

Actors freed in Shaker R & J revival

By JASON SHERMAN

Changing the sex of two principle characters (so that we now have Benvolio and Mother Abyss) in *Romeo and Juliet* might be the most visible change when the fourth-year theatre students present the Shakespeare play next week, but the unique approach being taken to the text should be of equal, if not greater, interest to the audience.

Professor Neil Freeman, who is directing (with assistance from fourth-year student Rod Carley) the five-woman, four-man cast, has done extensive research into the Folios and Quartos—original publications—of several Shakespeare plays, and hypothesizes that the manner in which the words were set down were attempts to faithfully recreate the way the words were spoken. Variations in spelling and fluctuations in metre (line length) have all been lost with presumably scholarly emendations of the texts.

"The old scripts were set down oratorically," Carley says, "and they were also set down in the way Elizabethans were taught to argue and debate." Given that these are lost arts, we might question the seeming air of academicism surrounding the project.

Freeman uses phrases like "training year," "challenge to the women actors," and "training exercise" which, though admittedly out of context from the rest of his comments, point to the production being little more than an indulgence in methodology.

Freeman himself has no idea how the audience will respond, or even whether that response will be consistent from one night to the next (he hopes not); he does know from experience that at least two phenomena occur. The first is that when the approach was used with professional actors, it "seemed to liberate them." In *Romeo and Juliet*, the material is there for actors to, Freeman says, "find things

out about themselves during the course of a performance."

It is a process, Carley explains, "of letting the text happen to the actors. Modern actors tend to find emotions that don't exist (in the text)." Further, the actors in this production "can't hide," says Freeman, and he means this on two levels. One, "because the text is based not so much upon what you're feeling but how much breath you're taking to say what you're feeling . . . the actors are becoming emotional and literal gymnasts." On another level, the audience will surround the stage on three sides: no hiding.

The other phenomenon has to do with the audience, which, Freeman says, "understands the text for the first time." In a different context, Freeman said that Shakespeare not only told a great story, but "he was able to satisfy the audience of his own day by relating truths of human nature, what it meant to be male and female (in the case of *Romeo and Juliet*)."

"We are dealing with a much different audience," Carley adds, an audience not used to listening to, or even aware of the existence of, Elizabethan patterns of rhetoric.

Freeman does not consider this a problem. "The aim for the actors," he says, "is to stand still. Their emotional connection with the words will move the audience." Indeed, he has been impressed with the way the actors have "tried to make contact with the material" during rehearsals. If his formulation holds true, the actors should make contact with the audience as well: "human being with human being."

Romeo and Juliet plays November 13 through 16, at 8 p.m., with 3 p.m. matinees on November 14 and 16 at Atkinson Theatre. Tickets: \$3.50, a dollar less for students. Reservations and further info: 667-3655.

Beautiful downtown Thunder Bay yields new AGYU boss



Who is this? a) A famous person's daughter; b) the new curator of the AGYU; c) a famous person's curator.

By HENRY SUM

With an extensive background in art administration, Elizabeth McLuhan takes over curatorial duties from Michael Greenwood, who is retiring from the Art Gallery of York University (AGYU) this month.

From the Thunder Bay National Exhibition Centre, McLuhan brings with her a great passion for Indian Art.

"I was intrigued by the variety of Indian art forms and their link to Canada's deep past," said McLuhan. Non-Western and prehistoric art has always fascinated McLuhan but she was disappointed to find very little literature on the subject.

A book on contemporary Indian artist Norval Morrisseau first caught her attention while she was working at the Royal Ontario Museum several years ago.

She was struck by how Morrisseau managed to bridge the gap between contemporary and ancient Indian history.

McLuhan's fascination with this fusion of ancient and modern Indian art influenced her MA thesis work. She further expanded this thesis into a show earlier this year at the Art Gallery of Ontario entitled *Norval Morrisseau and the Emergence of the Image Makers*.

"Everybody always says there's a book in their thesis so this show was mine," McLuhan said.

At the Thunder Bay Centre, McLuhan developed large Native Art shows which travelled to major museums, such as the McMichael Gallery and small scale shows in remote communities.

McLuhan earned the co-operation of the Indian people through her work as an arts consultant with the provincial government. Working seven years in the Native Community Branch, she travelled around Northern Ontario as an advisor.

McLuhan also evaluated grant requests. "I've been on both sides of the dollar bill—giving it out and receiving it," she said. Perhaps it was her talent for producing "high quality proposals" that generated the enormous funds donated to the Thunder Bay Exhibition Centre and made it the success it is today. "Art is the bargain of the century! It's absurdly inexpensive for what you get—an enrichment of your existence! Galleries generate an enormous amount of activity and income but most operate on shoe-strings," McLuhan said.

McLuhan has her hands full with AGYU's upcoming shows but is already thinking about future changes to the gallery's entrance.

Dynamic movement opens TCO concert

By GERARD LALDEE

The Toronto Community Orchestra, a residing 79-member orchestra at York University, gave its first of four concerts for the 1984-85 season last Friday.

The opening number was a very dynamic four movement piece played by the whole orchestra. The second, Mozart's "Sinfonia Concertante for Four Winds" was performed with a scaled down orchestra with four featured solo instruments, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, and french horn. The four soloists performed quite well but one could help but recognize the outstanding talent of

oboist Wendy Humber and clarinet player Ann Massicotte as their two instruments conversed with each other.

The last piece, Beethoven's "Fifth," consisting of four movements, was the highlight of the evening. This well-known piece was played with the utmost delicacy, the famous four notes of the piece echoing through the different sections of the orchestra.

The concert was held at the Church of the Redeemer, located at Bloor and Avenue Rd., and the orchestra, comprised of York music students, faculty, and alumni, community members, and professional musicians is under the direction of James McKay, the chairman of York's music department.

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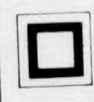
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