

# Entertainment

## Copithorne still exhausting all the possibilities

by Dean Bennett  
and Gilbert Bouchard

Being a walking exception to the theatrical rule seems to be a way of life for Edmonton actress Marianne Copithorne.

In a profession fraught with insecurity and unemployment — not to mention a shortage of good lead roles for women — Copithorne not only acts all year round but has time to hone other creative skills.

"I like to work here," she said. "After I graduated from the U of A's Bachelor of Fine Arts program in 1982, I went to act in Victoria, but I returned here because I hadn't exhausted all the theatrical possibilities this city has to offer."

"There are more opportunities for actresses here than in say, Calgary or Vancouver or Toronto. There are a lot of theatres here plus, with places like the Chinook Theatre and the Fringe Festival you even have the opportunity to put your own show together."

Last season, Copithorne appeared in *Gimme That Prime Time Religion* for Nexus Theatre and in *First Snowfall* and *Is Nothing Sacred Anymore?* for Theatre Network. In addition, she has also done radio and film work, but the lack of work in these fields in Edmonton, however, prevents her from doing more. Still she can't say she prefers screen acting to stage.

If I had to choose artistically between the stage and screen it would be the former. On stage you have three weeks of work to perfect your character, but in film you do the scene until you get it right, but then its over. If you don't like the way it was done, there's nothing you can do to change it."

Copithorne's talents are not limited to acting. One of the writers of *Prime Time Religion*, she has teamed up with fellow actor Murray McCune to write *Your Wildest Dreams* — a play that will be presented next April at Theatre Network.

The reason they decided to write this play, Copithorne says, was out of mutual disenchantment with the theatre.

"Murray and I were sitting around having a beer one night and complaining about the dreadful productions we were in. We weren't enjoying theatre at the time. We wanted to do theatre that was fun, that would have people leaving the theatre humming. Theatre Network got a grant and was able to finance us during our writing of the play."

*Your Wildest Dreams* is the story of Adam and Eve and Ted and Fern. Adam and Eve are on a mission from God to save Ted and Fern's marriage. God figures that if He can't make an ordinary relationship like Ted and Fern's work, what hope does mankind itself have?



Photo Bill St. John

While the play does use biblical characters, Copithorne is quick to point out that they aren't satirizing religion.

"Adam and Eve are more Noel Cowardesque that they are religious," she said.

In addition to performing in the show McCune and Copithorne will also be singing. At present Copithorne considers herself "an actress who sings." She wants to develop her singing talents and says she wouldn't be averse to appearing in the odd musical now and then.

Copithorne is currently starring in the Phoenix production of *Identity Crisis* and *Beyond Therapy* at the Kaasa stage. Both are high energy shows, something Copithorne attributes to the direction of Bob Baker.

"Although it is a set script Bob had us approach it largely through improvisation. He had us improvise scenes that could have taken place between the characters before the actual scene that (playwright) Christopher Durang wrote. He put us on the hot seat and interviewed us as our characters. One night, we sat around and read the entire script four times over and with about one hour and a half left in the rehearsal he had us act out the whole play without the script. It's amazing how much you actually retain."

"Bob makes sure you're always thinking and always moving during rehearsal time. The responsibility is on you and that makes the whole process very exciting."

At present, Marianne Copithorne is happily riding the crest of theatrical employment in this city but is aware that to grow as an actress, Edmonton can only be a stepping stone.

"Right now I'd rather work full time in Edmonton than be an actress-waitress in Toronto. I see a move coming in maybe two years though I couldn't pick the exact date, but rest assured when the time comes, I'll go where the work is."



Above: Marianne Copithorne  
Inset: Copithorne in *Gimme that Prime Time Religion*

Photo Greg McHarg

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