

# Entertainment

Third year of publication

## York literary journal needs more direction

By KEITH NICKSON

Can a literary journal published by York University ever attain a level of consistent quality? This question is raised again by the Fall edition of 'Direction', which features essays and poems by Canadian writers.

The introductory essay entitled "Yes Virginia there is a difference, but what is it - Some images and impressions of Canadian and American identities." Although it delineates many of the social, political and historical differences between the two countries, it fails to draw direct comparisons which

may have resulted in worthy insights.

Alan C. Koretsky resurrects the myth of the Canadian mosaic by suggesting "The image of a mosaic seems to me far more interesting and exciting than a melting pot; and multiculturalism seems like a more enlightened and humane policy than conformity to any one narrowly defined national way of life." So what? This is certainly a true though superficial observation, but what is the significance of this difference to Canadian and American identities and the relations of the two countries?

To be fair it must be said that Koretsky admits at the outset that he has no formal qualifications to discuss the difference between American and Canadian identities, but rather intends to rely on his impressions gained from living in Boston and Toronto.

When he finally focuses on these images, Koretsky fares much better. As he recalls his home town of Boston, Koretsky's prose begins to sparkle and flow with insight and humour. The unique Boston accent which he divides into 'High and Low Bostonese,' figures prominently in the discussion. Special affection is reserved for the 'low' Boston accent which "Viewers of Hockey Night in Canada may remember - 'Scaw, Numba Faw, Bawbee Aww!'"

Turning to Toronto, Koretsky's observations become more mundane, though this is perhaps due to our familiarity with this metropolis. He lists the virtues as "scarcity of violence and crime... the cleanliness of the streets" and the beauty of Toronto "both artificial and natural, both new and old."

There is an obvious lack of original insight here, and once again, Boston and Toronto are not directly compared, merely discussed separately. This technique can only ever produce interesting lists of idiosyncracies, but can never result in worthy conclusions.

Koretsky defends his method by arguing that the labelling of stereotypes is meaningless. This may be so, but it amounts to a weak excuse for lack of comparative analysis.

The poetry section of 'Direction' is similarly characterized by a definite lack of consistent quality. After reading the poems many times, however, several highlights emerged.

George Thaniels 'Athens-Rome Summer 1968' is a compact,

carefully wrought impressionistic poem which, combined with Herman Yamagasi's fine lithograph presents an excellent double page.

Even better, is 'For Noah' by Matt Tolland. In this piece, the traditional Noah is viewed from a radically different perspective and become almost a Mephistoles figure in the process.

Similarly, Michael Todd's 'The Beautiful Animals,' prefaced by two lines from a Michael Ondaatje poem, is an intense and furious piece whose form combines with the content to create a unified, coherent whole.

Unfortunately, the remainder of the poetry does not live up to these standards. Many of the works are obscure and incoherent, while others are strings of perplexing poetic phrases placed in juxtaposition. Jackie D'Amboisie's 'La Dechire' is especially characterized by such pompous phrases as:

I will for him  
Lock myself inside a pebble  
Cement my mind inside his  
timeless flesh  
Drag the child within me into the  
crooked sun

This is pretentious poetry which the editors should eliminate in future issues.

The sparse etchings and lithographs in the volume are all finely done, though perhaps a greater number would have made Direction more appealing. If the etchings were directly related to the poems, then a whole broader dimension could be added to the journal.

On the rear jacket of this edition, we are informed that 'Direction' is entering its third year of publication and that "We are confident that with the interest and encouragement shown Direction... these next two years will be equally successful." Fewer fluctuations in quality would ensure 'Direction's' more deserving success.

## Royal Alex musical: not very good at all

By BOB POMERANTZ

The current theatre scene is inundated with plays dealing with the problems of today's existence - war, terrorism, crime, and on a social level, loneliness, family breakdown and assorted sexual hangups. These issues are and should continue to be, explored as they delve into topics to which one can relate only too well.

"Very Good Eddie", a musical revival of 1915, is the Royal Alex's latest presentation. It tries to cash in on people's nostalgic cravings, setting forth a picture of a squeaky clean way of life. For several reasons, however, it fails to make even the slightest impact and one leaves the theatre wondering why such a play would ever be exhumed and dusted off.

The scene is set on a Hudson River dayliner where two honeymoon couples are about to embark upon a trip to the Catskills where they hope to enjoy a few days of sunning and 'spooning' Problems arise when Mrs. Georgina Kettle remembers a bag left ashore. Accompanied by helpful Percy Darling, they disembark to retrieve it. Unfortunately the boat pulls away from shore leaving Mr. Darling and Mrs. Kettle behind. Later at the honeymoon resort, Mr. Kettle and Mrs. Darling find that they are really "meant for each other".

There are one or two notable exceptions: Virginia Seidel's squeaky rendition of "Left All Alone Blues" is pure genius for her dance steps and facial expressions make full use of Anne Caldwell's lyrics, to illicit every last tear of laughter from the audience. The "Moon of Love" number was also successful, with Travis Hudson and the ensemble generating energy while they caroused under the shadow of a paper mache moon.

The dance numbers were staged innovatively, and one scene in particular, the cast forms a moving wave while travelling aboard a rocking ship. However, there were problems with the dancers themselves, whose movements could only be described as lethargic.

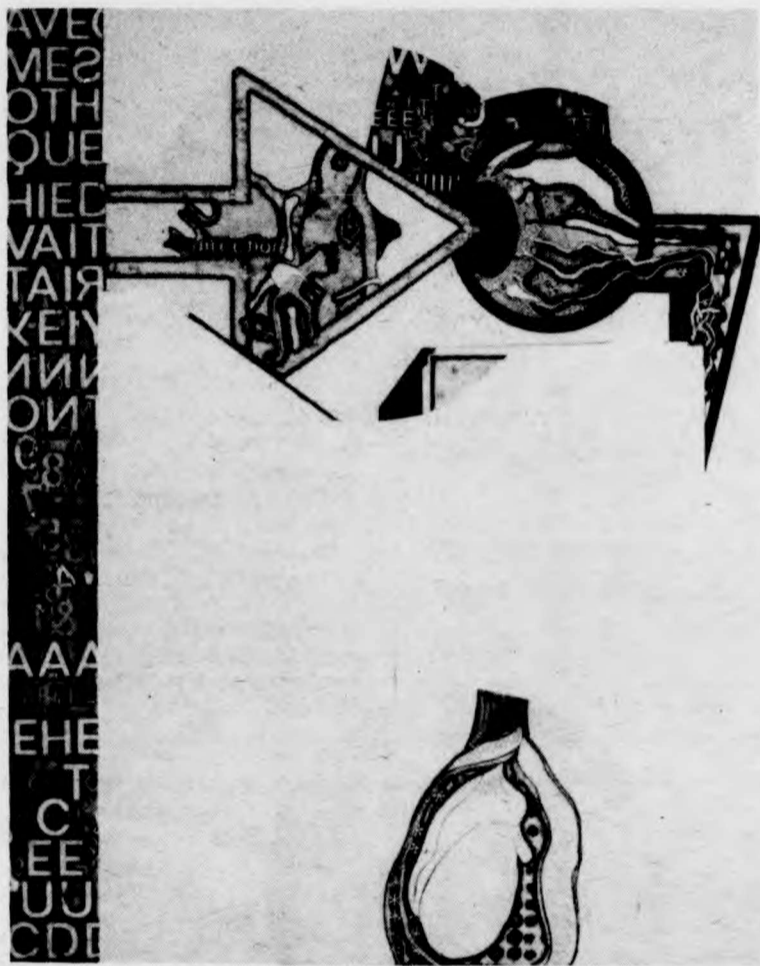
The acting, on the whole, was competent. J.J. Jepson played the

role of Eddie Kettle with much vigour, his pantomime routines being particularly well executed. Also, Benny Baker, in his dual role as ship steward, and later as hotel clerk, was hilarious. Mr. Baker draws upon all of his 50 years as a character actor to bring forth many well deserved belly laughs from the audience. However, the feeling that they were running through their parts, rather than actually performing. Some of the blame for this must lie with the director.

The primary reason for the play's failure rests in the fact that there is no unity between the acting and the music. At times one got the impression that the performers would stop singing or talking altogether, for their tongues seemed too firmly jammed into their cheeks.

Talking to Benny Baker after the show was a fascinating experience. He has been a part of every aspect of "showbiz" from vaudeville to radio, working with the likes of Betty Grable and Zero Mostel. He agreed that there was a need for the presentation of more musicals which bring back the joyous atmosphere of innocence, to help counter the violence which is seen everywhere. He also stated that while there is some new talent around today writing musicals, there is a place for the revival of some of the old greats.

This may well be true, but this play does not serve that purpose, for "Very Good, Eddie" turned out to be very mediocre, Mirvish. I say with some regret that like the two unfortunate newlyweds stranded ashore, the production also misses the boat.



## Xmas dance concert coming

DANCE CONCERT: YORK UNIVERSITY - DECEMBER 10, 11

Students and faculty members of the Dance Department at York University will present their Christmas concert Friday, and Saturday at 8 p.m. in Burton Auditorium. Thirteen pieces will be presented each evening.

Faculty member Earl Kraul, star of the National Ballet of Canada from 1950-1969, has produced Sondra Lomax and Richard Sugarman in the "Peasant Pas de Deux" from the first act of "Giselle". Giselle was first produced in Paris in 1841. Piano accompaniment for this Pas de

Deux will be by Lubos Cerny, chief accompanist to the Dance Department. Donald Hewitt, guest choreographer from the United States, has created a new work in the neo-classic style entitled "Scherzo", to the music of Brahms. This is his third visit to York's Dance Department.

Sandra Neels, a faculty member of the Dance Department and former member of the Merce Cunningham Company, has choreographed a new work for the concert called "Mainly Sunny Today" to music by Duke Ellington. Ms. Neels will also dance a solo choreographed by faculty member, Richard Silver. A former

member of Les Ballets Jazz in Montreal, Mr. Silver has prepared a group work entitled "Day" also to music by Ellington.

Faculty member Terrill Maguire has choreographed a group dance for the concert to music by BB King. A graduate of U.C.L.A., Ms. Maguire has had wide experience in California, including work in multi-media performances.

Student works include a Pas de Deux, "Veroni", by Anthony Spagnola, "Mudluscious" by Wendy Laakso, from a poem by E.E. Cummings, and "Darkweight" by Dianna Theodores-Taplin. Both Ms. Laakso and Ms. Theodores-Taplin are graduate students in the Master of Fine Arts program.

Fourth year student Maxine Heppner, has choreographed a music piece called "Trees". Third year student Jean Moncrieff's work "Terra" is accompanied by percussion student, Bill Winant, on the dubachi - a Japanese bell.

In addition, the fourth year composition class has collaborated on a piece entitled "Taking Chances". Jean-Aime Lalonde, first year student, will perform a traditional Irish Jig - Scottish version.

A donation of one dollar towards the Scholarship Fund will be asked at the door. No tickets are necessary.

## ctr checklist now out

The first edition of a Checklist of Canadian Theatres compiled by the Canadian Theatre Review, Canada's national theatre quarterly produced at York is now in print. Listing over 100 professional theatres from British Columbia to Newfoundland, this 12-page booklet includes the address, phone number and names of the artistic director and publicity director for each theatre.

The Checklist is available for \$1.00 per copy from the Canadian Theatre Review office (room 222, Admin. Studies). As a special introductory offer to CTR, a copy is included free with each new subscription to the magazine.

The Canadian Theatre Review, published under the auspices of York University's Faculty of Fine Arts, is available at bookstores for \$3 per copy or by subscription at \$10 for one year, \$19 for two years. Copies of the acclaimed record of professional theatre activity, Canada on Stage: The Canadian Theatre Review Yearbook 1975, are available through bookstores for \$14.95 or from the CTR office.

For further information, please contact: Lynn McFadgen (416) 667-3768.