

## citadel presents: the unreasonable act of julian waterman

W.N. Callaghan, Jr.

Trying to define the Canadian sense of humour is a little like looking for God. You know its out there somewhere, but no matter how hard you search you never really meet it face to face. But still you believe in it and keep on searching.

### theatre three needs actor

**THEATRE THREE** urgently requires an experienced Oriental actor, between the ages of 18 and 23, for their next production, 'By the Sea' by James Osborne. This is a salaried position, and rehearsals run from January 29 until opening night February 21. The production itself closes on March 4. Anyone interested, please contact the director, Ben Tarver, 436-4363, or 432-3341, or Jim Osborne, 439-0976 or 432-3486.

Certainly, if our history should have taught us anything, it should have taught us laughter. From the boisterous vaudeville of Sir John A. to the slightly cosmopolitan sarcasm of P.E.T. Canada's history provides us with an almost limitless source of humour. If any people has the right (one might almost say, the need) to laugh, it is we Canadians. Yet, how many really funny Canadian comedies have we produced?

The question, of course, is rhetorical. Instead of laughter, piety appears to be the national past-time: We are a country of undertakers--a nation of gargoyles. Although laughter may be our need, it is most definitely not our talent.

I had hoped that the Citadel's present production of "The Unreasonable Act of Julian Waterman" by Canadian actor Ron Taylor would provide some indication that the national grimace was about to break into a smile, if not laughter. Unfortunately, I came away from the so-called comedy as convinced as ever that things were just as serious as I had thought them to be. Without a doubt, "The Unreasonable Act of Julian Waterman" is one of the most unfunny plays that I have seen. As comedy, it is downright depressing.

The play ostensibly centres around the infinitely reasonable Julian Waterman. Presumably finding that his marriage lacks spark (this is never really made clear, so one is forced to presume), Julian decides to import his journalist friend, Hank Grant. So far so good. The resulting menage a trois offers two tantalizing possibilities. The play can either degenerate into French farce or accelerate into a kind of Neo-Restoration comedy. The former relies essentially on situation for its laughs; the latter on the language. Unfortunately "The Unreasonable Act" relies on neither. Taylor's situations are clumsily constructed. His language is pedestrian. In result, the play is perhaps a classic

example of what might be termed the Canadian propensity for gargoylian wit. It belongs to that most depressing of all dramatic genres--Canuck comedy, that is, comedy without laughter.

The manifest inspiration of "The Unreasonable Act" appears to be stupidity. Although stupidity has many drawbacks, it can sometimes achieve with ease that which genius effects only with difficulty.

For example: One of the best ways of understanding what makes good drama succeed is to see a lousy play. Read Miller's early radio plays and you will be able to understand what makes "Death of a Salesman" and "After the Fall" the great American plays that they are.

Applying this principle to the subject at hand, it is possible to extrapolate the characters in "The Unreasonable Act", to place them into their social context and gain some insight into the basic elements which go into the formation of that otherwise evasive entity, the collective Canadian personality.

The play's protagonist, Julian Waterman, is, for example, almost as spinelessly diplomatic as his political prototype--Mitchell Sharpe. He is incapable of making even a phone call without effecting some sort of "viable" compromise. Unfortunately for the play, as a comment on the Canadian composite personality, he strikes too close to home to provoke our laughter.

The Amazonian Mrs. Waterman is indicative of yet another Canadian prototype: Canadian womanhood.

Egocentric, unimaginative, masculine with a vengeance, she would be more at home in the locker-room of the Hamilton Tiger Cats than in bed. If you don't believe that she is indicative of Canadian sensuality (or lack of it), try getting off on Jerrold Morris' new book, "The

Nude in Canadian Painting". Lots of luck.

(You'll need it.)

Last and perhaps least, there's Hank Grant, the journalist. Hank's ambition in life is to write 'THE GREAT CANADIAN NOVEL'--"along the lines of Ernest Hemingway". When he does finally manage to write "the real me", his manuscript is perfunctorily thrown out the window. For the Canadian writer, the significance of this symbolic event is far too real to be even remotely funny.

Thanks to the genius of the director, Sean Mulcahy, the Canadian aspects of "The Unreasonable Act" extend beyond mere plot and characterization. The Citadel's current production of Taylor's comedy has the distinction of being the only dramatic production in Canada, perhaps the world, in which the intermissions are longer than the play itself.

At first this somewhat disturbing fact caused me a great deal of consternation. Surely there must be some reason for this otherwise inexplicable lapse in good taste. Finally, it dawned on me. The inordinate number of intermissions and their length served two fundamental purposes. The first had to do with the title of the play. The second to do with its theme.

"The Unreasonable Act" hinted at in the title of the play has nothing to do with the plot or characters of the play. It has to do with the play's structure, in particular its First Act.

Lasting no longer than ten minutes, the First Act, by any rational standard, constitutes little more than a scene. Despite this fact, it is nevertheless followed by a fifteen minute intermission. Pure genius, thought I. There could be no doubt: "The Unreasonable Act of Julian Waterman" is--the First Act.

This sudden insight did not, however, explain why there were two fifteen minute intermissions. Although I had even greater difficulty in explaining this seemingly inexplicable travesty of the dramatic art, I had already gone too far to turn back. There was a reason and I would find it.

Of course!

The length of the intermissions was symbolic of the Canadian consciousness--a consciousness defined almost solely in terms of the one resource that Canadian's have in super-abundance: Space.

Miles and miles of miles and miles.

Tedious space.

And what better way to symbolically represent this

consciousness than by producing a play in which the intermissions last longer than the play itself?

How ingenious.

But then there's nothing quite like good old Canadian know-how.

For you gargoyles, the Citadel's current production of "The Unreasonable Act of Julian Waterman" by Canadian actor, Ron Taylor, will be playing until February 3, 1973. Curtain times are 8:30 p.m. Tuesday to Saturday, 7:30 p.m. Sundays and 2:30 p.m. matinees, Saturday and Sunday. Box office is open 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday; 12 noon to 6 p.m. Mondays; and 1:30 to 2:30 p.m.

## chinese folk festival

Hats off to the Chinese Students Society for organizing one of the finest musical events of the year. I'm referring to the Chinese Folk Festival last Saturday night at SUB Theatre, presented as a part of the Chinese New Year Festivities. This year, the year of the Bull replaces the year of the Rat.

Unlike many ethnic organizations who treat their heritage with solemn formality, the Chinese students were able to examine their own traditional background and at the same time poke gentle fun at some of their own customs.

Musically, the first half of the program was tremendous. It started out with the Chinese Orchestra (a professional group based in the downtown area of the city), employing such instruments as an Ehr-wu, pei-pa, Yngchian, and several types of Chinese flutes. The most striking thing about oriental music is its use of perfect intervals, 4ths, 5ths, and octaves.

For me, the highlight of the evening was an Ehr-wu solo performed by Herbur Hsu, a student at NAIT. An Ehr-wu is a two stringed violin. "Why two strings? Because we don't need four". I can believe it. The tone of the instrument, while not quite as deep as a violin, when played well, can have as much, if not more, emotional impact as any western stringed instrument.

Other highlights of the first half were a soprano solo by Jennifer Yu (her version of the very difficult Flower Drum Song was superb), and three tunes from the U of A Chinese Chorus Group, conducted by Hsu Luk. The latter group started out a bit shaky, but found itself during the second number.

The second half featured an informative film on Chinese musical instruments, plus a violin solo and a fan dance.

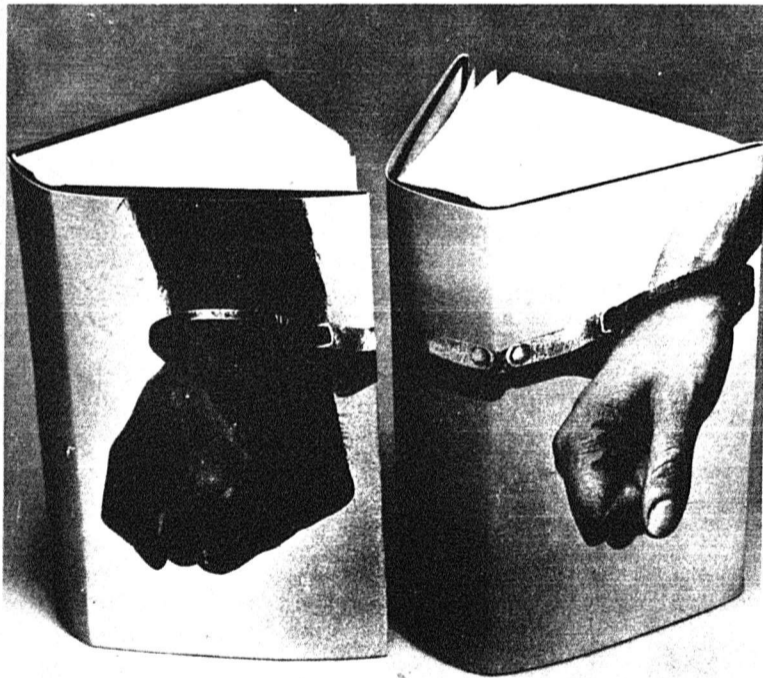
Another good thing about the festival was the number of people there--the theatre was packed! In fact, people were being turned away at the door. The audience was mostly Chinese, although there were a few non-oriental types. I would like to see lots more events like this; it is my belief that this type of concert reflects a part of our true Canadian heritage, since Canada's culture is made up of several different cultures, all retaining their separate identity. Listening to the folk music of these different cultures probably does more to promote intercultural understanding than do any intellectual discussions of cultural anthropology courses.

It is likely that the Chinese chorus and the Ehr-wu player will be featured at a workshop of the Edmonton Folk Club sometime in March.

Larry Saidman

# the arts

## German Book Exhibition



by Harold Kuckertz, Jr.

The German exhibition, presented at the Centennial library until January 20, is the first result of better cooperation between the library and the West German consulate.

Vice-consul Hermann Bleckmann and the new director of libraries, Brian Dale, emphasized this intensified cooperation in an interview with The Gateway and revealed their intention to establish a collection of German paperbacks at the library.

A rising interest in German books, especially among young people who discover their parents' language, led to this decision.

The current exhibition is organized by the German Association of Book Dealers and Publishers. It comprises 3,500 books and provides an excellent overview of the present German book market. Besides classic and

modern literature, the latter including several works of 1972 Nobel prize winner Heinrich Böll, the visitor finds an interesting selection of books ranging from children's literature to scientific reports.

The exhibit is not only aimed at the German population, as manager Arno Reudelsdorff explained. Picture books and several bilingual or English books also attract the non-German-speaking public.

The exhibition was opened last Wednesday by Horst Schmid, minister of culture, youth and recreation. In his opening speech, Schmid, of German origin himself, emphasized the importance of books for mankind and its progress.

Earlier, German Consul W. Stegerwald had thanked Dale and the library staff for their assistance in organizing the fair.

## winnipeg ballet dances: ecstasy of rita joe

The world famous Royal Winnipeg Ballet, Canada's first and most distinguished ballet company, will be appearing at the Jubilee Auditorium in Edmonton on January 22, 23, and 24th and at the Jubilee Auditorium in Calgary on January 25, 26, and 27th at 8:30 P.M. as part of its coast to coast Canadian Tour.

This magnificent Canadian Company of 25 vital and fresh young dancers has captured the hearts of audiences all over the world and is among Canada's most famous exports.

Featured will be "The Ecstasy of Rita Joe", the fabulous multi-media blend of dance, film, music, and singing

which features Chief Dan George on film and the magnificent voice of folk singer Ann Mortifee. A poignant story of the heartbreak of an Indian girl who moves from the reservation to the city, this ballet has been a smash hit wherever it has played in Canada, the U.S. and Australia.

Three other exciting and contrasting ballets will be performed each night, and each night will feature a change of program.

Tickets priced from \$6 - \$3 are available at the Opera Box Office in the Bay in Edmonton and the Ticket Wicket in the Bay in Calgary.