

ENTERTAINMENT

Living rhythm and words

Poetic spectrum from performing artists

PAULETTE PEIROL

"Music and poetry are as natural as a trip to the shithouse--if you have the calling, you must go."

Poet, Clifton Joseph *Rhythm an' Hardtimes* at Atkinson College, January 17th, proved that the poetic form is a natural and effective means of expression, for those who "have the calling".

Following their 'instincts' were Dionne Brand, Lillian Allen, Krisantha Sri Bhaggiyadatta, Clifton Joseph and Devon Haughton. Both Allen and Joseph are former York students. Brand explained that together, the five poets represented "a spectrum of black poetry". This 'spectrum' included their reactions to black history, the family, women, Toronto the-not-always-so-good, and various social issues. The casual Crowe's Nest pub was filled with close to 30 attentive listeners.

Brand began the performance by reading from her two recently published books, *Primitive Offensive* and *Winter Epigrams and Epigrams to Ernesto Cardinal in Defense of Claudia*. She introduced the first by saying, "It is rare when we've confronted our history and dealt with it. Living in Canada made me an international black person... it's hard to transcend the 'Can-Lit' syndrome" Brand's *Winter Epigrams* offered a refreshing sense of witty humour. Like a stand-up comedian, she began her poems on a serious note, saving the punch lines for the end: "Any poem about winter in Montreal is pornography." Brand's two books will be launched on Jan. 29 at the Third World Bookstore in Toronto.

Allen is a n accomplished performance poet, having worked at such

clubs as Scuffers and The Isabella. She is a master of "dub poetry", a style composed to or with a reggae beat. She exploits "the idiosyncrasies of language", using her full tonal range and often vociferating to an emotional climax.

Like the character of Travis in the beginning of the movie *Taxi Driver*, Allen says, "Sometimes I think I write just so that I won't take up a gun." York professors Frank Davey, Bob Simmons, and Agnus Braid have provided much inspiration for her writing.

Sri Bhaggiyadatta writes satirically of institutions, the media, and social concerns, much like a "poetic Swift". He said, "At first I didn't want to be black, I wanted to be white. Then I wanted to be invisible." The audience found themselves chuckling; Sri Bhaggiyadatta enabled us to laugh at ourselves.

Joseph, like Allen and Haughton, uses dub poetry. His love of music is evident in his poetic rhythms, which often border on chanting. He is a very polished performer, and has worked with Irving Layton.

Joseph's first book, *Metropolitan Blues*, was released January 19 at the Third World Bookstore. However, the printed words often seem incoherent without Joseph's suave, yet strong, voice to give them context. This is especially true of his concrete poetry.

Haughton read last, using reggae music as a background. He lacked the finesse of the others, and failed to communicate directly with the audience.

Brand said that the five of them collaborated because, "Well, you know, us poets are all lonely. This way we can tell each other, 'hey, it's

shit'--we need feedback." The audience provided much 'feedback' with their hearty applause and enthusiasm. And Joseph's suggestion of "Monday night poetry at York" seems to be a good idea--especially for those who are tired of *Monday Night Football* and *MASH* reruns.

Glendon cheers pianist Bowkun

NIGEL TURNER

This Sunday saw Glendon gallery present Helen Bowkun on piano playing selections by Bach, Ravel, Brahms, and Chopin, to a delighted audience, in the first of two such benefit concerts to be held in the early part of 1983.

Bowkun, a Ukrainian-Canadian, who has performed with various orchestras including the Toronto Symphony, repeatedly demonstrated her intimate acquaintance with the piano in an exhausting performance which was stunning in its speed and accuracy. Her playing paid tribute to the masters who wrote the works.

The highlight of the two-hour performance was "Alborada del gracioso", the fourth part of Maurice Ravel's *Miroir*. It drew enthusiastic applause even before the final part, "La vallee des cloches" was presented.

Another notable piece was Frederic Chopin's "Andante Spianto and Grande Polonaise Brillante, op. 22". The final piece of the performance, it was a fitting climax. Bowkun received a standing ovation. She then played an encore as it was the only way to silence the applause.

CINESCENE

MARSHALL GOLDEN

With Father Finance giving everybody a hard time, it's important to be discerning about where you spend your movie dollar--actually, that's dollars.

There's nothing more annoying than shelling out five bucks (10, if you're treating) to sit in the dark and watch two hours of filmic dreck. While there is a large selection of films playing in Toronto, there is also a high percentage of garbage in that selection. In an attempt to help you avoid the dreck, *Excilibur* offers Cinescene, a periodic survival guide to Toronto film.

Not to be missed

Independence Day: One of the best films of the year. Three people battle with themselves, their small town and the small town mentality that holds them prisoner in their attempt to gain true personal independence. The performance by Dianne Wiest, as the woman who seeks freedom from her sadistic wife-beating husband, is electrifying. Her face haunts us long after the film has ended--a reminder that each of us faces our own personal struggle for independence in some facet of our lives. The film succeeds because of the extent to which the audience can identify with these people and their fight. The cleverly woven script combines with taut direction and excellent performances to make *Independence Day* a film well worth the price.

Come Back to the Five and Dime Jimmy Dean, Jimmy Dean: This latest offering from Robert Altman is perhaps his best yet. *Jimmy Dean* subtly explores how much people change over the years, and how much they don't, through the story of five members of a James Dean fan club, The Disciples. By ambiguously cutting between a modern time reunion of The Disciples (held at a Five and Dime Store) and the same Disciples at the same store 20 years earlier, Altman artfully reveals a human vulnerability that is fascinating to observe. Never before has Altman shown such control in his craft. Cher, Karen Black, and Sandy Dennis give astonishing performances and the peach dust cinematography sets the perfect mood. *Jimmy Dean* succeeds because it removes the characters from their situational facade and stands them on their own for objective judgement. This film's individuality makes it a must-see.

Circular celluloid file

First Blood: An incredibly awful movie that has been playing an incredibly long time. This waste of a five-spot shows what would happen if Sylvester Stallone went crazy and tried to take on an army with his bare hands (literally). There's lots of blood, lots of violence and lots of stupidity as Stallone runs through the forest bashing skulls. Stallone has about five lines of dialogue in this post-Vietnam fiasco--perhaps someone has finally realized that Sly can pump iron but he can't act. All the prints of *First Blood* should go the way of its characters--massacred before they do any real damage. A fine film for the whole family--if you happen to be Don Corleone.

Consumer beware

Note: Beware of a new phenomenon that's been popping up at some Metro theatres recently--"Golden Topping". This is some type of heated chemical compound that is replacing hot butter on popcorn. As with most cheaper imitations, "Golden Topping" doesn't even begin to measure up in taste to the natural favourite. If it doesn't say butter, don't you want any. Is nothing sacred?

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