

Drama on Canadian Campi

A University of Toronto CUP Feature

by Pearl Parnes

Judging from reactions of twelve universities to a CUP questionnaire sent out by the Varsity, the calibre of Canadian amateur acting is on a high level. Support of the university drama group, however, ranges from the apathetic state at Western to the well-filled theatre at the University of Toronto.

Acadia, too, suffers from the mediocre reception given to its productions. It has an ambitious programme including a Shakespearian play, a current Broadway hit, French plays, a religious one-acter by S.C.M. and an interclass drama festival with entries by each of the four years. It is headed by Prof. H. S. Sipperell, "probably the best dramatic coach in Eastern Canada", according to the report received. Yet one of the productions Joan of Lorraine, despite enthusiastic reviews, brought out only one-tenth of the student body.

Dalhousie, with superior stage and lighting equipment, and acting of "amateur excellence", fares rather better, with one-half to two-thirds of the students attending on student nights.

Bob Toye, president of the Players' Guild of the University of Western Ontario, gave a discouraging report of drama on his campus. The acting, he claims, "as amateur acting, is amateur". He blames lack of dramatic atmosphere and general lack of interest on the campus for this condition. The stage available to the Guild is very small, with no dressing rooms and poor lighting facilities, "a very high-schoolish

affair", he explained. Although Purple Patches, the annual show is enthusiastically received by students and city officials alike, the drama productions are poorly attended.

Paradoxically, it is the smaller colleges which generate the greatest enthusiasm for dramatic productions. The Sock and Buskin Drama Club at Carleton College, equipped with a very good stage and actors who participate in the Canadian Repertory Theatre and the Ottawa Little Theatre as well as in the campus productions, creates a good deal of interest, prompting the following editorial comment in the College newspaper:

"The Buskins deserve praise and encouragement for their full schedule of dramatic endeavours. If the other clubs on the campus showed as much interest in their work as this group, Carleton would be the most active club centre in the university field".

The University of Montreal, with only two productions in the last two years, has reached a high standard of excellence. "Fantasio" by Alfred de Musset, viewed by University of Toronto students on one of the Carabin week-ends, sent the Toronto people home raving about the modernistic decor, which gave a three-dimensional effect, and the "impeccable manner" in which a three-act play was produced by a minimum of sets on a stage without curtains. A one-act adaptation of Oedipus Rex was enthusiastically received by the Montreal students, who designed and made all stage props and costumes. Concentrated ef-

fort is put into the production, with the actors of Oedipus Rex spending one week up north to get perfect precision.

Saskatchewan, with a drama school, a small but adequate theatre, good stage and excellent lighting equipment, produces all their own scenery and costumes. Their usual six to eight night stands, including Russian and Greek translations, are well supported on the campus. McMaster, with facilities which are "terrible or worse" still manages to produce a three-act play and participate in the Inter-Varsity Drama League Festival.

St. Francis Xavier, another small college, specializes in modern three-act plays. Despite crowded rehearsal time, little or no previous training, and few productions, the enthusiasm and interest created in the student body is excellent, particularly musicals, (e.g. Brigadoon), comedies and farces. Serious drama does not draw well, however, and fifteen to twenty per cent of the students will not attend any production. An excellent auditorium in the basement of the college chapel possesses a large, rather disproportionately long stage, with good lighting equipment. All scenery and costumes are made by the students, as at most of the universities. Muslin covering is used here for sets, since it is cheaper than canvas, and adequate for the purpose. As is the case in most universities, there is a lack of construction and storage space for scenery.

Prices for campus productions usually range from 50 cents to one dollar, with the University of Ottawa, which gets an excellent student support, charging 25 to 40 cents.

The kinds of productions in the various universities is fairly constant, including one-act and three-act plays in English, French and German, Shakespeare and modern productions. Attempts at "theatre in the round", the arena style productions in which the audience sits on all four sides of the stage, have been made at Toronto and Western. "Silver Cord" and First and Last (Galsworthy) have both been produced at Toronto, with enthusiastic receptions. The Western University's Players' Guild did "Exodus". Abstract plays are in vogue as well, with The Huggers and No Exit creating furors at their respective universities.

In general, opportunities for original productions are good, but interest in them is lacking. At the University of Toronto, few plays are entered in the Robin Godfrey competition for the best student-written play. The winning entries are produced by the University College Players' Guild. Floor shows for dances at Carleton College are written by students, but a competition for student dramas produced only one result. At Western, there is a standing

Somebody Got the TAR Beat Out of Them!



Guild prize for any student-written one-act play produced by the Guild, but interest has been poor, and the prize has never been awarded. Dalhousie has produced two original plays by students, and Alberta, like Toronto, accepts original radio scripts.

Toronto and Alberta appear to be in the forefront in the attempt to produce Canadian plays. Several one-act plays have been done by the college societies of the University of Toronto, and Fortune My Toe was a successful Gill production last year. Another Robertson Davies play, At My Heart's Core had a successful two-week run at Alberta.

The University of Toronto Drama Committee, an organization which includes representatives from each of the college guilds, produces several bills of one-act plays each year. There are "invitation" evenings, in which plays are exchanged between colleges. Every large faculty and college produces at least one musi-

cal show, with the All-Varsity Revue, when it is produced, collects talent from the entire campus. Student interest in the theatre is excellent, particularly for musicals and the three-act plays presented at Hart House Theatre.

Several universities participate in provincial, inter-collegiate and Dominion Drama festivals. Western this year plays host to six universities in the Inter-Varsity Drama League Festival.

Newspaper coverage on the whole is good. Several universities have permanent critics covering all campus and important professional shows. St. Francis Xavier has even secured the assistance of the local radio station. Most of the papers print advances as well as critical reviews. Mt. Allison gives coverage almost amounting to publicity before the show, but "very rarely review—they consider students sufficiently qualified to make their own judgment," a view not shared by most other papers!

Greetings Students

FROM

"Med-o Club"



COME OUT and SEE US!

Ye old student DON WARNER is here each Wednesday and Saturday. All you need is two bucks (\$2) and your council card.



FRAT PARTIES CATERED TO

UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATES

Opportunities Exist for You in the

R.C.A.F. University Training Schemes



There are the following schemes to choose from:

1. Subsidization Scheme: Technical, non-technical and aircraft.
2. Winter and Summer Training Schemes: Technical, non-technical and aircraft.

Qualifications:

Students applying for Flight Cadet rank must fulfill the following requirements:

1. Be in the 1st or 2nd year of a 4-year course or in the 1st, 2nd or 3rd year of a 5-year course.
2. Produce evidence of satisfactory academic standing.

3. Be a Canadian citizen or a British subject resident in Canada.

Candidates for Air Crew:

Must have reached their 18th birthday but not reached their 22nd.

Candidates for Non-flying Branches:

Must have reached their 18th birthday but not their 35th, on the date of application.

Marital Status:

Must be single unless having had previous service.

For Further Information

concerning the above-mentioned schemes contact your R.C.A.F. University Liaison Officer:

PROF. H. R. THEAKSTON,
Head of Department of Engineering
Dalhousie University. Phone: 3-6945

or

F/LT. N. D. CAIRNS,
Commanding Officer, R.C.A.F. Recruiting Unit,
254 Barrington Street, Halifax. Phone 3-9171



Subsidization scheme now provides for the payment of books and instruments required for studies.

-THE TIME IS NOW!