

Creeps, Fellows, Cups and Games

[CANADA AT THE FOLGER]

As readers of Canada Today/D'Aujourd'hui are aware, many Canadians feel that Americans are not particularly conscious of Canadian culture. There are, however, clear exceptions. We describe one below.

Without any diplomatic agreements or even a coordinated plan, a small but renowned library in Washington, D.C., has woven more and more Canadian culture into the fabric of its public and private programs.

In 1970, O. B. Hardison, Jr., the then new director of the Folger Shakespeare Library, which houses the largest and most valuable collection of Shakespeariana in the world, began its first public program, a film series, with a Norman McLaren documentary from Canada's National Film Board. For the library, which had been considered purely a scholar's retreat, this was a singular departure, but it was a mild portent of things to come. The library, which occupies a beautifully sculptured marble building across the street from the Library of Congress, has an impressive Founder's Room, where tea is served each day

Creeps by David Freeman, a singularly stark but successful drama, had its American première at the Folger Shakespeare Library Theatre. It is about the grim daily routine of cerebral palsy victims in a sheltered workshop. It went on to New York.

at two, and a replica of an Elizabethan theatre, which has become a mecca for intellectual Washington. When Hardison arrived on the scene, the stage had been used only once in thirty-odd years. He began using it, first for the films and then for poetry readings. Among the early poets who read were Canada's Margaret Atwood, the novelist, literary philosopher and recipient of the Governor General's award for poetry, and Frank Scott, poet, civil libertarian and former dean of law at McGill University.

In time the Folger sponsored a resident group of players and began producing plays — both Elizabethan and modern — in its theatre. In 1972 the group performed in the American première of *The Complete Works of Studs Edsel*, written by an American, Percy Granger, who lived in Canada (the play's locale) during the Vietnam War and had several plays produced on CBC-TV in Montreal. The Granger play has since become a staple work on American college campuses.

In 1973 the Folger produced *Creeps* by David Freeman, of Toronto, in its American première,



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