

Burgeoning talents of York student displayed in *Orillia Opera*

By ANGELA LAWRENCE

David Burgess, a fourth year York fine arts student, turned heads when explicit parts of his play *The Orillia Opera* were printed in the Summer 1985 issue of *Impulse Magazine*. His revealing play is based on a male washroom sex bust that occurred in the small community of Orillia, Ontario and is currently appearing at the OHM Place at 187 Harbord St. until September 14th.

In 1983, 27 men, many including some prominent Orillia residents, were charged with 77 acts of gross indecency. Their crimes were acts of masturbation, fellatio and buggery in the public men's washroom in the Orillia Opera House basement.

Although the sexual issue is the main motivation behind *The Orillia Opera*, this is not a play solely about homosexuality but rather a play about people and their lives. "I was attracted to the dramatic side of the issue... the effects on the families of the 27 involved," Burgess said.

After researching the incident in the summer of 1984, the aspiring director and playwright wrote a poem entitled "The Closet," and it is from this poem that *The Orillia Opera* metamorphosized.

The play examines, in particular, the emotional and psychological effects on the lives of two offenders and their families. When the offenders' "dark secret" is revealed, a wide spectrum of emotions is displayed and confronted—love, hate, pain, guilt, and fear for example. When one of the offenders tries to assure his teenage son that he loves him and his mother, the son replies in disgust, "Well I don't know about her, but I don't really want a faggot to love me." The scandal changes the offenders' lives: personal realities are faced; sexual desires and preferences are questioned; a marriage deteriorates; a relationship is strengthened and so on.

Further scandal breaks out when the Orillia press withholds the names of the 27 men. An entire community is affected as innocent citizens are

accused and families are ridiculed and shamed.

The Orillia Opera is directed by John Mitchell and stars David Burgess, York fine arts alumni Catherine Marrion, Julie Bond and John Milton (both graduates of this year's MFA program), and actors Lorne Cossette and Marcus Bruce. All of the actors in the small cast competently play multiple roles and functions within the play, however, Burgess' acting is especially natural. John Milton stands out as the alcoholic sex offender and Marcus Bruce's guitar playing and singing is very entertaining.

The Orillia Opera is collage play, using many forms of speech such as songs, chants, soliloquies, and direct address. Explicit sexual scenes, comedy, and lighting effects also contribute to the play's diversity. The play moves at a fast pace, jumping in and out of lives, experiences and emotions, which can be confusing at times—a direct result of the collage technique. For instance, the dramatic continuity of the play is continually disrupted by interjecting jokes, music and poetry.

The Orillia Opera is not the first playwrighting effort for David Burgess. He won the York President's Prize for his script of *The Great One* which appeared at the Samuel Beckett Theatre last year. He will also be directing the York production of *Saltwater Moon* next December. Burgess holds York's Theatre department in high regard and feels he has benefited by his intense study schedule. "Theatre at York is tremendous... I've done acting, directing and writing," exclaimed the fine arts student.

The Orillia Opera is a good example of David Burgess' burgeoning talents. He effectively puts what he has learned to good use and is able to reinforce the play's main statement that "deviant" behavior can be caused by societal pressure and moral standards. However, when it happens in a small community like Orillia, one realizes the universality of all people.

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The City of Toronto is conducting a study on the way in which responses to firefighter selection tests are influenced by race or ethnic origin. Subjects will be required to spend two hours completing a firefighter selection test. The test sitting will take place during late September, 1986.

Subjects will be paid \$30.00 for participating, with a bonus of an additional \$30.00 if a score above the average for all subjects is obtained.

Because of the nature of the study, we are particularly interested in recruiting subjects who are members of racial or ethnic minorities. In order to complete the study, we require subjects who are members of the following racial or ethnic minorities: Black West Indians, Chinese, Indians, Pakistanis, and South East Asians (Vietnamese, Filipino, etc.).

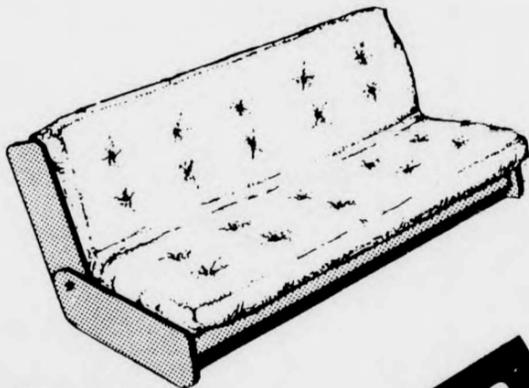
Subjects must meet the minimum requirements for the position of firefighter with the City of Toronto Fire Department. These include the equivalent of at least a grade 12 education and a good working knowledge of written and spoken English. Preference may be given to applicants who have more education.

It is important to note that this is *not* an invitation to apply for the position of firefighter, but rather for participation in the firefighter test validation study. Applications for the position of firefighter will be solicited during the fall of 1986, and a separate application will be required for those interested in a career as a firefighter.

Further information and application forms may be obtained from the Personnel Services Division, 2nd Floor West, Toronto City Hall, or by calling 392-7162.

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