

The arts

Hare today...

There comes a point in a play where, no matter how talented, the principal actor can no longer carry the action without support from the rest of the cast. Sadly enough, this is the case in *Harvey*, Stage West's present production.

Stage West has established a tradition of inviting well-known Hollywood actors to take on lead roles in Edmonton productions that are otherwise staffed by local performers. For the most part they have pulled it

off successfully. Artistic Director Bill Fisher informs me that the company is expanding operations to include Vancouver performances this fall and possible Calgary engagements in the spring.



The imported actors have provided drawing power and allowed regional actors to play alongside performers of a calibre normally unknown in Edmonton. The only drawback comes when direction relies too

heavily upon the big-name and not enough upon the supporting cast.

Academy award winner Gig Young is affable, lovable, and even delightful in the lead role of Elwood P. Dowd. Elwood is constantly accompanied by his best friend Harvey, who happens to be an invisible six foot rabbit. Together they saunter their way from bar to bar, treating each other to drinks, meeting strangers, and generally being thoroughly commendable fellows.

Wiebe won't carve cherries

Given his background, it is not surprising that Rudy Wiebe has strong connections with the past and with the land. Born a Mennonite in a log cabin in Saskatchewan, he spent his youth on the prairies. Lean and fit as the result of working on the farm he owns and rents out, he even looks like a prairie pioneer.

Professor Wiebe gave a reading of his work October 8 at Cromdale Campus, taking part in the Grant MacEwan Community College series of presentations by Canadian authors. He is an associate professor of English here on campus and has written several books, the most noteworthy being his award-winning novel *The Temptations of Big Bear*.

Because of his extensive use of past events as foundations for his stories, Wiebe is described by many as a historical novelist. It is a title he himself shuns, preferring to call himself a storyteller. However, there is a good deal of truth in describing him as a historical

novelist. Judging by the enthusiastic Canadian history lesson he gave by way of preamble to a scene set during the Riel Rebellion alone, he is obviously both well informed and influenced by our history.

In dealing with the prairies, Wiebe feels it is necessary to be a novelist. "To touch this land with words requires an architectural structure. A poem, a lyric will not do ... a poet carves cherries ... a novelist builds mountains."

He uses the High Level Bridge as an image of what he means. It takes the architecture of the bridge to break up and span the wide space presented by the river valley. So too must you break up and structure literature in order to deal with the great space of the prairies. In the tradition of Russian literature, giant fiction is a must.

Wiebe is already a recognized novelist. However, he is continually striving to improve himself by handling increasingly difficult and complex work in hopes of coming closer to the complexities of life.

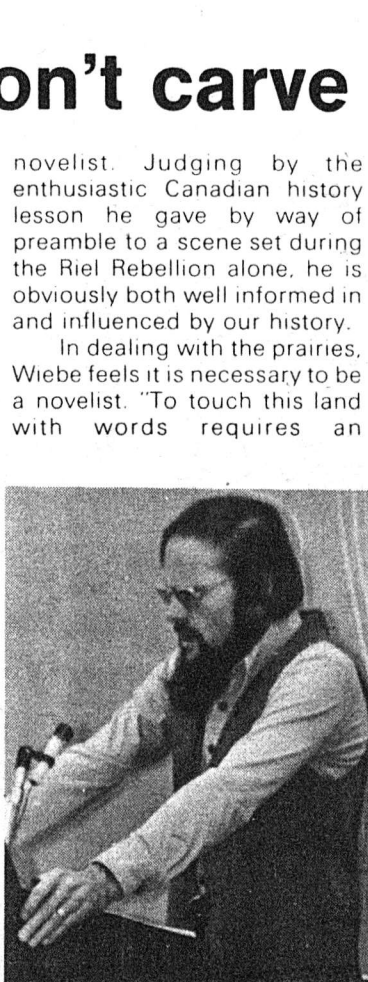
In doing so, he is risking failure through trying to communicate ideas too complex to be readily understood. So far he has succeeded in avoiding this, but regardless whether he enjoys continued success or not he is an individual and an author worth becoming acquainted with.

Turning to the plays themselves, the NDWT Company will be presenting two performances of *Hamlet*, Wed., Oct. 22 and Fri., Oct. 24.

The three plays by James Reaney, while a trilogy, are complete in themselves. They each represent a different period in the history of the proud Irish clan that emigrated to Southwestern Ontario in the early 1860's. Taken as a whole the trilogy becomes a metaphor on the evolution of rural communities through time, where farmers become small town merchants who become local politicians who switch from tilling the soil to cultivating power and influence.

In "Sticks and Stones" which initiates the tale of the family, the Donnellys arrive in Ontario and begin the battle for the land that will secure their family livelihood. They become country scapegoats and suffer the fire of a secret society.

In "The St. Nicholas Hotel,"



Kim St. Clair

Explosive trilogy tale

In just over two weeks one of the finest theatre companies ever to be seen in Edmonton will be arriving in SUB Theatre for a full week of performances. I am speaking of course, of the NDWT Company from Toronto,

which has recently begun a national tour of Canada presenting the Donnelly Trilogy and Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

The production of James Reaney's trilogy (of which *The St. Nicholas Hotel* received the Chalmers Award for the best play of 1974) is and has been hailed as an event of national

importance. Urjo Kareta of the *Toronto Star* says "The whole cycle is not just beautiful, but also dangerously exciting, a work of such controversial originality and demanding complexity that it will genuinely arouse audiences ...". Linda Gaboriau of the *Montreal Gazette* says, "The tale of the Donnellys makes explosive theatre and is eloquent proof that satires rooted in regional soil have a paradoxically universal resonance."

The NDWT's presentation of the three Reaney plays "The St. Nicholas Hotel," "Sticks and Stones," and "Handcuffs" is the result of a unique combination of author, director, company and topic, and the culmination of a number of years' work. At the same time it has helped in planning future collaborations.

With this in mind *Hamlet* was chosen as a fourth play so that what discoveries made during the production of Reaney's trilogy can be applied to one of the classical traditions.

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The three plays by James



A scene from *Handcuffs*, one of the trilogy plays on the infamous Canadian Donnelly saga.

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In "The St. Nicholas Hotel,"

the Donnelly sons find themselves caught in a second generation race for reputation and money. Politics and murder plague the family, until in the third play handcuffs and coffins become the symbols of the Donnellys' fate.

These three plays of pride, prejudice, fire and land reveal what has become a legend in Ontario but what it portrays is definitely not provincial.

James Reaney is often rated Canada's most outstanding poet and playwright and currently teaches at the University of Western Ontario. Not only did his "St. Nicholas Hotel" win the Chalmers Award in 1974, but "Sticks and Stones" was the runner up. That leaves "Handcuffs" with a chance for 1975.

Mark Macklam

Passionate Shrew gets hers

Petruchio and Katherine hit the boards this weekend in Thrust Theatre with *The Taming of the Shrew*. One of a series of MFA Directing projects, this production presents William Shakespeare's battle of the sexes as a black comedy.

In this passionate and comic play, Jonathan Harrison plays Petruchio, the Tamer of the title, and Pam Boyd as Katherine the Shrew. Actors with professional and varied experience, Mr. Harrison and Ms. Boyd bring many gifts of person and skill to their roles.

An Edmontonian for ten years of her growing up, Ms. Boyd found fruitful work on her return this spring. As well as teaching with the Citadel Workshop, she enjoys the excitement of acting before a live audience.

"Performance requires a special energy," says Ms. Boyd. "When the audience reflects and gives you back this energy, you give it again. You can really build something with an audience."

Mr. Harrison, too, finds

performance exciting. "Acting transcends at least the spoken word - transcends so many things. An extraordinary sense of joy is communicated from actors to audience."

Virtuoso visits

This Friday the Edmonton Symphony Society presents the first concert in a new mini-series titled "Great Composers". The series, which include 3 single concert events, was created in response to a public demand for performances of the popular orchestral repertoire which require an augmentation of the number of musicians in the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra.

The celebrated virtuoso, Philippe Entremont will perform the immensely popular Piano Concerto by Grieg in the opening concert. Entremont has been dazzling audiences with his keyboard artistry for nearly two decades. Having performed with the world's leading orchestras and conductors on six continents, Entremont has been called by critics "a young French pianist who is nothing less than a genius" and "le pianiste atomique".

Thanks to the sponsorship of the Clifford E. Lee Foundation ticket prices for this new series are especially appealing. At subscription prices an adult can attend for as little as \$3.33 a concert while a senior citizen or student can attend for \$2.33 a concert.

Staggering Sorabji

Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji, writer, pianist, composer, gained a reputation in England in the 1920's and 30's as an extraordinary irascible critic and a fabulous pianist of staggering virtuosity and power. Paul Rapoport will give a lecture on the legendary Sorabji Monday at 8:00 p.m. in Room 1-23 Fine Arts Centre. In addition to being a general introduction to Sorabji, his music, and his world, this lecture will discuss his last published work, *Opus classicum-balisticum*, written in 1930.

Robert Austin