

# News of the arts

## Playwrights in Britain

Five Canadian playwrights will tour arts centres and theatres in England and Scotland from May 15 to 25, under the auspices of the Department of External Affairs. The ten-day visit, part of a pilot project to promote Canadian playwrighting abroad, is organized by the Guild of Canadian Playwrights with assistance from Canada House in London.

The playwrights Michael Cook, David Fennario, Ken Gass, Ken Mitchell and Rick Salutin, will illustrate the diversity of work being done in English-speaking Canada through general discussions and selected readings representing major themes in Canadian contemporary playwrighting. The work of the five, which reflects various regional perspectives and stylistic approaches, has been important in the growth of Canadian theatre over the past ten years.

The authors will visit the University of Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, the Institute of Contemporary Arts and the Theatre Writers' Union in London, the Bristol Arts Centre, the Third Eye Arts Centre in Glasgow, the Centre of Canadian Studies at the University of Edinburgh and the Theatre Workshop in Edinburgh.

## B.C. home of the gods?

A chemist and sometime expert on primitive Indian art says author Erich von Daniken may have been right when he claimed that the ancient gods of long-dead civilizations were, in fact, visitors from another planet.

Richard Bradshaw said in a recent interview in Vancouver that there was evidence to support the theory that not even von Daniken, the Swiss author of the controversial book *Chariot of the Gods*, knew about.

"When von Daniken wrote his books, showing primitive paintings and carvings of the creatures he said came from outer space, he confined his research to the Mediterranean area and remote islands, but he should have included British Columbia," Bradshaw said.

"There is more evidence to support von Daniken's theory in one small area of British Columbia than he found in all his travels in Europe."

Mr. von Daniken sparked an interna-

tional uproar a few years ago with publication of *Chariot of the Gods*.

The book contained "evidence" purported to show that rock paintings, carvings and monuments, always believed to be primitive native art and idols representing ancient gods, were in fact fairly accurate reproductions of helmeted space travellers.

"Many of the primitive drawings found by von Daniken in the Sahara Desert, Italy and Syria, which he claimed were drawings of creatures from another planet, are reproduced almost exactly in ancient Indian pictographs (rock paintings) found in various areas of British Columbia," Bradshaw said.

"The most outstanding example is the 18-foot drawing of a looming figure with a single-eye — claimed to be a spaceman — that von Daniken found drawn on a gigantic rock in the Sahara region," Bradshaw said.

"But there is an identical figure drawn on a rock face near Seton Creek, 350 miles north of Vancouver, complete with the same one-piece tunic, radio antennae and a spherical helmet fitted with a visor."

Mr. Bradshaw suggests if the ancient gods of Europe and the equatorial civilizations were, as the Swiss author claims, visitors from space, the "gods" came to British Columbia, too.

"And why not?" he asked, "After all, there is evidence that the Spanish Conquistadores travelled as far north as the Similmameen Valley, in the interior of the province, but you don't find that fact in the Canadian history books, either."

## Celebration of books becomes annual event

Canada's first National Book Festival, sponsored by the Canada Council, was held from April 2 to 8.

The festival was planned as a celebration of the growing public support of the Canadian publishing industry. Hundreds of communities participated in activities planned by regional organizations, municipal and provincial governments, schools, libraries, bookstores and associations.

In New Brunswick, for example, two vans carrying books as well as authors, actors and musicians toured the province. In Ontario, radio stations sponsored contests for local high schools and donated books to the schools' libraries as prizes. In Labrador, the festival helped sponsor

the Labrador Cultural Festival, in which the magazine *Them Days* was featured. Saskatchewan held a conference on "the paper that speaks" at the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College to bring native writers together with publishers, educators and the public. An audio-visual presentation about Northern writers was circulated in the Northwest Territories.

In Quebec, the Union des Ecrivains mounted a major literary stage show. The festival also co-operated with the Newfoundland Teachers' Association to bring authors into the schools. Children in Prince Edward Island took part in a writing and drawing contest, from which winning entries will be published in a full-colour book. Acadian authors toured the Atlantic provinces, and the MicMac Indians held a *mawio'mi* — a gathering of Indian elders who made an oral presentation of their culture. In Vancouver, Robson Square was the site of a large book display; films based on Canadian books were shown, and authors read from their works.

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation produced a half-hour special program on Canadian children's books.

Festival committees and participants, whose slogan was "enjoy reading all about us", hoped to stimulate further interest among Canadians in their own books, and to confirm the vitality of Canadian writing.

## Arts briefs

Richard J. Wattenmaker, chief curator of the Art Gallery of Ontario from 1972 to 1978, has been appointed director of the Chrysler Museum in Norfolk, Virginia.

The Toronto Drama Bench, an association of 40 theatre critics and entertainment writers from southern Ontario and Montreal, announced two awards for distinguished contribution to the Canadian theatre for the year 1978. The first award was presented to Dora Mavor Moore, a promoter of Canadian plays and performers during the Forties, whose core of actors formed two-thirds of the first Stratford Festival company. Her New Play Society was the first home for the Stratford costume department. Floyd Chalmers, whose charitable foundation provides the prize money yearly to the outstanding Canadian plays of the past season, received the second award.