

Pope blesses audience with an infallible performance

Gary Cohen

Carole Pope and Rough Trade came home to Toronto last week and the students of York University welcomed the city's reigning queen of rock 'n roll with open arms.

The frenzied crowd of about 400 did everything, but kiss her ring, as Pope and The Trade vibrated everyone at the least publicized, most anticipated concert in recent York history.

What Pope couldn't say with her voice, she made the audience feel with her body—and when she spoke, the steamy-sensual-hard-nosed message was loud and clear. The hand tucked caressingly into the bright red shirt, the stripping of the studded leather bandana, the expressive hands groping at the crossroads of the black leather chaparejos, the shaggy-dog hair bouncing in counterpoint to the energetic body, and behind all the theatrics a roughedged, artesian well of a voice complemented by a hard, tightly wound band.

The lights came down, it was already after 11:00 and the audience was expectant and full of static. Then, one by one, Rough Trade materialized out of the darkness and with them their music.

Bucky Berger manned his drums, assuming the Buddha-like grimace that would characterize him throughout the concert, and the beat began.

Terry Wilkens' controlled, omnipresent bass followed suit as he plucked in between puffs of the ever-present cigarette that dangled carelessly between his lips.

The steady melody of David McMurray's keyboards flowed into the percussion. He stoically appeared bathed in the spotlight.

The tightly-cropped head of Kevan Staples filled the light beam, followed by the crisp, clean walls of his dangling Telecaster. Shoulders hunched, body swaying, Staples put the finishing touches on the sound.

By the time Carole Pope took the stage—take it she did, like it was her personal property—the

audience was ready to sing, dance, sweat or die with her.

Strangely, though, after the first two songs, the intensity that took so long to develop dissipated. Pope began strongly, sticking to material from the latest albums, *Avoid Freud* and *For Those Who Think Young*, but as the audience settled in after the initial shockwave, so did she. For the next thirty minutes both the band and the audience coasted.

It wasn't until the band got to their hit song, *High School Confidential*, that the audience shook off the cobwebs and rose to their feet. With the audience adulation turned to full frequency, Pope and the band responded. Suddenly everyone seemed reminded of why they were there and the real party began.

Each song — *For Those Who Think Young*, *Furor About the Fuehrer*, *It Hit Me Like a Slap* — only emphasized the band's tight professionalism. Staples' guitar solos were brief, melodic and musically pointed, never digressing too long from the main focus of the show — Carol Pope. The band melted together showing the savvy that the years bring, to provide a driving musical framework into which the sultry, sophisticated voice fit as neatly as a picture.

Throughout the remainder of the 90-minute event, the audience stood on chairs and tables or pressed to get close to the raunchy aura which seemed to radiate from the stage.

When it was over, a wall of noise brought Rough Trade back for a three number encore—and five minutes of incessant whistling and hand-slapping brought the band back for their second encore, another run through *High School Confidential*, the song that gave the band their commercial stamp of approval.

Shaking hands and waving, Pope and her players left the stage. As the lights came up, the magic vanished and the exhausted feeling that comes after a good rock concert crept in.



Carole Pope and Rough Trade brought a little rock magic to York.

Faustus foams in a philosophical frenzy

Linda Feesey

The Triple Action Theatre presents Steven Rumbelow's *Faustus* at Theatre Passe Muraille until March 21.

This is a new adaptation of the story of Johann Faust, the man who sells his soul to the Devil in return for all-encompassing knowledge, based mainly on Marlowe's version. "Faustus is condemned to relive one hour of his memories, his greed and his failures for eternity." Thus, Rumbelow sets the play free from the constraints of time and space. It takes on the intensity of a demonic ritual steeped in history and pain. Rumbelow wisely uses the words of earlier versions, deftly weaving in elements of dance and ancient

chanting. *Faustus* and *Mephistophiles* can rail and wall and lapse into vaudeville. *Faustus* can play havoc from a reliquary while *Mephistophiles* caricatures a bishop and *Mephistophiles* can cradle *Faustus* as the Madonna cradles Jesus in the pieta. Thus the work sucks the audience into the pit of rotting souls.

This play does not cater to the common denominator of taste or intelligence. One must be ready to set one's thinking cap "philosophic mode" to enjoy the frenzied dissertations. The questions of what is hell and what must be sacrificed for all-encompassing knowledge may seem alien to us in our enlightened secularized society.

Six Characters

The Pirandello Zone

Ian Bailey

It is the present day and in a Toronto theatre the Director is growing progressively more frustrated as he attempts to elicit a theatrical response from his company.

His mounting frustration twists into anger and confusion as his stage is invaded by six people. They are an Italian family and they claim to be characters created and abandoned by their author during the 1920's.

Like ghosts they come with a mission; to be finally allowed to enact the story they have never been allowed to tell. And what a story it is.

This is not a synopsis for an episode of the "Twilight Zone". It does not belong to the medium of television, but to the theatre. The play is *Six Characters in Search of an Author* by Luigi Pirandello. Since early February, fourth year Theatre students have been rehearsing for this month's presentation of the play within a play.

Six Characters is being directed by freelance director Ed Thomason, formerly the artistic director of the Belgrade Theatre in England. He sees *Six Characters* as a contemporary play with a great deal of theatrical chemistry. "It is written to ask the actors and the audience what is real."

"Thomason is focusing his production on the narrative of the play and is willing to relax on the philosophical aspects of the story. 'I like to think that the audience will respond viscerally rather than cerebrally.'"

The play stars Shawn Zevitt as the Father in the family and Anne Cook as the mother. Also featured in the cast are Monique Verlaan as their stepdaughter and Daniel Chevrier as the Director. The play is produced by Don Rubin and sets are designed by Robert Holmes. The play will be presented at Burton Auditorium from Tuesday, March 16th until Saturday, March 20th. Performances will occur at 8 p.m. from Tuesday to Friday, with two special matinee showings 2 p.m. on Wednesday, March 17th and Saturday, March 20th. Tickets are \$1.00 each.

Stong's Iolanthe

Musical theatre full of wit

Stefano DalBello

In the wake of England's celebrated Doyly Contes closure, Gilbert and Sullivan were alive and well at York University. Ironically and almost simultaneously, Stong's Titwillow Ensemble began its fourth performance of *Iolanthe*, also

known as "The Peer and the Peri". The Stong Group, just over a year old, has now produced two operettas, the first being *H.M.S. Pinafore*.

Iolanthe was alight with humour, and at what point Gilbert's wit ended and the Titwillow Ensemble's began is

not for anyone to question. Simply, the show was delightful: musically and otherwise. Given the restrictions of the Stong Junior Common Room the performance was still successful "musical theatre". Musical Director/Accompanist William Westcott, at the keys of his grand piano, made a convincing substitute for an orchestra, the most modest of which would have been too large. The cast, 30 in number, showed tremendous performing energy; the effect of a group that size moving together in such close quarters was very powerful.

Fine performances were returned by John Huston as Lord Chancellor, Laura Schatz, as the Fairy Queen, Tim Murphy and Sue Mumford in the romantic leads, and Gabrielle Prata in the title role. The minor leads had their own brilliant moments, and the chorus sang and acted splendidly.

Iolanthe is a combination of political satire, romantic tragedy (well, near tragedy), and an absurd love story. Its beauty lies in its music, the colour (lovely costumes!), humour and feeling. Surprisingly, the play's romantic finale is not left to the romantic leads, but with the crusty Lord Chancellor and the seemingly-young (though centuries old) *Iolanthe*.

Stong's Titwillow Ensemble will keep the Gilbert and Sullivan tradition alive and plans another operetta next year. Producer/Director Richard Linley maintains, "The wit of the operas has not vanished by any means...and as with any play the conventional humour will come out of the piece in any event."

Fertile Wet Hens lay golden eggs

PJ Todd

The title *The Saga of the Wet Hens* does not translate fully. The french expression *poule mouillée* roughly corresponds to the English slang "chicken" — to be a coward. It is unfortunate that some of the irony of this insult is lost on the English ear. There are no cowards in this saga. Instead, the play explores the courageous struggles of five French Canadian writers; the four lead characters and the playwright herself.

Marchessault has indulged in the ultimate literary fantasy. She creates a forum in which the writers she respects the most can interact. Their exchange of ideas and opinions is revealing historical and literary analysis.

Marchessault has resurrected Laure Conan (first Canadian writer of the psychological novel) and Germaine Guevremont, and introduces them to two living literary greats, Anne Hebert and Gabrielle Roy, through an innovative 'time warp'. The time warp allows the dead writers access to the living ones and access to modern literature. Conan, for example, familiar with Hebert's novels, wants to

discuss them, claiming, "historical time was created to divide us."

The play is like an eye chart: the better your vision, the more you can see. But while those theatregoers familiar with the literature will recognize passages from specific novels, and those familiar with the writers' biographies will enjoy the subtle references, no one should avoid this play. It is, above all, a superb dramatic piece.

Monique Mecure as Conan glides onto the stage on a trapeze. Diana D'Aquila (her performance alone is worth the ticket) falls from the ceiling with her legs wrapped around the perch of an enormous birdcage. The set, symbolically womb-shaped, is constantly transformed by mysterious lighting effects; animal calls and haunting melodies dart through the theatre, travelling along the intricate speaker network. The costumes are brilliantly coloured batiks and weavings. The entire performance stuns and animates on both the literary and dramatic planes. It can be a valuable encounter for anyone.