

**Boccaccio's Decameron**

**Bawdy tales battle reality blues**

W. Hurst  
Alex Hausvater plans to direct *Hamlet* as a house-party with the piano-playing host as the tragic prince because Hausvater likes to give classical plays unclassical productions.

To Toronto's Bathurst Theatre, Hausvater brings his version of *Boccaccio's Decameron*: Franco-phone actors use English to portray Italian actors who must perform in German for their Nazi captors.

The original *Decameron*, from the 14th century, is a collection of sometimes bawdy tales that were told to avoid reality; 'reality' was the plague in medieval Italy.

Hausvater has directed a rather traditional *Decameron* for the Italian stage. While researching for that production, he learned of actors who performed traditional plays, like *Decameron*, throughout Italy, until 1939. In that year, being thought socialist, the troupe was arrested by the fascists and disappeared into concentration camps.

**A story to tell**

This disappearance is the starting point for Hausvater's current production. He asks, "What happened to the actor, who had a story to tell? The story becomes his means of survival."

Despite the setting, Hausvater is adamant that this *Decameron* "has nothing to do with concentration camps, absolutely nothing," except allegorically. The actors are engulfed in horror, much like the plague but theirs is man-made. Therefore, attempts to avoid reality are similar. Perhaps more importantly, the concentration camp may be more emotionally immediate than a medieval plague.

**A Beckett play for his theatre**

Brian Mitchell

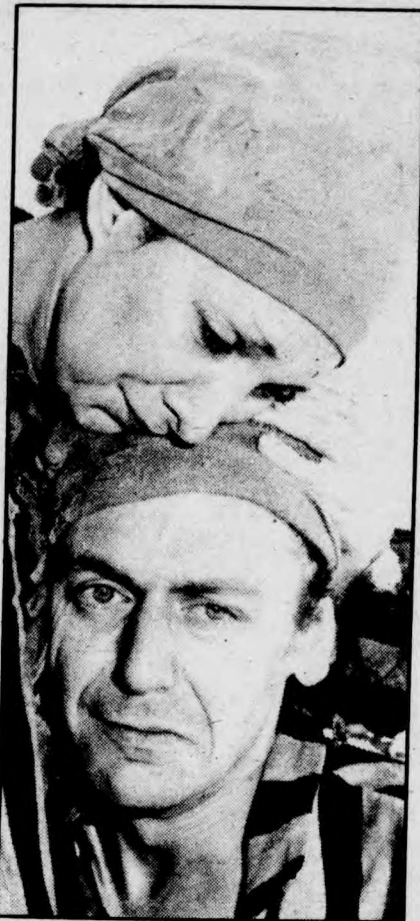
This week, for the first time in the history of the Samuel Beckett Theatre here at Stong College, major works of Beckett will be staged. "This'll be the first time any of his major works have ever been presented there," said Mark Hudson, producer of the Mini Festival called *Beckett at Beckett* through which the works will appear.

The festival will include two of Beckett's most well-known plays, *Waiting for Godot*, directed by Robert A Holmes, and *Endgame*, directed by Brian Scott.

"When the theatre opened, only three of Beckett's short works were done, and since then, there's really been nothing," Hudson said. "There are so many courses that use (works by) Beckett," he added, "that it seems fairly ironic we wouldn't be using the theatre we named after him to do more of his stuff."

The productions are intended to allow people to see the works of Beckett in a specifically theatrical light. It will be the first chance for many to approach his works without the usual obligatory classroom overtones. Hudson is quick to point out that "the atmosphere at the theatre is very complimentary to Beckett's work. There's a certain intimacy and rapport there."

Apparently, permission to name the theatre after Beckett came directly from the playwright. The letter from Beckett granting that permission will be on display throughout the festival which will run Tuesday Oct. 19 through Saturday Oct. 23.



Ironically, Hausvater insists that "it's a most amusing show" and he worries that an audience may not laugh, although he and the actors work for more than laughs. His favourite reaction is one where "there's a roar of laughter and then absolute silence, with no intellectual transition of any kind."

However, this is a man who relies on his intellect to support his unconventional approach to production. To explain casting actors who speak little English, Hausvater says that "the French actor's struggle to find the work or sound becomes the struggle of the actor in *Decameron*."

Alex Hausvater may be right, if it all works--actors as actors, comedy in hell, language as dramatic tool. Perhaps he wants to get past the conventional viewpoint that holds back an audience from what Hausvater calls the "magic" of theatre. After all, the play's the thing.

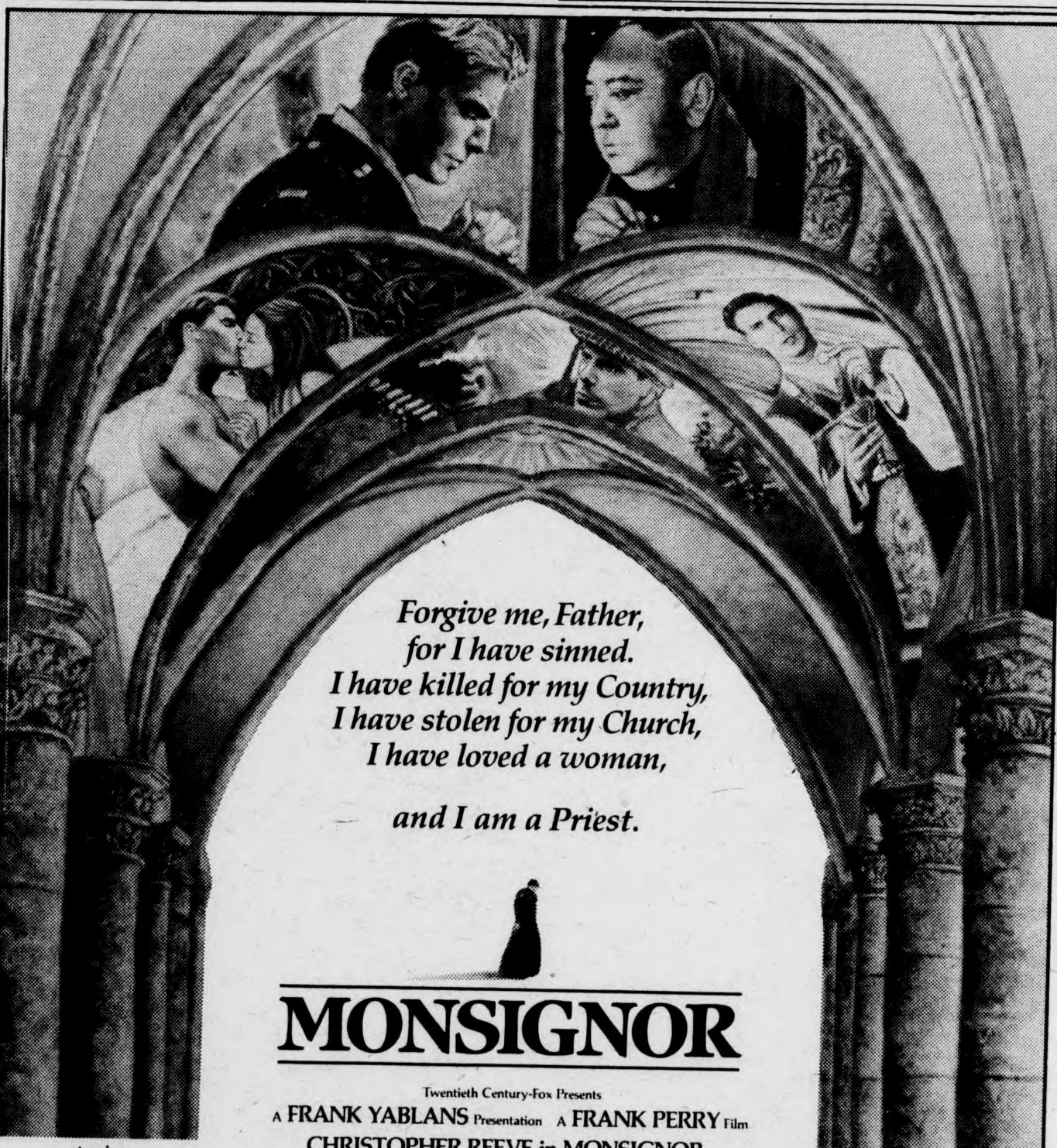
*Boccaccio's Decameron*  
Bathurst Street Theatre  
736 Bathurst St.  
Oct. 20 - limited run.  
Student inquiries 595-5088.

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I have stolen for my Church,  
I have loved a woman,  
and I am a Priest.*

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with TOMAS MILIAN as Francisco Director of Photography BILLY WILLIAMS, B.S.C.  
Music by JOHN WILLIAMS Produced by FRANK YABLANS and DAVID NIVEN, JR.  
Screenplay by ABRAHAM POLONSKY and WENDELL MAYES  
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