Worthwhile play Festival has a dul

by Anna Borowicki

A playwright takes the embryo of an idea, nurtures and shapes it, and eventually the idea gives birth to a script of workable dialogue for actors and directors. In essence, playwrights are the supreme creators of a play, and theatre as we know it could not exist without them.

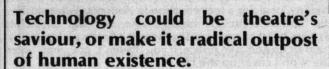
Yet, while Canadian theatre companies have developed some of the world's most creative and imaginative actors, they continually discourage the development of stage writers.

The New Play Festival, February 1-5, was designed to further the cause of emerging playwrights and playwriting. Nine workshopped plays-in-progress were presented with an emphasis on the development of script. (Workshopping is the creative process a playwright undertakes while working directly with the actors and directors to refine a script.)

The origins of the New Play Festival can be traced to the Alberta Playwriting Centre, established in 1981, and funded by the Alberta Foundation for the Performing

Arts through Western Canada Lottery.
With the funds it received, the Alberta Playwriting Centre was able to give Northern Light Theatre and Alberta Theatre projects \$20,000.00 in seed money for workshopping new plays.

Last year, the University of Alberta Drama Department entered the festival, making it a project for the 4th year BFA acting classes. Brian Deedrick, Associate Director of Northern Light and Festival Coordinator, described the blend of talents as a "wonderful marriage.'



While students explored their acting skills in different ways, the Festival was able to keep firm control on its budget by having the talents of eight actors available to them at no cost.

The final selection of plays to be workshopped depended largely on which playwrights had the best prepared scripts and who would receive the greatest benefits.

The Festival was divided into two phases. The first phase, beginning January 9, concentrated in providing an environment where the playwright could develop

Intensive three week workshops consisted of inhouse readings and rehearsals involving 22 performers, seven directors, eight playwrights, and several

During workshops, the playwrights received



Brian Deedrick, Director of Festival, Susan Henley from The Artist, and Mark Bennet from Fallaway relax backstage before performances.

feedback from directors and actors in defining and sometimes refocusing a script. From there, the playwright would attempt to reconstruct scenes and refine some of the ragged edges of the play.

The second phase of the New Play Festival was the presentation of workshopped productions to the public, February 1-5. To kick off the Festival, a seminar was held on February 1. Three luminaries of Canadian Theatre were invited to speak - Sharon Pollock (Associate Director of Theatre Calgary), Guy Sprung Artistic Director of Toronto Free Theatre), and Urjo Karedo (Artistic Director of Tarragon Theatre, Toronto).

Pollock, a playwright herself, was concerned with developing playwriting positions in theatres so the team which creates the production.

Sprung questioned the existence of theatre in the world we are creating. He also suggested that the it could produce the opposite effect making it a "radical outpost of human existence.'

hindering the growth of a national theatre. There are comments, opinions, criticisms, and questions to the

Retailers Associated

few touring troupes, and the CBC and Maclean's Magazine are slow in bringing information from one egion of the country to the other.

The three guests unanimously agreed that the passionate committment and ideological energy of the 70's had evaporated into a desire for 'quality of life'. Doubts, anxieties, and troubled times lie ahead with no clear destination in sight.

With playwrights continuing to face the uncertainty of this decade, the New Play Festival could not have come at a more appropriate time.

For emerging playwrights the Festival has meant money during a time of economic restraint, a chance to sharpen their skills and a showcase for their work. The playwright could become part and parcel of the artistic assortment of plays presented were in various stages of development, ranging from sit-down readings to productions lacking only in design.

The plays were in fact so varied that there seemed onslaught of technology could be theatre's "saviour" or to be only one common characteristic in all of them: serious themes using the language of the streets.

After each presentation, audience members were Karedo reminded the audience that the absence of invited to attend postproduction discussions. The network of information linking the country is audience had a unique opportunity to direct their

playwright. Of the rough the Festival 4 discussions as a show of

The Artist, a one-a Rebar and directed by hits of the Festival. Ma your curiousity and invit her eyes.

At first you find yo liking her. And once vulnerabilities, you wa harshness of the world.

Mandy is a char becoming known as 'th we can all relate to. It' association the audienc makes The Artist excell

Anoth Chinook Theatreand th is Fallaway, written by exploration of agifted 1

with confusion and vio Mark Bennet, the a





