

No more flying solo

Noah dances away from self-production

BY STACEY WEIGHTMAN

Halifax modern dancer Gwen Noah is previewing her new dance, **The Last Show**, this evening at the Dalhousie Art Gallery as a work in progress. Noah will be performing this dance March 1 and 2 during Local Currents: Atlantic New Dance Festival. The Gazette's Stacey Weightman, a student of Gwen's, managed to grab 45 minutes with the artist.

GAZ: How did you get your start in dance?

GWEN: My mother asked me if I'd like to take dance classes, and so as an eight-year-old I was overjoyed. I took all forms of dance: classical ballet, jazz, and Spanish dance. I've given a good 26 years of my life to dancing.

GAZ: I know that you're originally from St. John's — what was it about Halifax that brought you

here?

GWEN: It's funny how I ended up in Halifax. My boyfriend at the time was up here studying architecture so that's why I moved here.

GAZ: You are not only a dancer but a choreographer — when did you begin choreographing and do you choreograph for others?

GWEN: I began choreographing in 1984. My work is predominantly solo although sometimes I do create duets. Most recently I co-created a duet with George Stamos called *Proceed with Caution* — it is part of the Atlantic New Dance Festival. The other duet that I recently created was called *The Two Marys*. Marise Vachon, also in the festival, is the dancer that I worked with there.

GAZ: Why did you start up your own dance company?

GWEN: I founded Gwen Noah Dance in 1991 to create a pres-

ence for contemporary dance in Halifax. It is predominantly a solo dance company, but if there's ever room in terms of funding at some point, I would be able to have other dancers. But that's not the focus of the company right now. Right now the focus is on solo performances and creations.

GAZ: The performance that you are putting on this Thursday at the Dalhousie Art Gallery is called *The Last Show*. This performance isn't your last one so why did you chose this title?

GWEN: I chose the title because I am at the end of a cycle and I feel like I have come full circle. I did not want to continue working in the way that I had been — mainly self-production — and felt that this would be the show [that completed that phase]. What I mean by that is that as a dance company, the best way for you to

develop is for you to be produced and presented by other dance producers. Not only are you paid, but the costs of mounting a show are paid and then you are free to concentrate on the dance. I want to do creations that are funded and supported. In the past I have had some assistance but it was not enough. Self-production means that you are doing a lot more work besides the creating; you are also administrating the work. I feel that I am an old dancer because of it all. Not only do I have to take care of myself, but I also have to take care of my art form. I feel that I have given a lot to the community in the past six years with the productions that I have done.

GAZ: How would you define modern dance in comparison to other dance forms? Many people seem to have a hard time understanding what it is.

GWEN: Contemporary dance is a dance form that can incorporate a number of other dance forms. It can be quite athletic — it usually is athletic. The energy from the dance tends to be different compared to ballet. Ballet has this lightness and it has this idea that you are in the air. Contemporary dance has a real connection to the earth, be it working the whole body down on the floor or just the way that you are dealing with infinite lines of energy — you are relating to the ground and also the heavens. You can pull [in] a lot of other dance forms as inspirations: maybe you are going to have a little bit of Scottish dancing, maybe a bit of Club dancing, maybe a bit of Folk dancing, your work may be more theatrical. The way that you express yourself — not only through movement but through other elements, other art forms — may be incorporated into the work that you do. People can relate to it more because of the vast amount of different types of dancing that you can draw [into it].

GAZ: How do you feel about the level of support that dance receives in Halifax? Are there many opportunities for young dancers in Halifax?

GWEN: There aren't really opportunities for young dancers here. Gwen Noah Dance is the only professional dance company around here and there is not even enough money to do a production that is funded properly. Unfortunately, the support is not high for dance in Halifax.

GAZ: What lies ahead for Gwen Noah and the Gwen Noah Dance Company?

GWEN: I am going to continue to work on the piece for March 1 and 2. I'll be touring in St. John's and Vancouver in April and I have no plans after that.

GAZ: To the person who knows nothing about dance and is thinking of coming to your show on Thursday, what would you say to encourage them to come see it?

GWEN: You would see a piece that is very lively. It's joyful, there's bursts of dance that happen, and yet there is this thread that connects the dances. I think that people would find the movement exciting; I hope that they do.



No capes, no tights

BY NEIL FRASER

The Do-It-Yourself attitude is strong in Halifax, and not just in the local music scene. Halifax talent is now infiltrating the comic world and has created a growing local scene. At the centre of this new community is Calum Johnston, strange owner of the Strange Adventures comic shop.

'Minis,' or 'zines,' consist of photocopied sheets of long paper folded over into magazine form. The more paper you use, the more pages you get. You are only limited by the amount you want to photocopy. This inexpensive method is perfect for starting your own independent magazine or comic book, free from the restraints of commercial markets.

As well as carrying minis at its 5262 Sackville Street location (a second store is in Fredericton), Strange Adventures also publishes an anthology of maritime works called, coincidentally, *Strange Adventures*. Recurrently, coverage on CBC and in the Daily News of the anthology has garnered responses from as far away as British Columbia. This widespread attention can only be good for all artists and writers involved in the project.

When I talk about comics, I don't mean those superhero comics with the impossibly propor-

tioned heroes and heroines in their incredibly tight clothing. The only superhero comics I have seen locally are parodies. The best of these are *Colosalus*, by Mike McGraw, and *Moocho Man*, by Andrew Delby, in the *Strange Adventures* anthology.

Subject of a recent article in the Daily News, Amy Baker is the creator of *Dollface*. *Dollface* is a series of short stories about anything and everything.

One ongoing story is that of "The Angry Beaver." Introduced in the first issue of *Dollface* (cost \$1), this surly woodland creature was an asshole before he was even born. Also in *Dollface* #1 is a surreal story

about Venda and her glowworm, a tale of a woman who goes to a family planning centre for a pregnancy test, and a satirical look at rising coffee prices — Baker suggests it's the fault of Colombian drug cartels. All are very beautiful stories told in a touching manner.

A more down-to-earth work is Decent Comic's *Adventures in Paper Routing*. Authored by Alex Kennedy and Sean Jordan, *Adventures in Paper Routing* chronicles the true life adventures of Xela Ydennek and Naers Nadroj as they brave the dangers of their paper route. They must deal with broken elevators, the old folks home,

and ultimately, must face their nemesis, Crazy Lady. Inside the back cover of *Adventures...* is a hilarious one-pager called "Reservoir Smurfs."

The closest thing the new comic scene has to a local superhero is Michael Roth in "Bad Moon Rising" by David Howlett. Mild-mannered music reporter Roth becomes a werewolf and finds that he enjoys it. The thrill of the hunt enralls him and he finds himself revelling in his animal side, while ignoring his human half. Very tight storytelling and great artwork here.

Comics have always been regarded as a juvenile medium, and as such have always been subjected to heavy censorship. Only since the rise of direct market comic shops like Strange Adventures have comics been able to take a more serious tone. By combining art and storytelling techniques, comic book creators — especially with today's independent market — are bound only by their imagination.

The advantage of minis in particular is that anyone can do them. If you have something to say or a story to tell, put it on paper and take it to a photocopying machine. The only thing holding you back is you.

Take a walk down to Strange Adventures and see what the locals have to offer. The more you support local talent, the more of it there will be.



the box

▲ The **CKDU Truncheon Ten** is not available this week as the staff is recovering from their 11th Annual Funding Drive. A little after 7 p.m. last Sunday — the CKDU goal of 45K was reached and when the dust had settled, \$45,030 had been pledged. Way to go Halifax (and whoever else can pick up CKDU's 50 titanic pounds of power)! Folks can pay their pledges and collect their prizes in SUB 320.

▲ The #1 single-show total for the Funding Drive was **Radio Free Kansas** with \$1,610, while the #1 two-show total was **Saturday Morning Musical Box** with \$1,527.

▲ At a reception before last Tuesday's opening performance of Dalhousie Theatre's *The Good Woman of Setzuan*, there were two important awards handed out. **Ben Chaisson** was awarded the Blackmore Bursary from Neptune Theatre. This award is presented to a Dalhousie technical theatre student for excellence in their field. **Blanche Potter**, who worked in Dalhousie Theatre from 1966-1994, was commemorated as only the second Honorary Dalhousie Theatre Patron (the first being Mrs. David MacK Murray). Ms Potter has been a part of every Dal Theatre Production since the 1960s, and will always be remembered for her contributions to the program.

▲ Two new exhibits running until Saturday at the **Anna Leonowens Gallery** are Stephen Clayton Ellwood's untitled installation and Kelly Dodge's *dumbshow*. *Dumbshow* consists of "small environments occupied by paper maché figures, [their appearance]...enriched and complicated by the personal and political nature" of the textual exchanges between the figures. The NSCAD gallery is open Tues. to Fri., 11a.m.-5 p.m. and Sat., 12 p.m. - 4 p.m.

▲ The Theatre Arts is presenting **Hurray for Johnny Canuck**, a work written by Ken Gauss about the most unlikely superhero of them all...a Canadian one. The play tells the story "of how Johnny Canuck and the secret Canadian Supersquad saved the world." The play runs Feb. 15-17, 22-24, 29 and March 1-2 at the Playhouse on 6 Parkhill Rd. Tickets are \$5 opening night, and \$9 afterwards for Seniors/Students, \$10 for Adults. Call TAG at 477-2663 for more information.

▲ The Dalhousie Art Gallery is continuing its series of screenings for **African Heritage Month** next Wednesday. *The Emperor Jones*, directed by Dudley Murphy, is a film version of Eugene O'Neil's classic story about Brutus Jones (played by the great black singer, actor, and activist Paul Robeson), a pullman who becomes King of Haiti. Screenings are at 12:30 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. in the gallery in the lower level of the Arts Centre. Admission is free — donations accepted.