

Perth County Conspiracy pleasing

by Cathy Blackburn

It may not be a conspiracy, but it works. Perth County achieved the impossible — on Wednesday, March 21st, they had 800 Dal students sitting relaxed in the McInnes Room and singing together. It was a "take your shoes off and stay awhile" atmosphere, and everyone did. Relaxed on the floor, peaceful and close to those around us, we lay back and enjoyed the music.

The concert started late and there were ticket hassles, but the tension eased when the group wandered on and invited us to join in the opening song. The same refrain closed the evening, swelling more strongly and happily from the audience — a result of the good feelings we'd shared during the evening.

The music is gentle and home-grown; all written by Perth County people. It celebrates life and love and the land. Social comment is pointed but not harsh. Somehow the general spirit remains hopeful.

Songs were interspersed occasionally with instrumental

numbers. Judy on piano and flute and Jeremy on the drums sounded their finest in these pieces. Bob and Richard are the lead singers, alternating solos with an erratic dialogue that was sometimes annoying rather than amusing.

The people on stage — Penny dancing in the background, the baby Raphael — all enjoyed each other and the music so much that the audience responds. But this performance lacked an ebullience, a joyousness that we've experienced elsewhere. In Toronto and in London, (both admittedly much closer to Perth County, Ontario) there were probably thirty people involved. They danced through the crowd, lit candles, and made the contact personal. Here at Dal the audience was expecting a performance rather than an experience; so there was too much expected of the too few people on stage. Almost all the music was new to this audience — only one old favourite from their two LP's Still, it was a unique and en-



(peter clarke/dal photo)

Perth County Conspiracy at Dal

joyable way to celebrate the first day of spring.

Perth County no longer records for "Kolumbia". They

have cut an LP on their own called "Rumour II". It is mostly in-concert recordings from their recent western tour.

It will be available for \$3 at Saturday's concert at King's College.

Shaw's Candida coming

Andrew Downie, whom TV buffs will remember from "Dr. Finlay's Casebook," is directing Neptune's production of "Candida," which opened March 29. The show is designed by Maurice Strike, who did "Loot" for Neptune earlier this season.

Andrew Downie started his career by winning two bursaries: the first one took him from his native Edinburgh to London to study acting and singing at the Royal College of Music for three years; the second was a French Government bursary which enabled him to study acting in Paris under Georges Wague. He played leading roles for Tyrone Guthrie at four consecutive Edinburgh Festivals and was offered a regular contract with the Glasgow Citizen's Theatre, which lasted until he was asked to play in the London production of Benjamin Britten's "Let's Make An Opera."

Guthrie also invited him to

Canada to play the tenor lead in "HMS Pinafore" at the Stratford Festival in Ontario. This led to three summers doing Gilbert and Sullivan at Stratford and for the CBC. Since then, he has been back as a guest director at the Opera School in Toronto. In 1972 he was opera director at the School of Fine Arts in Banff, Alberta, where he will be returning in June of this year.

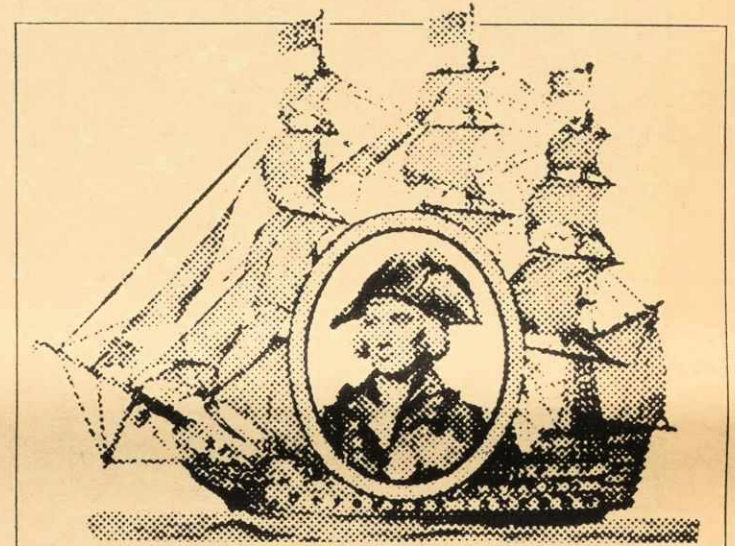
Downie is currently working as an advisor to the Royal Shakespeare Company in England.

Joan Gregson, one of the original members of the Neptune Company in 1963, plays the title role. Gregson is recognized as one of the most accomplished actresses in Canada. The late

Nathan Cohen called her one of the three best actresses in the country, along with Kate Reid and Frances Hyland.

Miss Gregson's most recent triumph was as Beatrice in Goldoni's "The Servant of Two Masters" at Neptune in 1971, where she replaced Tedde Moore, who collapsed during the opening night's performance.

She is also known for her many years as a member of "The Gillans" — a popular daily programme about the Maritime farm family on CBC Radio for a number of years. She was also a member of the Neptune company that took "The Sleeping Bag" to Expo in 1967, and across the country on a Festival Canada tour.



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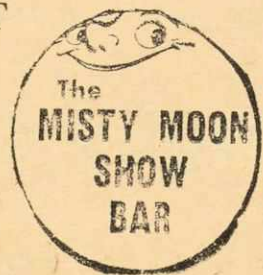
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