

Film and TV director offers actors free advice Perseverance is always the key

By JENNIFER PARSONS

Allen Erlich, prominent television and film director, had a dose of advice to deliver to the 60 students that attended his Primetime lecture at Atkinson last week. "80 percent of the work you'll get in television and film will be shit," he informed the gathered crowd.

Erlich was straight-forward about the kind of work theatre students could look forward to, but he added that they had to "forget about the stupid story, forget about the stupid lines" and learn to do even the bad stuff well.

From the vantage of his experience with the CBC and with the Director's Guild of Canada, Erlich referred these criticisms mainly to situation comedies. Erlich himself has directed "every sitcom ever done by the CBC." These have included *The King of Kensington*, *Flappers*, the supermarket sitcom with Don Adams called *Check It Out* and 160 episodes of *Hangin' In*, a show about a teenage drop-in centre.

Erlich suggested that part of the problem is that a sitcom "is a producer's medium," meaning time and cost are a priority over the creative process. Sometimes, he explained, the producers will tell you that you only have two hours to shoot a sequence but, when lighting set-up takes an hour and a half, "you only get a half hour to rehearse and shoot the scene."

Erlich said he had noticed an improvement in actors and felt that it was due to a rise in educational programmes available to actors. He noticed however, that in casting for a part often all of the potential actors auditioning could do the part equally well.

This is a problem he had when casting for his most recent project *Legal Street*, a new CBC series that

has an episode dealing with gay-bashing. Each of the young men he saw for the lead role could have brought something to the part, he said.

Often his distinction between those who get the part and those who don't rests on whether or not they look like the actor who has already been cast as the father, Erlich noted. Even if you know you're the actor for the part, your complexion may be too fair or your hair the wrong colour, he added.

Outside of his work on sitcoms, Erlich has directed many television Shakespeare productions for the CBC. He said he would love to translate more Shakespeare theatre productions for television but that the CBC doesn't have the money to do it.

This turned the talk towards the problems of the Canadian film and television industry as a whole. Erlich said that for the most part the "CBC has been a major employer of actors" and that in light of its financial difficulties and, on a larger scale, the free-trade debate, one must start to question what's going to happen.

Erlich defended the importance of government involvement in the industry in Canada. "Everywhere else in the world the government helps—in Australia it helps, in Belgium it helps . . . but, being next to the big neighbour (the United States), people here think it's abnormal," he said.

He suggested that without government assistance perhaps only 10 films would be made in Canada and out of those 10 the odds of having a hit would be zero. With the government's help, perhaps as many as 100 films could be made, increasing the possibility of success. The problem, he said, is to make sure that the same people don't get most of the help all of the time.

When asked what he thought



BABAK AMIRFEZ

DIRECTOR ALLAN ERLICH

Canada had to offer the film industry Erlich said he thought we "have good character actors with an eye for detail." The technical crews are also very good and, with the rise of American productions filming in Canada as a result of our lower dollar, they could become even better. Erlich proposed however that the "Americans have the art of writing" and what good writers exist in Canada, usually move to the States, where the money is.

He also feels that at the moment "Canadian producers are trying too hard to make pseudo-American films." He believes the key to success lies in producing large quantities of films. It's not even about "shouting Canada all over the place" but rather putting emphasis on good stories that will give Canada a chance to produce the quality it is capable of, Erlich said.

Erlich predicts that if this emphasis on production and good stories happens "this country will be famous for films in 20 or 30 years." As a consolation to the actors in the audience, he concluded that perseverance is the key. "Everyone is good . . . in the right part," he said.

"Hopefully sitcoms will die in this country and I can rest in peace," Erlich concluded about his own career.

ARTS CALENDAR

Compiled By Jennifer Parsons

MUSIC

Student Recitals, Glendon Singleton-Wood, flute; Jennifer Aharonian, flute. McLaughlin Hall, March 26, 7 p.m.

Student Chamber Series, a varied programme given by student ensembles. McLaughlin Hall, March 27, 12 noon.

Student Recitals, Sandra Risely, piano; Linda Galessiere, soprano. McLaughlin Hall, March 31, 3 p.m.

Student Recital, Lucjan Drewicz, clarinet. McLaughlin Hall, March 31, 7 p.m.

Student Concert, "Experimental Media-Electronic Music and Dance"—performed by the students of the Music Department, Dance Department and Fine Arts Students. McLaughlin Hall, April 1, 4 p.m.

Student Recital, Rosalba Lamanna, soprano. McLaughlin Hall, April 2, 7 p.m.

Student Chambers Series, a varied programme given by student ensembles. McLaughlin Hall, April 3, 12 noon.

GALLERIES

Nancy Hayelgrove, a show featuring big, bright and colour-themed acrylics on canvas. Zacks Gallery (109 Stong), March 25-April 10.

Janet Cardiff, recent prints by the artist. Glendon Gallery, Feb. 26-March 29.

Tending the Fire, sculptures by Gail Esau. Winters Gallery (123 Winters), March 16-29.

Poiesis '87, a show featuring works from the Founders Student Art Competition. Includes prints, paintings, sculpture and photography. Founders Gallery (120 Founders), March 25-April 8.

Choice of View, paintings and sculptures by John Drew. Calumet Gallery (Atkinson), March 16-29.

Vera Lamechia, works by the artist. IDA Gallery (102 Fine Arts Bldg.), March 30-April 3.

The Modern Spirit-Glass from Finland, produced by the Finnish Glass Museum, the exhibition traces the distinctive contributions and design innovations in glass since WWII. AGYU (N145 Ross), April 2-May 3.

Sylvie Belanger, experimental constructions by the artist. La Maison Du Culture (Glendon Hall), March 31-April 29.

THEATRE

A Man's A Man, an independent production of a Bertolt Brecht play. Directed by Soheil Parsa with original music by Colin Campbell and Andy Stochansky of Partical Zoo. Samuel Beckett Theatre (Stong), March 25-28, with an additional matinee March 28 at 2 p.m. For more information phone 736-7236.

Balm in Gilead, a play by Lanford Wilson and directed by Elise Menard. The final production of the season by the third year acting ensemble. Atkinson Theatre, March 31-April 3, 7 p.m. Free admission.

Soundstage features a new play by Ken Koebeke, a playwright in the Theatre Graduate Programme, will be read. Atkinson Theatre, March 27, 12:30-2:00 p.m.

GUEST LECTURES

Computer Applications to Music, a lecture given by Professor Kristie Allik of the Faculty of Music, University of Western Ontario. McLaughlin Hall, April 1, 4 p.m.

If you are planning an arts event, drop by *Excalibur* at 111 Central Square or call 736-5239 and ask for Kevin, Angela or Jenny.

OSAP improved for 1987!

The funding allocated to the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) for the 1987-88 academic year has been increased by 17%.

What are the major changes?

- increased living allowances;
- smaller contributions from parents;
- a special grant package for sole-support parents;
- increased grants for single independent students;
- increased funding for the Ontario Special Bursary and Work Study programs;
- interest relief on provincial loans.

What do the changes mean to me?

- increase in average grant assistance;
- larger grants mean smaller loans and a reduced debt when you graduate.

Where can I get more details?

Contact your financial aid office on campus.

How do I apply?

OSAP applications for the 1987-88 academic year will be available from the financial aid office of your college or university in early April.



Ministry of
Colleges and
Universities
Ontario

Hon. Gregory Sorbara, Minister
Alan K. Adlington, Deputy Minister

OSAP