

# Too hip for the room

BY TIM COVERT

The images are contradictory. The woman sitting across from me, suffering from a persistent cold and recovering from the effects of a Shiatsu massage, could not be the same person who becomes the frenetic, chattering, "But I'm just goofin' around..." Babe Bennet Monday nights on *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*. I try to reconcile that image with the one of the concerned mother before me who is talking about how her daughter is benefitting from the alternative educational philosophy of her Buddhist-founded junior high school.

"Shambhala Middle School," says Cathy Jones, "is a parent participation school. Unfortunately I haven't been able to participate much because I've been busy. So I thought I would do a benefit, which I've been promising for a couple of years."

The benefit Jones is referring to is *Too Hip For the Room*, a performance she's doing to raise funds for Shambhala. The show will run two nights in the McInnes room, starting on the 20th of April.

The school undertakes some unique approaches to schooling, including having 5 to 10 minutes of meditation at the start and end of the school day to "honour basic being and vast mind."

Jones's daughter Mara, who attended the school for Grade 7, 8, and 9, will go to public high school next year. While worried about how her daughter will adjust to a public high school — Mara's friends tell her that most time is spent telling the kids to shut up and be good — Jones thinks she's got through the tough part of her schooling in the best possible way by being in Shambhala.

"She's so interested in things and so aware...I completely spaced through school. We walk the dog and she tells me about Napoleon before his rise to power. And all I know about Napoleon is that he was short and that he had his hand in his pocket."

The school is not exclusively Buddhist and though there is Shambhala training available, there is no pressure to become Buddhist. Jones says that when her daughter decided she would like to do a few Shambhala levels, she had a much easier time than Jones did.

"Where she was younger," says Jones, "she didn't have so much going on in her head that she had to escape from. Sitting there can be so incredibly, interestingly, frustrating. Trying to sit for forty minutes without getting up and screaming 'Fuck this' is really hard. The first time I did I thought I was going to go mad. You really notice your aggression, your wanting to fall asleep, your wanting to escape somehow from what life's like when you don't have all your distractions. Actually that reminds me, I haven't practiced lately."

The hit show that is *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* has changed Jones life in more ways than in simply movin' from her native Newfoundland. Though she performed for 20 years in the CODCO troupe, the success of *This Hour* has begun to take its toll.

"This Hour builds up towards the end of the year, and by then

it's like this [points to her fatigued eyes], like the way my eyes look now. But I'm glad that we have the show. I like the way it runs, it moves along. Not so fast that it's annoying, like a video image, but fast enough that if you're watching and you don't like something, then there'll be something else in two minutes."

Jones likes the spirit on the show, and while very hard to do, it has a wonderful cast, writers, helpers, producers, etc. She notes that having a new baby at 40 — a five month old daughter Eleanor — has been tremendously exhausting and that she's unsure as to what is causing her the greater fatigue: *This Hour* or her new child. Jones went back to work six weeks after giving birth and is wondering how she can do anything but be a mother. She wants to hang out with Eleanor; Jones feels she doesn't even know her.

Jones says that having her new baby has actually helped her with dealing with the show stress because the hormones involved in breast-feeding kept her pretty spacy for the first four months. She says she wasn't exactly writing sharp stuff but she made a choice for the baby.

Even so, the stress of having a new child, coupled with the stress of doing one of the top shows in Canada has been affecting Jones's health. I asked how long she thought she could keep doing *This Hour*.

"It's hard to say," she said, "because by the time you finish the summer and you feel recovered...Mary Walsh takes weeks off. We always say, 'Molly

## Intense and heavy posing

BY MARK REYNOLDS

Having missed the previous shows *Our Lady Peace* has played in Halifax, and being largely unacquainted with their work, I went to the McInnes Room this past Sunday not quite knowing what

to expect. And heavy they were "intense" and "heavy," not to mention the hot new band in Canada, I was prepared to be impressed.

I arrived late for the show and thus missed the first act, Spooky Ruben, who are supposed to be an up-and-coming act from Toronto. I did catch all of the second act, Glueleg, also from Ontario. Though prone to arena-band posing (holding the guitar upright between the legs, for example), they put on a great show, with really impressive tunes. The sound was almost Nine Inch Nails, almost metal, almost funk. Most interesting was the use of a saxophonist as a permanent fixture in the band. They are definitely on my CD wish-list.

Next up was *Our Lady Peace*. Everybody else had apparently heard that they were "intense" and "heavy" too, because the crowd and security were into the spirit of things before the first note was played. I really have to question whether any of the crowd-surfers and body-slamers even noticed the band, let alone heard them.



Cathy Jones in a state of Nirvana

McGuire is on assignment' and I'm thinking Cindy Diviznchik better be on assignment several weeks next year because that's the only way to do it, to get through."

Jones says that, "It's hard to give up the bread, the cake. But I think that I'm going to have to think about it at some point. When I went back last year I tried to do as many gigs as I could on stage because I missed it. I real-

ized that being on stage is no easy gig either. I'll have to find a way to maintain my health in the middle of it, and keep going. I guess I could go another two years or so."

*Too Hip For the Room* will be based on a compilation of characters that Jones put together for a show in PEI last year. One of the characters is Amanita Muscaria from Sicilygreeceperu — because Jones wanted to get the accent right — who sings songs like "You Are My Pyjamas." Jones is going to do some couples, one of whom is in violent domestic situation. Another couple piece, *Lil and Buster* which Jones might perform with Andy Smith, has in it the beginnings of Babe Bennet. There will be a hippie poet named Drusia Farmriver and other personas including: the ever-popular fully-developed Babe Bennet; Mrs. Enid, the 75 year old weather girl; Donny Byrd, from the Byrd family, and Luv Murphy the slick, more refined, townie buddy of Mary Walsh's Dakie Dunn. Jones says that she will be showing her "filmeo" *Outport Lesbian*, as well as other film clips during the show to get her into and out of costumes.

The comedian Cathy Jones slips into and out of characters as easily as she does costumes. But the real Cathy Jones is the tired mother of two before me, finishing off the last of her herbal tea and heading out the door. Walking by her on the street you couldn't tell that just under the surface lies the multiple personalities and comic artistry that makes her a national comic treasure. "But I'm just goofin' around..."

Cathy Jones's *Too Hip for the Room* is taking place in the McInnes Room the 20th and 21st of this month. Showtime is at 8:30 p.m. and there will be a cash bar. Tickets are \$12 for students/seniors and \$15 regular, and are available at the following locations: Trident Booksellers, Attic Owl Books, Paradise Bakery, Shambhala Middle School, and Acadia and Quigley Decorating Centre.

## the box

Σ This the last *the box* for the year and I hope that it has enabled you to find out a little bit about what's going on artistically around campus and around the city. In fact, I hope that the whole Arts section has made you aware of the incredible artistic community in which we happen to be going to school. Take advantage of this opportunity over the summer. Do something out of the ordinary and see something extraordinary.

Σ The Dalhousie Art Gallery is presenting the *La Terra Trema*, a neo-realist masterpiece, this Wednesday at 12:30 p.m. and 8 p.m. in the gallery in the Dalhousie Arts Centre. The film, being shown as part of the Neo-Realism 1920-1956 series, is about a Sicilian fishing family and their struggle against an oppressive social system. "The improvised story, on-the-spot filming, and non-professional actors are the hallmarks of this genre."

Σ Halifax's own *Jest in Time* will be the stars of their very own comedy special this Friday at 8 p.m. on CBC Television. *Jest* (Pop.4) stars JIT members Sherry Lee Hunter, Mary Ellen MacLean, Christian Murray, and Shelley Wallace as the sole inhabitants of an imaginary town which has a doughnut shop, a gas station, a pub, and four churches. The "imaginative and refreshing comedy" of the troupe is not limited to any age group and has even made the Queen laugh. The group members have "melded their talents for physical comedy to an exquisite array of eccentric characters and situations. The results are falling down funny."

Σ Art critic and exhibit curator Robin Metcalfe will critique *Clay: Medium Based Practices*, one of the exhibits running at the Dalhousie Art Gallery, next Thursday. The presentation will begin at 8 p.m. in the gallery, located in the basement of the Dalhousie Art Gallery.

Σ Neptune Theatre's *If We Were Women*, despite its critical lambasting by Ron Foley MacDonald, is continuing its run until Sunday, April 7. The show stars Elizabeth Richardson, Shelia Paterson, Joan Orenstein, and Ruth Madoc-Jones as four women representing three generations who come together after the death of one women's lover. The play, nominated for a Governor General's award, is "a passionate collision of ideas about life, relationships, power, and choices." The play is being performed in the Rebecca Cohn of the Dalhousie Arts Centre. Performances are at 8 p.m. today and tomorrow, 5 p.m. and 9 p.m. on Saturday, and at 2 p.m. on Sunday. Tickets are available from the Neptune Box Office in Barrington Place Shops and at the satellite box office set up during performance times. Tickets can be reserved by calling 429-7070.