

# Entertainment

## Something in the Wind breath of fresh air

**Something in the Wind**  
Theatre Network  
til Feb. 9

review by Suzanne Lundrigan and Gilbert Bouchard

"Something in the Wind": makes sympathetic drama out of environmental issues.

Raymond Storey creates the McIsaac family: mother Jean, her husband Garnet, and their two children Donny and Karen, who live in the shadow and the stink of a sour gas plant erected on their property in the early fifties. The play chronicles their struggle to keep their way of life in the face of this interloper.

Initially plagued by small day to day irritations, the family then has to come to grips with long term health problems which they believe to be the direct result of the proximity of the sour gas plant.

This play's strength, purity, and simplicity make it a rewarding piece of drama.

Storey's script is strong: structurally, he effectively juxtaposes opposing points of view thereby effecting irony and maximizing contrast; further Storey has integrated all the elements of drama, as humour occurs as frequently as pathos.

This fine script is complemented by fine acting. Susan Sneath as Jean McIsaac shines as the conciliatory matriarch of the McIsaac clan. A fine job given that her character ages

thirty years during the play. Robert Winslow as the McIsaac son Donny is as brash and gangly as a kid off a ranch should be. Bonnie Green as his sister Karen is the perfect foil to Winslow's Donny. She provides just the right balance of sibling rivalry and fraternal love. Bradley C. Rudy creates an almost archetypal "company man" sliming in and out of the ranch like a twentieth-century Albertan snake oil salesman.

The play and production are very economical. Storey pared down his script to the bone. For example, the physical absence of Garnet McIsaac who exists only in the words and memories of the other actors. The set is equally stark: a bare stage and no props. Creative lighting and evocative music establish mood.

Into a world numbed by the statistics coming out of Bhopal, Storey has brought a genuine ranch family living day to day in the shadow of a hydrogen sulfide plant. Their concerns are our concerns. They worry about a sick child; they worry about the welfare of cattle ingesting sulphur-dusted feed; and they worry about keeping bread on the table. The audience identifies readily with them.

It is refreshing to see a play that takes politics and environmental concerns and presents them from the little guy's perspective.



Photo Bill St. John

The cast of *Something in the Wind*. Clockwise from top left: Bradley C. Rudy as the Company man, Bonnie Green as Karen, Susan Sneath as Jean, and Robert Winslow as Donny.

## Print shop play really hot off the presses



Photo Rob Schmidt

Starring in *Closing Time* from left to right Len Crowther as Willie, Christian St. Pierre as Serge, Phil Zyp as David, and Blair Haynes as Stan.

**Closing Time**  
Workshop West  
til Feb. 15

review by Regina Behnk

This past weekend saw the premiere of Daniel Libman's *Closing Time* at the Kaasa. The story is set in a Montreal based co-op printing shop called "La Presse Chien Chaud". The set design, by Walter Foster certainly give the flavour of a Montreal environs. A similar shop could easily be found on St. Laurent or some other indigent part of Montreal east.

Serge (Christian St. Pierre, a UofA B.F.A. graduate of 1984) and Stan (Blair Haynes) are two friends who decide to open a co-op printing shop. Initially they are both idealistic and dream of running their operation free of the bureaucracy which plagues the mega corporations.

Three years into the venture, Serge is calm and comical as denoted by his appearance. Dressed in corduroy pants and a green sweater torn at the elbow, his hands are filthy and it is apparent that he does the dirty work. Stan, on the contrary, is the picture of refinement wearing black dress pants, a crisp white shirt, and a tie. He immediately takes over the responsibilities of the desk. It's clear that over the years Stan has assumed the role of authority, he is the real businessman.

When Stan and Serge first began their business they recruited an old man Willie (Len Crowther) to serve as their teacher. Now, masters themselves operating the company at a deficit, Stan feels that they should retire Willie. In Stan's eyes Willie has become a liability and doesn't earn his salary. Serge is appalled with Stan's attitude and defends Willie. Complications ensue when Stan discovers that Willie has purchased \$2000 in materials for personal use on the company account.

Willie is supported by David (Phil Zyp) a young apprentice at the shop. Through their discussions we discover that Willie has written his autobiography and intends to use the shop's press and paper to print it.

Against the background of this issue Serge and Stan begin to bicker about who does what. In this sequence Serge becomes boss and Stan the employee. It becomes apparent that friendship and business do not mix well.

The casting for this performance is splendid. St. Pierre is especially convincing in his role. He has a timing that lends itself effectively to comedy. The script is so well crafted that it made the actor's job all the easier.

"Closing Time" which won Alberta Culture's Playwriting Competition last season is well worth viewing. It is produced by Workshop West at the Kaasa and runs through February 2.

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