

# THEATRE UNB: A GROWTH INDUSTRY



**Kathleen Scherf: Coordinator of drama activities.**  
Theatre has been her life since her undergrad days at U of T.

By Randall N. Haslett

Quiet on the set! Curtain up! Cue the actors! It's SHOWTIME!! Theatre UNB is off on another busy season; in fact their 93/94 season is their biggest ever with 8 shows confirmed and possibly 2 more in

April. Due to the combined efforts of Prof Ed Mullaly and Prof Kathleen Scherf, the campus is overflowing with budding Julia Roberts and Al Pachinos!! The reason I know all this is because there is a waiting list to get into the drama classes; and I'm one. Did you

know there were over 60 people at the "Open Call" last week? All this bodes well for Theatre UNB aficionados this winter.

The growing success of Theatre UNB coupled with the activities of Richard Hornsby's musical program, has meant that Memorial(Mem) Hall is bursting with creative arts activity. As the Coordinator of Drama Facilities, Prof Mullaly has an even bigger smile on his face. Mem Hall is getting a work-out in gigantic proportions. Consequently, Theatre UNB will use three venues this year to stage its many shows; Mem Hall, Marshall D'Avray Hall, and The Cellar Theatre (Carleton Hall Room 139). This presents some logistical and technical problems for Prof Scherf, the Coordinator of Drama Activities. Ones she is glad to have, mind you. The major obstacles are the transportation of sets (especially in the snow!!), proper lighting and good sound. However these are problems that Dan Silk is able to solve in his cool capacity of Designer and technical coordinator. Dan brings to Theatre UNB years of experience gained at the Playhouse.

This experience will result in some awesome sets for Theatre UNB productions. The season

premiers 15-16 October with *No Stronger Than Words* monologues and dialogues written by UNB creative writing students. This is followed by *Arsenic and Old Lace* 28-30 October and The Fringe Festival 3-6 November. Next is a co-production with Theatre Fredericton 16-18 December, *Cinderella Meets Frederickton*—an hilarious, unusual, politicized, and very local version of the famous fairy-tale. *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* will be presented 27-29 January. For mature audiences (which is all of us, right?), Peter Shaffer's *Equus* plays 24-26 March. Other shows are planned for February and April. By the look of the line-up, theatre goes are in for a great season!!

Prof Scherf is responsible for putting that season together. Theatre has been the centre of her life since her undergrad days at U. of T. Further honing her skills at UBC while receiving her masters and doctorate degrees, she became an accomplished actor, director and producer. She carefully balances her passion for theatre with her teaching duties, her writing, and her family. She is the Editor of *Studies in Canadian Literature*. The author of one book, three more are scheduled for release

over the next twelve months. Theatre is also a family affair. Her husband Dan Silk is an accomplished director and set designer. Their son Rob, a Grade 3 student, helps as a prompter, a production assistant, and a general all-round stagehand. Additionally, she also finds time to be the Artistic Director for Theatre Fredericton. Where does she get the energy??

During a recent interview, Prof Scherf emphasized that the growth in theatre is a result of the renewed interest by the University to promote its Fine Arts programs and that everyone is a beneficiary. The spinoff is that both Prof Mullaly and Prof Scherf are involved in community theatre; Prof Mullaly is an active member of the Gilbert and Sullivan Society of Fredericton having directed several shows. This is not confined to faculty, but to students as well. Greg Doran, a UNB grad student is directing the Spring production for Gilbert and Sullivan.

As for the bottom-line, tickets are moderately priced for starving students and budget minded clients; \$3-\$5 is the norm. In most cases the profits/proceeds are plowed right back into the programme. Some shows make money and some shows lose, and that's a REAL lesson for budding producers and actors. Prof Scherf is also glad to be able help raise public awareness and some cash for non-profits. Proceeds from the season opener will go to the Rape Crisis Centre. She really appreciates the way in which the community, both on & off campus, has supported Theatre UNB. Last year over 2,000 patrons passed through the turnstiles to view the productions of Theatre UNB. It looks pretty certain that these figures will be surpassed this year. That's good news for the Department of English and the Faculty of Arts who support the drama programmes.

The back bone of theatre is made up of the administrators, the carpenters, the painters, make-up, wardrobe, etc. Prof Scherf is the contact person for anyone interested in performing on stage or backstage. She states that the students are really great to work with and are willingly to try anything, but it's not too late to join the fun.

Further information can be obtained by calling the Department of English at 453-4676. With the shows they have planned, I think I'll call to see if they have a season pass!!

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