

compiled by Kristy Gordon
and Heather Sangster

Things are quiet on campus this week, but the few events that are scheduled look interesting.

This is your last chance to catch the theatre dept's performance of *Othello*, directed by Neil Freeman. Performances run until the 25 in Burton Auditorium. The show starts at 7pm and admission is \$5 for students at the door. Phone 736-5173 for more info.

On Nov 27 at 7:30pm **Orchestra York** will perform in DACARY Hall, McLaughlin College. Admission is \$4 for students.

The **Winds Symphony and University Choir** will perform a joint concert on Nov 29 at 7:30pm in DACARY Hall. **Kathleen Ash-Barracough** will conduct this performance. Phone 736-5186.

Fourth year theatre student **Rhea Ackler** will direct *The Jones Boy* by Canadian playwright **Tom Walmsley**. This one-act drama deals with heroin addiction and survival. The show runs from Nov 28-Dec 1 in the Samuel Beckett Theatre. Performances start at 8pm and tickets are \$3 at the door.

On Nov 29 Canadian pianist **Francine Raye** presents a solo recital of works by Schumann and Beethoven as part of the CJRT Soloist Series. This performance, which is being recorded for broadcast, starts at 12:30pm in DACARY Hall.

Don't miss the **Thursday Night Main Event** presented by the CYSF and McLaughlin College. This dance features live music by **The Hopping Penguins** and **Tall Tales 'N' True** opening up. Various contests and continuous draws all night. Limited \$6 tickets available at the CYSF office.

Don't miss the **Ann and Marshall Webb Collection** in the AGYU (N145 Ross), running until Dec 17. This photographic display includes 22 international artists. Gallery hours are Tues-Fri 10-4:30pm, Wed 10-8pm and Sun 12-5pm.

If you want 16,000 pairs of eyes reading about your event, please bring your listing to the EXCAL office and drop it into the manilla envelope on the arts board.

Lewis triumphs in my left foot

by Ira Glick

Rarely does a film come along that really sweeps you off your feet. By that I mean a film that tears at one's heartstrings and causes tears to well up in the eyes. *My Left Foot*, the true story of Christie Brown, is one of those films.

Christie, played by the unbelievably talented Daniel Day Lewis, is a victim of cerebral palsy — a muscular disorder which has left him barely able to communicate, and incapable of any movement except for his left foot.

The film, Jim Sheridan's directorial debut, is structured as a series of extended flashbacks which follow Christie Brown's progress from his birth to the day, in 1959, when he first met his wife-to-be, Mary.

Christie Brown's story is one of triumph over adversity. While born into a very poor Irish family, he is nevertheless fortunate in that his family is a tightly-knit group with boundless love and respect for one another. No one ever treats Christie with pity. As a result, he develops self esteem and confidence and begins to make fantastic use of his only functioning limb.

One day Christie manages to get a piece of chalk between his toes. He slowly writes the word MOTHER. His father is elated and

announces that his son is a genius.

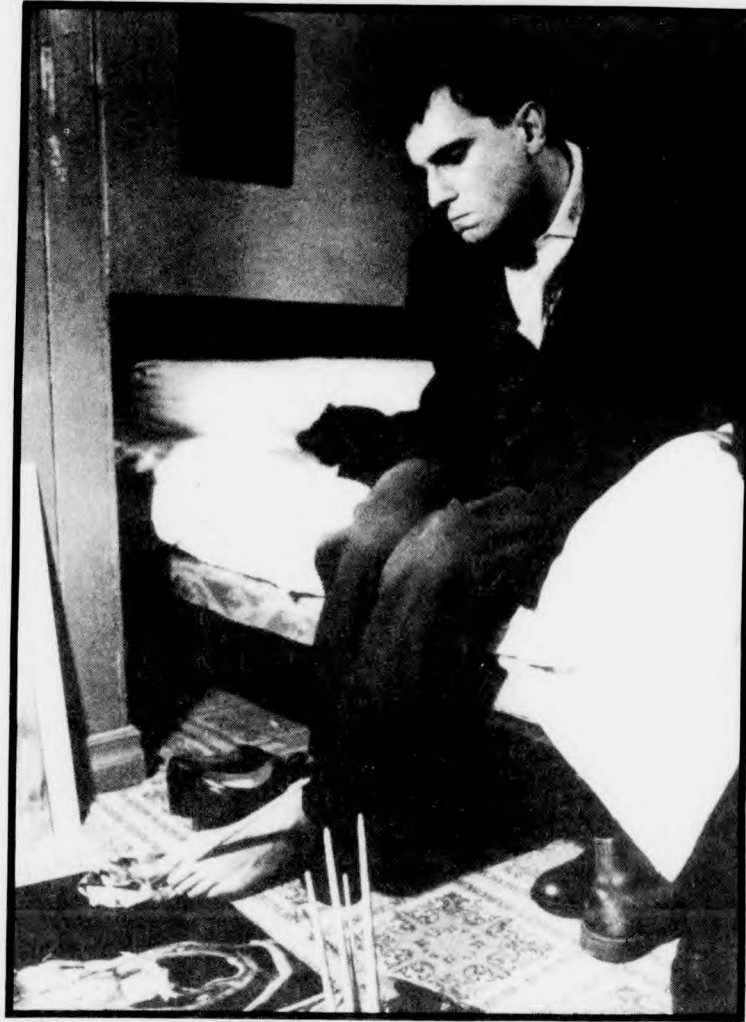
Christie discovers his real passion and begins to paint oils. It is not long before he begins to receive appreciative nods from the art world.

My Left Foot is a classy little film. When I say it's a tearjerker don't think *Terms of Endearment* or an NBC disease-of-the-week show. Think instead of *Dominick & Eugene* or *A World Apart*. The same kind of restraint (as in non-sensationalistic) and clear-eyed stylistic economy of those pictures is well in evidence here.

Drama with this kind of gutsy sincerity is something Hollywood adores but doesn't seem to be able to pull off much anymore.

Christie is no angel. He curses, he makes scenes in public and is demanding. He also looks, toward the end of the picture, to be well on his way to alcoholism. I mention all this only to highlight the admirable; that the screenwriters Peter Sheridan and Shane Connaughton have made the bold dramatic choice of showing Christie realistically — with all his faults and imperfections. The guy ends up looking like one tough bastard, and we end up loving him regardless.

This film is a compelling, passionate and life affirming tale of one man's courage to rise above his limitations, give despair the shakeoff and live his life with both dignity and grace.



Daniel Day Lewis portrays life with dignity and grace.

by Ira Nayman

"Well, the show has been changed a little bit since the taping of the pilot. The person who originally okayed the series has left the CBC, and his replacement didn't like the direction of the show. So, we've toned down the politics so we could emphasize the personal relationships..."

"But how can you have a show about politicians set in Ottawa where the emphasis isn't on politics?"

"It does seem to miss the point, doesn't it?" (from a telephone conversation with David Cole).

"Yes, we've taken out a lot of the politics — we want to go for the relationships between the characters... if anything, I think this makes the show more political..." (from a telephone conversation with Paul Chato).

When I first heard about the television series *In Opposition*, I thought I had died and gone into comedy heaven: Canadian political satire is one of my specialties. I attended the taping of the pilot last November, and was heartened to find that, aside from the occasional easy joke, the show was what the advanced publicity had described, a satirical look at federal politics through the eyes of a political rookie, Karen Collier. Excited, I wrote a couple of scripts (so eager was I, in fact, that I did not, at the time, have the characters' names!).

Three months later, I spoke to David Cole, creator of *In Opposition* and co-creator of *Seeing Things*. He explained why the show had changed and he did not sound happy. *In Opposition*

had been OK'd in its new format for six episodes, which Mr. Cole was already writing himself, but if I remained interested, I could contact him after they were taped to see if more could be ordered.

At this point, I wasn't too happy either.

In due course, the tapings of the six episodes, including a rewritten plot taking into account cast changes and the new direction of the show, were produced. To say that the politics had been de-emphasized was like saying the federal government has a small problem controlling its spending — what an understatement!

The last episode I saw, for instance, revolved around Karen's relationship with a good looking but dumb former hockey player. Although ostensibly about her Party's efforts to recruit him as a candidate in a by-election, the primary conflict was about Karen's disdain for his intellect and lust for his body. At one point in the taping, the only real topical reference was removed between takes.

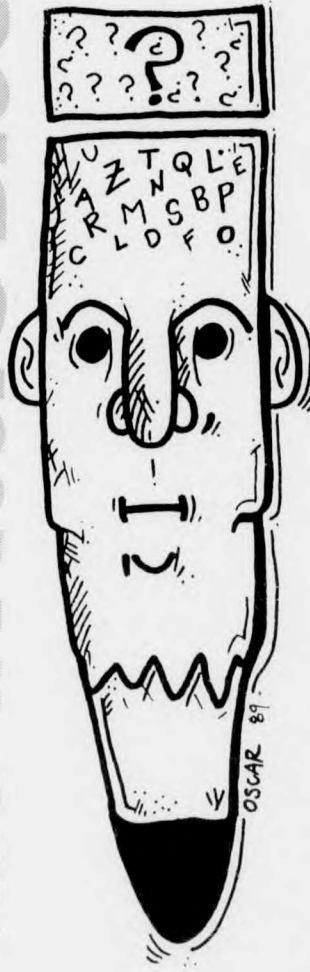
I rewrote the episodes I had originally submitted, and wrote a few more for good measure, but the series had mutated into something I couldn't write for. I was not surprised, therefore, when Paul Chato, head of Situation Comedy at the CBC, rejected the scripts (although I would have preferred that he tell me up front that he didn't want topical satire rather than lecture me about his idea of situation comedy form). It was like we were talking about two different programmes.

During one of our half dozen conversations, Mr. Chato told me that he wanted to develop shows that were both critical and popular successes. We all do, I suppose. If he had been prepared to listen to me, I would have argued that *In Opposition*, as it was currently conceived wasn't likely to be either. Setting a show on Parliament Hill, the centre of Canada's federal government, and *not* emphasizing politics is something critics were likely to ridicule. Comparisons to *Not My Department*, a CBC programme from a couple of years ago, which, although similarly set in Ottawa was similarly non-political, were inevitable. (To be fair *In Opposition* is much funnier than *Not My Department*; still it doesn't say much for the institutional memory of the CBC!)

The public reaction is just as easy to predict. People who aren't interested in politics aren't likely to watch a show set in Ottawa called *In Opposition*; those who are interested in politics aren't likely to watch more than a couple of episodes when they realise that the show hardly delivers any. Thus, after a mild initial interest, audience members were likely to be unimpressive. I cannot believe who Paul Chato's viewer surveys told him would watch this show.

In all, 10 months elapsed from the time I first heard about it to the time my last script was rejected. Not to worry, though: I knew early on that it wasn't likely I would write for *In Opposition*, so the toilet stalls of the world were safe.

the writers block



Ira Nayman is a York student with vast experience as a writer. Ira has written numerous newspaper columns as well as dabbling with CBC television and radio.