

# Henley's Crimes is about a typical dysfunctional family

by Krista Ellis

Someone once said that "drama is life with the dull bits taken out." If you leave the dull bits in but laugh at them anyway, you get *Crimes of the Heart*.

Written by Beth Henley, *Crimes of the Heart* is the slightly macabre story of three southern sisters who have

## THEATRE

*Crimes of the Heart*  
 written by Beth Henley  
 directed by Franco Boni  
 Studio Theatre

more than their share of skeletons in the family closet. The Magraths are not famous or notorious; they are a

normal, everyday dysfunctional family. The difference is that playwright Henley successfully holds up their dark spots for us to judge and examine.

The play is a very comical look at some of the saddest moments of our lives, delving into themes of suicide, mental and physical abuse, misogyny

and domestic violence. The characters do their fair share of wallowing in self-pity, but they also rise above it and find humour in the worst of situations.

After the show director Franco Boni was asked to describe the show in one word. After a brief moment of reflection, Boni's eyes lit up and he said: "Explosion!"

Thinking for a moment, Boni added: "There is, amidst the humour, an incredible seriousness. It's all one big release from beginning to end."

I believe Boni has found the humour in the misery which Henley intended, the humour which makes us examine our own misery a little closer, and take our own happiness a little less for granted. The three sisters draw strength from one another, not only as family, but as women. "I feel it is important for women to rely on each other, especially since they have grown up in such a misogynistic environment," said Boni.

Each of the sisters is chained down emotionally to a man, until finally, aiding each other, they find temporary escape from the manipulative, male-

dominated relationships which control their lives.

One of the more memorable scenes is between two sisters, one of whom has just tried to commit suicide by putting her head in an electric oven. Upon being discovered, she reveals why their mother hung herself and their beloved cat, to which her sister replies: "We've just got to learn to get through these bad days. It's getting to be a thing in our family."

This production was quickly paced. It was emotionally erratic, bordering on hysterics, which often made it difficult to watch.

At times this production was unbelievable — the scene where the actors recklessly ran into walls which shook, for instance. I found myself grasping the sides of my seat tightly, clicking my heels together three times and whispering "willing suspension of disbelief, willing suspension of disbelief..."

*Crimes of the Heart* doesn't have a happy ending. But although these women's lives will probably continue to be filled with sorrow, you sort of know they will always have each other.

## Verlaine and Rimbaud experience Eclipse

by Josh Marans

*Total Eclipse*, a play from the late 60s by Christopher Hampton (best known for writing the screenplay for the film *Dangerous Liaisons*) will be playing March 10 to 21 at the TSP Studio Theatre. I had a chance last week to talk to the show's director, Stafford Arima.

**Josh Marans: What is the play about?**

Stafford Arima: The play recounts this [true story] of two poets, Paul Verlaine & Arthur Rimbaud... They met in 1871; the older poet invites the younger poet to come to dinner to talk about his work because this younger poet, Rimbaud, is a genius. He's 17 years old, and he writes poetry that is so advanced for his age that this older poet is enthralled and invites him to come to Paris.

(Verlaine) finds this younger poet has new ideas about changing the world, about becoming a god. The older poet is much more traditional, and is fascinated by this kind of rebellious character.

(Verlaine) decides the only way to abandon his traditional lifestyle is to just travel all around Europe with this

## INTERVIEW

*Total Eclipse*  
 written by Christopher Hampton  
 directed by Stafford Arima  
 TSP Studio Theatre  
 March 10 to 21

younger poet and experience this rebellious life. He hopes it will make him a better poet.

So that's what the play basically does: recounts their relationship (which) over a two year period was very tumultuous, passionate and violent.

**Is it a homosexual play?**

No, no.

**But there is a homosexual relationship.**

There is a homosexual relationship between the two poets, but the play is not a play about homosexuality, about being gay in the nineteenth century. It is an element of their relationship, just like alcoholism is an element of their relationship.

Rimbaud, the young poet who is a rebel, wanted to step outside the so-

cial order. The social order was traditional, conforming, conservative, "normal." He felt that he had to step outside of this social order and do everything that would derange his senses, would derange other peoples senses.

He didn't want to be like everybody else. For him that meant as a 16 year old boy, delving very deeply into alcoholism and drugs, into... wild sex which included a homosexual relationship with this poet. But it's not a play that deals with gay issues in nineteenth century France.

**A number of people working on the show are York Theatre Students or Graduates. Does this mean that students of the program can look forward to a lot of theatre work?**

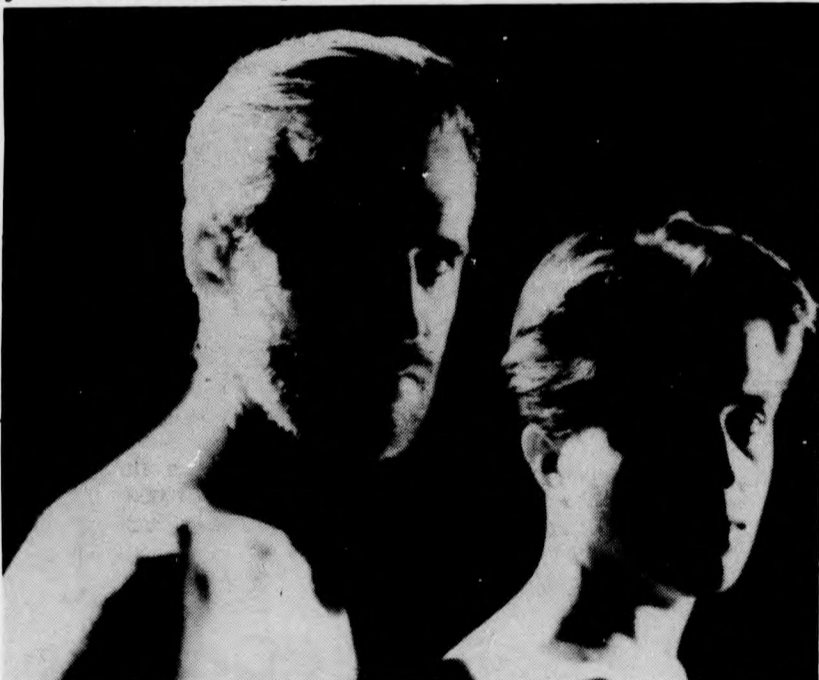
We have five designers on the show, and four of them are graduates or graduating students. I don't think that graduating from York's Theatre department — or any York Fine Arts Department — will enable or hinder you from getting a job.

When I audition people, I don't look and say, "Oh, York University! We must have that person!" If they are right for the role, if they are talented and I see something I think would be great to work with, (I would hire them). It doesn't matter if you have no experience or a lot of experience.

**Why was it important to do *Total Eclipse*?**

It was important because of the message. It deals with finding your own personal power, being able to say to yourself that I want to be a poet, and I want to live this kind of lifestyle, that I want to be a traditionalist or a non-conformist or whatever you decide is what you want to do. You should feel happy about your choices.

[Another reason] is that we all have things in our past that have happened to us, and sometimes a lot of those things can be scary enough that we actually want to block it out of [our mind]. This play has a very uplifting message: you can have a very horrible past, but you can still be a very promising adult.



Andrew Brinks as Paul Verlaine and Theo Ward as Arthur Rimbaud in Christopher Hampton's *Total Eclipse*. According to director Stafford Arima, the play is about finding your personal power. •photo by Richard Ambrose

## See play, relive your first date

by Julie Cavicchioli

Do you remember when you went on a date and thought the person you were with was "the right one?" *The End of Love* takes you back to that first date when you had butterflies in your stomach and could hardly focus on anything other than the person you were with.

*The End of Love* is an anti-romantic play about two sexual orientations: gay and straight. It explores the need to find and hold on to love.

The relationships which illustrate the two orientations parallel each other in terms of love, desire, sex and marriage. They illustrate the beginnings of a relationship, courtship and the initial emergence of feelings of love and lust.

The two sets of couples who seem perfect for each other are treated with humour. Lionel (Warren Sulatycky, who also wrote the play) is obnoxious, while Peggy (Ellen-Ray Hennesy), his love interest, is incredibly silly. They're a perfect match.

## THEATRE

*The End of Love*  
 written by Warren Sulatycky  
 starring Edward Roy and Ellen-Ray Hennesy  
 The Theatre Centre  
 until March 8

Simon (Steve Cumyn) and Kyle (Donaid Carrier) also complement each other, one being manly and conservative, the other rough and boyish. Both couples experience the pain and joy of loving and being in love.

The actors' energy is incredible. They manage to arouse our imagination and keep it stimulated from beginning to end.

*The End of Love* shows how wonderful and devastating love can be. It reveals how desperately human beings yearn for love, and how devastating the loneliness which accompanies the end of a relationship can be.

If you appreciate alternative theatre, you must see Savage Theatre's production of *The End of Love*.

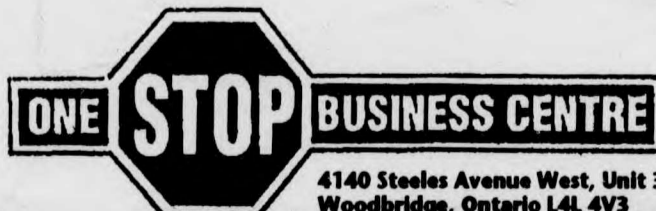


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