

and amateur photographer who becomes involved in the pretentious world of art through a job in a small art gallery. Her infatuation with the attractive female curator involves her in fraud. Although she is hurt and disillusioned by those she most admires, Polly's unique character enables her to survive the experience. *Mermaids* has already racked up sales far in excess of its \$350 000 budget, and extensive distribution rights have been secured.

Another recent hit is *Family Viewing* by director Atom Egoyan. Winner of the Prix Alcan at the 1987 Montreal New Cinema Festival, it was also selected for the 1987 Berlin Film Festival Forum and won the Festival of Festivals' Toronto City Award the same year. *Family Viewing* is a provocative deadpan comedy that takes a dark look at family relationships in the video era. It focuses on the breakdown of the family unit by using satire to examine the effects of technology on human emotion.

Director Egoyan shot a substantial part of the film on different kinds of videotape and intercut them with film to create a kind of visual interplay. Egoyan, whose first feature, *Next of Kin*, was also well received, has established himself as a major director with a singular voice.

An altogether different era is brought to the screen by director Francis Mankiewicz, with his brilliant costume drama of the 1920s and 1930s — *Revolving Doors* (*Les portes tournantes*). The film is both a sentimental period piece and a modern drama. Its protagonist — a

The award-winning *Night Zoo* is a compelling drama by one of Quebec's most promising filmmakers.



Céleste (Monique Spaziani), a determined and stylish piano player in *Les Portes Tournantes*.

brooding, contemporary artist played by Gabriel Arcand — retreats from his marital problems and his inability to communicate with his son by poring over his mother's memoirs. The lives of mother and son show how the past influences today's culture.

Another recent Canadian success is *Dead Ringers* by David Cronenberg, one of the country's best-known filmmakers (*Videodrome*, *The Fly*). A realistic drama, the film represents somewhat of a departure for Cronenberg, whose earlier works were science fiction or horror films.



Photo: Takashi Selda

Dead Ringers explores the bizarre lives of identical twins, Elliot and Beverly Mantle, both portrayed by English actor Jeremy Irons. Inseparable as youngsters, they grow up to become famous gynaecologists and remain deeply connected in a number of disturbing ways. They share their medical expertise and become involved with the same woman — an actress named Kate, played by Canadian Geneviève Bujold. The climax is a horrifying confrontation that forces them to face up to the many ties that bind them.

This spring, *Laura Laur* — a film by Quebec director Brigitte Sauriol — is slated to première at Cannes. Based on the novel of the same name by Suzanne Jacob (winner of the 1983 Governor General's Award), it is the story of a free-spirited, uncompromising woman (played by Portuguese-Canadian Paula de Vasconcelos) who draws men to her even though she threatens their dominance.

Laura Laur is one of a trio of promising Canadian films that will make their début at Cannes this year. The other two are *Jesus of Montreal*, Denys Arcand's ambitious \$4.2 million follow-up to *Decline*, and *Comment faire l'amour avec un Nègre sans se fatiguer*, a quirky sex satire based on a best-selling novel by Haitian-Canadian writer Dany Laferrière.

Cannes will once again provide an international context from which to judge the Canadian film scene. If recent past performances are any indication, Canada will continue to be seen as a country that can create movies that are not only culturally its own but competitive with the best the world has to offer.