

[Translation]

## THE LATE BRUNO GERUSSI

### TRIBUTES

**Hon. Jean-Louis Roux:** Honourable senators, it was my intention today to mark the passing of two distinguished representatives of Canada's artistic community. The first of these was Robertson Davies, but after hearing the moving and eloquent words of Senators Fairbairn and Doyle, I shall say no more. I shall speak only of the second great figure whom the arts have lost.

Honourable senators, I did not have the privilege of knowing the great writer Robertson Davies personally, but such was not the case with the second artist to whom I would like to pay tribute today, actor Bruno Gerussi. He died suddenly some two weeks ago, although I learned of the sad event only recently.

[English]

The son of an immigrant Italian stonemason who settled in Medicine Hat, Alberta, Bruno won a scholarship to the Banff School of Fine Arts and honed his gifts as an actor with the Seattle Repertory Theatre. He was also part of the Stratford Shakespearean Festival for many seasons, where I saw him for the first time in 1954 playing old Gobbo in the *Merchant of Venice*. Though playing opposite the great German actor Herbert Volk in the role of Shylock, I have kept a most vivid memory of his portrayal of that small part.

I did not know it at the time, but I myself would be part of the Stratford company two years later and would play on the festival stage with Bruno Gerussi. It is still an open question as to who had the idea of asking French-speaking Canadian actors to impersonate the French court in *Henry V*. I thought it might be Michael Langham, since he established the first contacts with us. Recently, Tom Patterson insisted that he was the first to have had the "great" idea. In any event, I do know that I played the French ambassador in the second scene of the first act, and Orleans in the rest of the play.

If memory serves, Bruno played various parts, including Bardolph, formerly a servant to Falstaff who became a soldier in King Henry's army.

[Translation]

• (1420)

This meeting of the two groups of actors, anglophone and francophone, was an important milestone in the history of Canadian theatre, culminating later on in the creation of the National Theatre School, among other things. Relationships were quick to develop, quite cordial ones for the most part. The cordiality was more spontaneous with some than with others, but with Bruno Gerussi, it was instantaneous. He was extremely open and friendly with us; this was a man of innate generosity.

[English]

• (1420)

We had a great time, drinking, joking, and more often rebuilding the world and reshaping our country, Canada, in a spirit of tolerance, mutual understanding and happiness.

In the late sixties, Bruno Gerussi became a young widower with two children to raise. He began to give them the best in education and comfort and, consequently, had to leave the stage. After being host of that three-hour national celebration, *Morningside*, one of the finest programs on CBC radio, he became the star, for 19 years, of the most successful CBC television series ever, *The Beachcombers*, played in 30 countries from Australia to Germany.

I very seldom saw him in *The Beachcombers*. As a result, the Greek character he portrayed in that program will luckily not be my last memory of Bruno. I much prefer thinking of him as Peer Gynt or Romeo, two of the innumerable characters he portrayed, mainly with the Canadian Players and with the Stratford Shakespearean Festival.

As Peer Gynt, he was capable of all the excesses, fantasies, lies and incredible fables the character borrows from the legends of his country, through which he pretends to have lived. Of all the portrayals by my friend Bruno Gerussi, his portrayal of Romeo is the one for which I most fondly remember him. He brought to Montaigne's young son the bearing of a flippant little punk, the leader of a teenage gang who liked to fight, bully, shout and quarrel. However, once he had met his Juliet, played by Julie Harris, he was transformed into a passionate lover; not a romantic ballad singer, perhaps, but an adolescent full of energy and vital strength, a truly modern lover.

From that image of Romeo, years ago, Bruno had physically turned into a Falstaffian character. Had he not renounced the stage, this part would have suited him famously. This is probably why, on learning of his sudden death, the following words came back to my mind:

...He's in Arthur's bosom, if ever man went to Arthur's bosom... A' made a finer end, and went away...at the turning o' the tide...

## WORLD AIDS DAY

### EFFECT OF PANDEMIC ON YOUTH

**Hon. Landon Pearson:** Honourable senators, I rise today to speak about AIDS-affected children and youth in conjunction with the Eighth Annual AIDS Day which was last Friday, December 1. This year, the World Health Organization has chosen the theme "Shared Rights and Responsibilities" to emphasize the importance of solidarity in the global response to HIV/AIDS.