

Arts

Beckett Theatre plans to censor obscenity

By ANDREW CLARK

A new policy recently adopted by the Samuel Beckett Theatre in Stong College threatens to censor plays which management deems to possess obscene content, despite the existence of federal and provincial obscenity legislation.

According to Megan Thompson, the theatre's Artistic Director, "We censor them to a certain extent, we're not so strict that we would ban them (plays), or wouldn't even consider them. But I would read the script before I would make judgement."

This new policy introduces changes in the "theatre-use contracts" which give the Beckett management the right to approve scripts. The contracts, which were authorized this year, must be signed by all directors who wish to produce a play at Samuel Beckett. The contract states: "Management reserves the right to approve all scripts and productions." The clause is designed to prevent material of a controversial or sexually explicit nature from being performed. Plays are judged by Thompson, who worries about offending large groups of people at the university. "Anything that had explicit scenes or anything like that would probably be controversial," she said. "Not only for our college but for professors, and for people who might be offended by it."

When asked for her criterion in determining the moral value of a play, she replied, "I don't really have any."

Thompson explained that the clause is "just a precaution in case someone wants to put on *Caligula*." Olga Cirak, Assistant to the Master of Stong College, used a play produced five years ago called *Breasts* as an example of the kind of problems which the policy is trying to prevent. Although there was nothing extreme about the play itself, students com-

plained about the posters which advertised the show.

Thompson is primarily concerned with sexual material and nudity. She says the clause will stop someone who "decides to throw something wild and wacky, and has got orgies on stage, and stuff. That's the kind of thing I don't want to see." Cirak echoes this view, saying the clause stops detrimental work and things like "everyone dance around nude and fornicating."

Federal and provincial obscenity laws would prevent such activities from occurring on stage, however the Samuel Beckett management feel it has a responsibility to define its own policy on the matter. When asked if she felt federal and provincial obscenity laws were inadequate, Thompson answered, "They (York students) have a right to see that (i.e. nudity), but I'm not really sure whether I would want to be responsible for it in this theatre. If they want to put that on, then they'll have to find somewhere else to put that kind of stuff on, because we just won't allow it."

Thompson does not feel that the censorship clause will change Samuel Beckett's reputation for producing alternate and experimental theatre. She said that controversial work can still be produced in Samuel Beckett. "Yes, it's a theatre that allows students to do the plays that they want to do; and basically it's their choice, but (only) to a certain extent. We don't go that far," she explained.

After a successful season last year, only four plays are scheduled at Samuel Beckett this year. Last year's season featured a variety of plays which offered students an option to the mainstream theatre offered by the York Theatre Department. This year, given the new policy approach, it will remain to be seen whether the theatre will still provide this alternative.

York's Umbach displays skill and sensitivity at IDA exhibition

By BLAKE EVANS

Upon entering this week's IDA show, "The Birthing Chair," one would make the distinction between this and other exhibitions on the basis that the artist Jill Umbach, paints on wooden doors.

But this is only one technical aspect of a show which, also includes charcoal drawings and photo-etched prints. All these mediums come together under what becomes a second distinction: that Umbach's works have a rich, earthy quality.

In a discussion with *Excalibur*, Umbach described her work as dealing with the concepts associated with history such as time, decay, death and ritual. The doors in the show seem to exemplify the concept of time in that they are symbols of a kind of passage.

For instance, Umbach's "Door Portal II" has been richly textured with plaster. The plaster has been painted over with subtle whites, blues and earth tones. The overall effect is reminiscent of the wall frescos which were an important form in the history of European art.

Another example is an etching displaying a human form that the technique of semi-embossment endows with a sense of age and

decay. The form appears both leathery and earthy, similar in appearance to the ancient Anglo-Saxons found preserved in the peat bogs of England. In another print, a white-on-white pattern in high relief creates a different sense of age while conveying the essence of decaying architecture, or bone fragments.

About the title of the show, Umbach says that the chair interests her because of its simple form. The form

of the chair has the kind of architectural simplicity from which her work evolves and the process of creation from a line of chair or the surface of a door to a developed piece, is a birth of sorts.

From the more work-intensive doors to the simplicity of the charcoal drawings suggesting the curvature of a chair, Umbach has shown both sensitivity to her subjects and the skill to present them in physical art forms.



ROCKIN' THE GRAD LOUNGE URBAN-COUNTRY STYLE: Blue Rodeo delighted audiences last Monday and Tuesday at the Grad Lounge with two inspired shows. From left to right: Cleave Anderson (drums), Jim Cuddy, Bobby Wiseman.

Winters applauds Musgrave's reading

By MARK KEMP

On tour to promote her second novel, the recently published *The Dancing Chicken*, poet Susan Musgrave made an appearance at York last Wednesday as part of the Winters College Reading Series. At 35, Musgrave is certainly one of Canada's foremost poets, with more than 10 titles published, including two novels and two children's books, the most recent of which is the beautifully-illustrated Halloween story called *Hag Head*, which sold out quickly, along with the poetry collections, at the after-reading book table.

The mercurial Musgrave entertained her audience with a blend of excerpts from her recent works and with witty anecdotes which served

both as autobiographical sketches and embellishments to the poems. Musgrave began writing poetry when she was 14; published her first collection, *Songs of the Sea-Witch*, at 19; and has lived in Canada, Ireland, England, Central America, and, currently, on Vancouver Island. She told of sunbathing in Panama on a beach with shark warnings signposted and vultures and American bombers flying overhead, leading into her poem, "Hurt Birds, Vultures and B-52's."

This piece, as was the case with the majority of those she read, came from her latest poetry collection, *Cocktails at the Mausoleum*. Many of the poems in the collection were inspired by her three-year sojourn in Latin America, but they tend to be personal rather than political. Musgrave spoke of the problem of writing in such an alien environment, where revolution and oppression are the subject matter for native artists, and a Canadian finds herself something of a misfit. Nevertheless, the poetry from this period shows sensitivity and insight into individual lives; for example, one piece describes the inability of an Argentine dissident, even after two years of imprisonment and physical torture, to believe in the existence of such a thing. "Torturers are just like you and me," the poem's speaker observes.

Much of Musgrave's poetry deals with an inability for individuals to fit into society. "You Didn't Fit," a

poem describing Musgrave's father, begins with a dream in which a shoebox is his overcramped coffin and ends with his dentures not fitting. Musgrave introduced the poem with an anecdote about her father's non-conformism: when he visited her in Ireland, he refused to change his watch from Pacific Standard Time, and was eight hours out during the entire trip. Other tales included her memory of a rat trapped in her toilet, with no man around to kill it. "I'm old-fashioned in a lot of ways," she said, "and don't mind doing the cooking and washing, but I think that the man should get rid of the rats."

After a few selections from such earlier collections as *Tarts and Muggers*, and *A Man to Marry*, *A Man to Bury*, Musgrave read excerpts from *The Dancing Chicken*, an amusing look at smalltown BC through the eyes of an adulterous lawyer named Cod. As research for the book—her hero has embarrassing difficulties with the directions—she had to buy a box of condoms. As she explained, it is the responsibility of the '80s author to write about safe sex.

(Winters College readings take place every Tuesday afternoon at 5:00 p.m. in the Senior Common Room. Most are poetry and prose recitals by York students, with the occasional appearance of well-known figures such as Musgrave and other Canada Council-sponsored readers.)

Why go to Timbuktu? When we are close to you!

SADROO'S GROCERY SUPPLIES

East and West Indian Foods and Spices

- Large Selection of Cheeses
- Dried Fruits and Nuts
- Bulk Foods and Deli
- Baking Needs and Patés

...and much, much more

BRING THIS AD AND RECEIVE 10% OFF
On above mentioned items—Does not include specials

34 Futurity Gate, Unit #1
(opposite Steeles West Market
between Dufferin and Alness)

738-9322

HOURS: Mon, Tues, Wed, Sat 9-6, Thurs, Fri 9-8, Closed Sundays

Don't Forget Our

PARTY TRAYS AND GIFT BASKETS

AMICI'S PIZZERIA & RESTAURANT

4801 Keele St. Unit 62 Downsview, Ont.
MON-WED 11-1 THUR, FRI 11-2 SAT 4-2 SUN 4-12

736-4884 736-4662

- open 7 days
- eat-in, take-out or delivered
- FREE DELIVERY
- authentic Italian cuisine
- daily fresh pasta dishes
- directly across from campus - we are your fastest alternative to campus food