

**Soviet poet at Burton**

# Yevtushenko's readings move and excite

By **ROBIN ENDRES**  
Soviet poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko's appearance at Burton Auditorium last Thursday was as much a well-orchestrated performance as it was a poetry reading.  
Poets in Yevtushenko's homeland expect massive audiences who in turn expect to be moved and excited by poetry. Yevtushenko and British actor Barry Boys, who read the English translations, together with the enthusiastic sold-out audience, managed to re-create something of this experience.  
The most obvious feature of this more oral concept of poetry was the cumulative repetition of words and phrases:

Oh give me a mystery, some simple mystery  
a secret mystery — silence and timidity—  
a fragile mystery, a barefoot mystery—  
just one sweet secret mystery!

Clearly this is more effective heard than read, and the dramatic interpretations by Boys enhanced this aspect of Yevtushenko's poetry.

**KING OF CAVIAR**

However, it was hearing the Russian version after each translation which made the evening unique for poetry

lovers. Certain passages were easily recognizable, such as the entrance of the pompous King of Caviar and the song of the drunken women in a long poem about a Russian village fair.  
But even if you couldn't compare passage to passage and line to line, once you knew what the poem was about the meaning which emerged from Yevtushenko's reading was purely rhythmical. His poetry is nothing if not heavily accented, but within this steady beat are complex metrical variations quite fascinating for one who doesn't understand the language.  
The reading began with shorter lyrics recording disillusionment with love; moved to longer narratives celebrating the Russian revolutionary spirit, and an even longer poem celebrating sexuality; and ended with the well-known anti-fascist Babi Yar.  
One of the most effective poems was a new work, as yet unavailable in North America, called Kazan University — the university where Lenin studied. The long section read by Boys is dedicated to a 19th century woman

revolutionary named Vera (I didn't catch the Russian surname) who was imprisoned for life in 1884 as the leader of a populist organization known as the People's Will.

**VERA IS FAITH**

The narrative is overlaid with intricate image patterns of seeds and poetic words symbolizing the things that cannot be suppressed by tyranny, and culminating in repeated chorus tapped out on pipes leading to Vera's prison cell:

I am faith  
I am faith  
I am faith  
Are you still alive?  
I am faith  
I am alive.

The poem's impact was heightened when Boys revealed that the Russian word for faith is vera.

One poem was read only in English; Boys and Yevtushenko alternated passages, with Boys occasionally imitating Yevtushenko's Russian accent.

From Desire to Desire records a pair of lovers crossing the North American continent and is perhaps the longest paean to erotic love outside the Song of Songs. But Yevtushenko's version is also funny with lines like "the hotel Bibles turned their pages with our breathing", and, after a long passage about honey, "all who love are Huckleberry Finns with moustaches of honey".

**NOT A SPOKESMAN**

Yevtushenko assiduously refuses to discuss political issues, claiming to be neither an official emissary of the Soviet Union nor a representative of dissident artists. (Although I did overhear him say at the reception that Solzhenitsyn, once a prisoner of Stalin, is now a prisoner of the West).

He prefers to be judged first and foremost as a poet, and apart from the odd predictable rant in the crowd, and a few English department types with "superior" taste ("the Rod McKuen of Russia"), most people responded with delight.



Soviet poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko read his works at Burton Auditorium last Thursday night, in his only Toronto appearance. He is currently on a 25-day tour of Canada.

## Ultra-right conspiracy theory is powerful core of Executive Action

By **MICHAEL HOLLETT**

Executive Action is billed as "possibly the most controversial film of our time"; it is certainly one of the most thought-provoking.

The film is a dramatic representation of the theory that the killing of John F. Kennedy was not the act of a lone gun-man, but the result of a well-planned, ultra-right conspiracy.

The conspiracy leaders are three businessmen, adequately played by Burt Lancaster, Robert Ryan (who died the day after the film's completion) and Will Geer (star of TV's The Waltons). They feel that Kennedy's liberal policies are a threat to the country, and that the Kennedy family is attempting to set up a dynasty.

They hire participants in the disastrous Bay of Pigs invasion to carry out their plans.

Lee Harvey Oswald provides the conspiracy with a believable fall-guy.

The conspirators work on the premise that the American

people won't want to think of the US as a banana republic with assassinations caused by political conspiracy. The public would rather believe that a lone "mad-man" killed the president, thus freeing the society of any blame.

The film is a combination of newsreel footage in black and white, and fictitious footage in colour, combined very smoothly.

A tabloid included in the price of admission elaborates on all the facts in the movie that support the conspiracy conclusion.

Many of the facts are direct quotes from testimony presented to the Warren Commission, and they are so convincing that one cannot help wondering how the commission failed to reach the conspiracy verdict. In light of Watergate and the US government's record of deciding what it is "good" for the public to know, a cover-up is conceivable. Either that, or the commission was made up of a group of very dumb men.

Executive Action is worthwhile both as a shocking hypothesis and an interesting story of political conspiracy.

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**DOES MONEY MATTER? PROSPECTS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION**

By Marion Porter, John Porter, and Bernard Blisshen

**Does Money Matter?** analyses the preliminary results of a recent survey of Ontario high school students and their parents, and probes the controversial area of the financing of post-secondary education. This book not only makes student opinion available to teachers and researchers, but also draws reliable, sometimes startling conclusions about educational opportunity for different social classes, equality of opportunity for the sexes, and the viability of the existing Student Awards Program.

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