

# 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."



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

## Technology could be theatre's saviour, or make it a radical outpost of human existence.

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 his potential.

Intensive three week workshops consisted of in-house readings and rehearsals involving 22 performers, seven directors, eight playwrights, and several dramaturgs.

During workshops, the playwrights received

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 playwright could become part and parcel of the artistic team which creates the production.

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

Karedo reminded the audience that the absence of a network of information linking the country is hindering the growth of a national theatre. There are

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

The three guests unanimously agreed that the passionate commitment 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 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 to be only one common characteristic in all of them: serious themes using the language of the streets.

After each presentation, audience members were invited to attend postproduction discussions. The audience had a unique opportunity to direct their comments, opinions, criticisms, and questions to the

playwright. Of the rough discussions as a show o

*The Artist*, a one-act play by Mandy Rebar and directed by Mandy Rebar, was one of the hits of the Festival. Mandy's curiosity and invitation to her eyes.

At first you find you're liking her. And once you see her vulnerabilities, you wish she was harsher of the world.

Mandy is a character becoming known as 'the girl we can all relate to.' It's association with the audience makes *The Artist* excellent.

Another play, *Chinook*, by the Chinook Theatre and then *Fallaway*, written by Mark Bennet, the

Mark Bennet, the

**INTRA** AND **Wardair**

**HAWAII**

**\$539**

FROM

Per person - Return Air only to Honolulu from Edmonton  
Midweek - April 1 - 30/84

plus

**TAHITI**

**\$1179**

FROM

Per person - From Honolulu  
Airfare and 7 nights  
Accommodation

**BRITAIN BREAK**

2 Close To-Home Destinations -  
1 Great Price

- London (Gatwick)
- Manchester

**\$659**

FROM

Per person - Return From Edmonton  
Air Only

**Wardair. We're listening.**

Edmonton Travel Hub Mall - U of A  
9006 - 112 St.  
433-2494

**INTRA**

Independent Travel Retailers Associated

**DON'T JUST HIGHLIGHT IT, "BOSS" IT!**

Put STABILO BOSS to work and get attention. "BOSSING" is highlighting at its best. Computer printouts, book reviews, graphs and maps. To colour-code or emphasize, "BOSS" them all! Insist on the original. STABILO BOSS, available in transparent ink in 8 fluorescent colours at a special introductory price of \$1.69 on STABILO BOSS and \$2.09 on STABILO BOSS 2. Save 25%.

Refillable pocket model.

**Schwan-STABILO**

at **VARSITY DRUG, HUB MALL, UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA**

Distributed in Canada by: **HEINZ JORDAN AND COMPANY LIMITED, 900 Magnetic Drive, North York, Ont. M3J 2C4**

*L'express*

Main Floor SUB  
7:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.

- Gourmet Coffees
- Deli Sandwiches
- Hot Sandwiches
- Soups
- Salads
- Liquor license after 3 p.m.

NOW OPEN EVENINGS!!

STUDENTS UNION FOOD SERVICES