush. Now. Room 282, SUB. Nominations close Feb. 4.

...Hot Flashes...

MUSIC

Danny Greenspoon will be appearing at the Hovel January 21, 22 and 23. An engaging and witty performer, Danny's repertoire ranges from blues and ragtime, to folk and country, to swing music and traditional jazz. Tickets are available at the door, \$2.00 for members and \$3.00 for non-members.

Edmonton pianist John Hendrickson will perform with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, Maestro Pierre Hetu, conductor, on Friday January 28, 8:30 p.m. Saturday January 29, 8:30 p.m. and Sunday January 30, 2:30 p.m. Tickets for these concerts will be available Friday January 21 at the Symphony Office, 11712 87 Avenue. For further information phone 433-2020.

The Magic Flute by Mozart will be presented in English at the Victoria Composite High School Auditorium on Wednesday January 26 and Saturday January 29. Performances both evenings are at 8:00 p.m. Admission is \$3.00 for adults and \$2.00 for students, with tickets available at the door. *The Magic Flute* is co-produced by the U of A Department of Music and the Victoria Composite Drama Department.

THEATRE

The Theatre Francais D'Edmonton will present *Il Suffit d'un Peu d'Air (Just a Bit of Air)*. The dates for this production are January 28, 29, 30 and February 4, 5, 6, with all performances at 8:00 p.m. Theatre Francais D'Edmonton is located at the College St. Jean auditorium, 8406-91 Street.

ART

Recent paintings by Margaret Mooney will be exhibited in the Foyer Gallery of the Centennial Library from January 28 to be until February 25. These paintings are acrylic and will be offered for sale. More information may be obtained by phoning 433-0321 in the evenings.

CINEMA

The Czechoslovakian feature film *Zert/The Joke* will be presented by the National Film Theatre on Tuesday, January 25 at 8:00 p.m. in the Central Library Theatre. This restricted film is in Czechoslovakian with English subtitles. Tickets are \$2.00 for adults and \$1.50 for students.

LECTURES

Grant MacEwan Community College presents a lecture-discussion series on the best sellers of today. Caterina Loverso will instruct the course every Wednesday and Friday during the noon hour, for 10 weeks beginning January 26. The series is in the Edmonton Room of the Central Edmonton Public Library. Bring your lunch, coffee will be supplied.

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