

Campbell Foster, musician and actor, in scene from *Stereo Chastity*.

## York filmmakers impress artist

By DAVID BYRNES

Louise Greenwood, assistant curator of the Art Gallery of York University, knows what she's talking about when she says there are good artists walking around the university who are "worth giving a push." Greenwood is so enthusiastic about *Stereo Chemistry*, a third-year film project by Stephen Young Chin and Sebastian Salm, that she has included it in the present AGYU show called *Drawing—A Canadian Survey*.

*Stereo Chemistry* is a satire on science and bureaucracy director Chin says, but he sees it more as a form of light entertainment "that's meant to be fun." It's also a vehicle for the music of the lead actor, York student Campbell Foster.

The plot is both conventional and absurd, and opens up a range of slapstick possibilities. The hero, Ralph, is a lab assistant to two sinister scientists. After Ralph inadvertently creates an anti-matter device that was supposed to be a new kind of synthesizer, Ralph must decide whether he wants to sell out

to these symbols of the state, or use the device for his own musical purposes.

The script is good, although Salm admits that he, Foster, and Chin didn't lard it with the gags they could have. The weakest part of the film is the acting, which is often too relaxed—the characters merely become the mouthpieces of the script.

The film's main strength is Salm's creative cinematography. Especially noteworthy is a four minute "fantasy music video sequence"—a color eruption in this black and white film which features Foster's musicianship and establishes Ralph as a diehard musician. Salm considers this video sequence not only a good vehicle for Foster, but as a step forward for his own career in video filmmaking.

The title of *Stereo Chemistry*'s theme song—"Positive Self Image"—is really what the film is about, said Chin. He and Salm are presently at work on another film called *The Complaint* which will be a political satire with a more serious message.

## Writer making plans for Norman

*The Trouble with Norman*  
written and directed by Kevin Prentice  
Samuel Beckett Theatre

By NIGEL TURNER

York theatre student Kevin Prentice recently blended life with art and came up with *The Trouble with Norman*, a semi-autobiographical play which premiered last week as part of the Theatre Department's annual Project Week. The play, which Prentice wrote three years ago after the break-up of his marriage, concerns the exploits of recently divorced pet-store owner Norman Jessup (played by Prentice) and his best friend and fellow divorcee Lorry (Richard Williams). Norman is convinced to go to a singles bar, where he meets and woos Donna (Janet Wilson), who he manages to win over despite

his bungling efforts.

Norman's trouble, he explains, is that "Society has it all backwards . . . You want to be happy and you think that in order to be happy you need a woman."

Prentice was noticeably nervous at first—"I was scared to death because it was my own script," he later said—but soon calmed down. In fact, he had just cause for being nervous, because the script still needs some work, and this production failed to utilize even some of its good points.

Donna's overly didactic speeches, for example, may be put down to tight rehearsals and poor directing, but the text cannot escape blame, either. Nevertheless, the sold-out audiences were responsive in a positive way, to the extent of giving Prentice the confidence to send the play out to professional theatres.

## Lake Ontario location shines on to no avail for Rose-ified Seagull

*The Seagull*  
by Anton Chekhov  
directed by Richard Rose  
at Harborfront through March 18

By JASON SHERMAN

Autumn Angel's attention-getting production of *The Seagull* has been receiving a good deal of criticism for not living up to its potential, and what this has come down to is that the effect of locating Chekhov's country setting next to Lake Ontario has all but been lost. Which is quite true—only a small portion of the audience actually has the lake in view for the performance, and the rest are left wondering why director Richard Rose went to all the trouble and expense (\$1,000 a week to light the lake alone). Like the disastrous *O.D. on Paradise* at Passe Muraille, the natural setting seems entirely superfluous.

Moreso in this case: there is an absurd disparity between involving an actual lake and using minimal scenery. Nor is this the greatest problem: we have also to contend with the idea that a number of these youthful actors represent quite elderly folk. Troublesome, too, as always in such cases, is the transposition of Russian society to North American. The translation by John Murrel leaves little room for idiomatic adjustments; hence, when someone affirms "We're Russian," it's almost as anachronistic as it is defiant.

With all this, it's strange to understand why the production is so appealing. Part of the

reason is it starts with a great text, and the ensemble work is used to good effect. Rose has a notion of what the play is all about, an idea we might reduce to the artist trying to reconcile reality with the dream world. This is exemplified by the two writers, by the kind of theatre Treplev wants ("we need new forms") and the kind of world Trigorin is constantly reducing to notes on a page.

Chekhov does not ally himself with either camp—the central image of the seagull is used by him mostly as a parody of symbolism, but also to show his bipartisan attitude, having a number of characters allude to and identify with it. There are a number of "seagulls" in the play, each equally desperate and, by extension, equally pitiful.

Elizabeth Hanna as Nina is the most powerful figure, this owing to her own presence rather than the role itself. She is energy incarnate and is involved with every spoken and unspoken word, every action when she is on stage. York graduate Stewart Arnott as Treplev *should* be the most powerful, but his unconvincing acting relegates him to a role of secondary importance. Denis Forest's understated Medvedenko is the most likable of the group, if only because he manages to wallow in self-pity in so unforced a manner. The rest of the cast is reliable, with one other standout performance from Tanya Jacobs as Arkadina who, with help from Rose's staging, owns every scene she's in.

An intimate evening of theatre. Recommended.

John Blackwood (L) and Denis Forest in *The Seagull*.

**favor**

"Do  
yourself a big  
favor, eat at  
Favors"

Victoria Stevens, Toronto  
Star, Monday, Feb. 6, 1984

NEW \$1.25 off appetizers every day  
for students with I.D.

**FAVORS RESTAURANT**  
Marketplace Plaza 1881 Steeles Ave. W.  
Corner of Steeles & Dufferin (665-2550)

**Yink Yink**

KOMEDY KABARET

EVERY WED. NITE IS CAMPUS NITE!!

**\$2.00** ANY WEDNESDAY WITH STUDENT CARD!

**1280 BAY 967-6425**

RESERVATIONS REQUIRED

**LONG TIME AGO**  
The first issue of *Excalibur*  
appeared on 7 October, 1966.

WE CAN HELP YOU  
PREPARE FOR: **OUR 48th YEAR**

MCAT  
LSAT · GMAT  
GRE · GRE PSYCH  
GRE BIO · SAT  
DAT · VAT · OCAT  
MAT · PCAT  
NAT'L MED BDS  
NDB · NPB · NLE  
ECFMG · FLEX  
TOEFL  
VQE

**Stanley H. Kiplan**  
EDUCATIONAL CENTER  
OF CANADA LTD.

The test preparation  
specialist since 1938

COME  
VISIT  
OUR  
CENTRE

Call Days, Eves. & Weekends  
**967-4733**

720 Spadina Ave. Suite 410  
Toronto, Ont. M5S 2T9  
Other Centers in More Than  
100 Major U.S. Cities & Abroad