

York grad standing tall *Under the Elms*

By REBECCA CANN

"Things works out the way they're meant to." For actor Dan Lett things have been working out rather well. Lett is currently starring in the Theatre Plus production of Eugene O'Neill's *Desire Under The Elms*, opening this week. Since his departure from York as a student five years ago, Lett's career has been expanding and improving.

The young actor has already gained recognition in both theatre and film with an ACTRA nomination in 1983 for his work in the CBC series *Home Fires* and a 1984 Dora nomination for his portrayal of Murray in the Shaw Festival/Toronto Free production of *Delicatessen*. With five years work at the Shaw Festival under his belt Lett's portrayal of Eben Cabot, a young man in love



Is that a grin? A smirk? York grad Dan Lett has plenty to smile about.

with his stepmother in *Desire Under the Elms*, represents the actor's first leading role in a professional classical play.

"Four years ago I wouldn't have been ready," states Lett. "It's a great part, a great play, but rehearsals are physically and emotionally draining. I'm brain dead at the end of the day. Right now the idea of eight performances a week is rather frightening. But there's a great feeling in the work, a release."

When offered the part of Eben this summer, Lett was thrilled with the opportunity to work in a play by O'Neill.

"I've followed O'Neill to the letter in rehearsals because I trust him. He knew what he was talking about. If you ignore him you go all the way around the block and suddenly someone is pointing out the fact you're back where you started."

Lett's identification with his character is powerful. "I understand Eben from the minute he walks on the stage to the minute he walks off," Lett says. "He is an emotionally charged, vulnerable young man, totally alone with himself, living in a world of fantasy. The kid's got no walls—you can see right through them."

"It's a magical gift I've been given to play this part. The more I've worked on it the more I've somehow had the feeling O'Neill wrote it for me."

Lett's abilities as an actor were quickly recognized by the faculty of York's theatre department. Shortly after entering his first year Lett was asked to join the second year per-

formances. "I kind of waltzed into my second year," says Lett, "but the first month was the worst. They really put you through your grinds, put the fright into you."

a few weeks later was apprenticing in the professional world of theatre. "Auditioning for the Shaw Festival while doing *Coriolanus* was professionally my biggest break," says



Look closely . . . closer . . . we promise Lett's name is beaming up there somewhere . . .

Lett's energies went into his performance work at York. In his fourth year he played a leading role in three out of the four major department productions. At the time the department's system for designating parts consisted of an auditioning process for third and fourth year students. "It was like working professionally," says Lett, "you were part of the competitive world. It was a very special year and a lot of fun. The highlight was playing *Coriolanus*, putting the playing together in three weeks."

While playing the title role in *Coriolanus*, Lett auditioned for the Shaw Festival. He was accepted, and

Lett. "I somehow thought the Shaw Festival wouldn't have happened for me otherwise."

"Shaw has opened up doors for me," says Lett. "After my first season I came back to Toronto and did *Dreaming and Duelling* (at the Young People's Theatre) with Christopher Newton, a director at the Shaw Festival. The casting head at CBC phoned me up after seeing the playing to talk about doing *Home Fires*."

Lett's growing career, however, is no guarantee of constant work. As a character actor ("not the Mel Gibson type") he is frequent being told he is either too young or too old for a



part. This last fall Lett says, "I sat for two months, had 25 calls, and nothing came up. I finally got a part in an NFB film in Montreal called *Out of a Job*."

The actor, however, is less than undaunted by the nerve-wracking audition process. "I love it," says Lett, "going to interviews every day, reading new scripts, meeting new people. It's fun. It only gets tiring when you're running out of money."

Lett does not see moving to the United States as an easy way out of the constant difficulty of finding work. Although he does not reject the idea, such a move is seen as a business proposition. "You've got to be able to broaden your market," points out Lett. "I'd like to go to the States, as well as England, but I'm not going until I've built my film career. I've got a lot of growing to do here as an actor first."

For the future Lett is playing with the idea of producing plays. Yet he remains vague on the subject. As far as directing goes, "I've toyed with the idea but I'd have trouble getting ideas over to the actors." Ultimately, Lett explains, "I'm an actor."

Outside the St. Lawrence Centre Lett's name is spread across the marquee in bold lettering. Lett laughs as he describes how he takes people by to see the enormous billing. While he admits he has been "given the chances" in his career, Lett also points out "I've worked damn hard."

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS WINTERS COLLEGE - JANUARY 1986

The Master, Fellows and Staff of Winters College wish all students a Very Happy New Year in 1986

- * Students who would like to discuss their academic plans, or who would like to talk over their options, hesitations, or simply take confidence in their decisions are invited to make use of the College advising staff at this early point in the year.
- ** Winters students are reminded that Winter/Summer 1986 will begin in the first week of FEBRUARY, and are urged to help College Council welcome this group and help it through the inevitably bewildering days which begin the session.
- *** Winters College may again run a Summer Residence for students. Applications may be made at the Porter's Office, Winters College from Monday, 27th January.

MONDAY, 6-31	ART GALLERY: <i>Apocalypse at the Downtown Drive Inn</i> . Featuring 45 works depicting deconstructions, elaboration, subversions and transformations of the image banks of advertising. An exhibition of photo montages by RICHARD SLYE. Art Gallery, Room 123.	Mon.-Fri. 10:30 a.m. - 4:00 Sunday noon - 5:00 p.m.
THURSDAY, 9th	Official Opening of <i>Apocalypse at the Downtown Drive Inn</i> (Everyone Welcome)	5:00 - 8:00 p.m.
MONDAY, 13th	Fellows Lunch*	Master's Dining Room 12 noon - 1:30 p.m.
TUESDAY, 14th	Poetry Series (Readers to be announced)	Senior Common Room 5:00 p.m.
WEDNESDAY, 15th	Residence Students Dinner Guest Speaker: Dr. R. Cluett (Slide show * talk on Prof. Cluett's experience in the Arctic in 1956 while serving as an Ensign in the U.S. Coast Guard)	Master's Dining Room 5:00 p.m.
MONDAY, 20th	Fellows Dinner Guest Speaker: Harold J. Levy, Special Advisor to the Law Reform Commission of Canada	Senior Common Room & Master's Dining Room
MONDAY, 27th	Fellows Lunch*	Master's Dining Room 12 noon - 1:30 p.m.
TUESDAY, 28th	Poetry Series (Readers to be announced)	Senior Common Room 5:00 p.m.

*Students with parents visiting campus welcome to attend (\$8.00)

FACULTY HOUR: Every Monday, Wednesday and Thursday, 4:00 p.m. - 6:30 p.m. Winters Senior Common Room

ATHLETICS: Notice of Game Schedules will be posted on the Board Adjacent to the Athletics Office (Room 116, Winters College—please check).

CLUBS: York University Portuguese Association, Room 124A, Winters College, 667-6167.

York Association of Mature Students, Room 139, Winters College, 667-6328.

Iranian Students Association, Room 124, Winters College.

WINTER/SUMMER SESSION: Classes begin 3rd February 1986