

# ENTERTAINMENT

## Geometry not about love triangles, tensions



Sheila Moore and Geordie Johnson in *Geometry* at the Tarragon Theatre

## York's Exile seeks larger audience

CHRIS B. DODD

Keeping a literary magazine alive, in today's economy, is no easy task but *Exile* has flourished throughout the decade and publisher Barry Callaghan still experiences difficulty in trying to run such a publication in the current environment. According to Callaghan, Canada does not provide the cultural environment in which such magazines can flourish. "This is not a country where people buy journals," he says. The intellectuals are basically interested in politics and don't seem to be interested in watching good writing evolve.

The lack of public support also bothers Callaghan. "Our bookstore sales are almost non-existent," he says. "And the level of personal subscription is low. Yet, we now know that readership is quite wide. We receive about 100 manuscripts a week, most of them from people who are familiar with the magazine. My conclusion is that the readers are there, but they're not fighting to keep the thing alive."

However, Callaghan does hold high regard for government agencies such as the Canada Council which he believes has been a major financial boost for the arts in this

country. "Without them," says Callaghan, "culture in this country probably wouldn't exist."

Contemplating the magazine's future, Callaghan admits that it could be gloomy. "Sometimes I think *Exile* should die. Over the years I've put nearly \$10,000 from my personal pocket into the journal. Obviously, the financial outlay can't continue but, when I think this way, it only means that I'm tired."

"Over the years *Exile* has published some fine material," adds Callaghan. "What's more, I'm convinced there's even a larger audience out there, if we can reach it somehow."

## Thank you!!

W. HURST

The last *Excalibur* of the current year is the last chance for thank-you's. To the people who have sat in the seats, have spun the discs and handed in the copy.

To Elizabeth the Efficient, for reading and reading and reading and reading, trusty non-repro in hand.

To Merle and her petty cash for type-writer ribbon. Too bad the bookstore charges so much.

To Stuart, Terry, and Greg. Imagine a summer without "Can you re-set this in 2300?"

To Mario, Debbie, and Nigel. A picture is worth a thousand words; a stat is worth still more.

To Paulette and Paul (not a team). Obviously, good writers get better. Especially with time, right Brett?

To Steve, not only a man with taste, but more importantly a man with copy, lots of it.

To Steve's cohorts. The music goes round and round and it comes out here. All kinds of music.

No thank-you's to those who operate under the delusion that "university newspaper" equates with "free publicity."

An entertainment section could be article after article of promotional pap by people angling for connections with the entertainment industry. On the other hand, these pages could be small-minded carping. *Excalibur* was, and is, neither. The writers knew their stuff, did their homework and worked, really worked.

No art exists in a vacuum and this may be especially true of the performance arts. Politics and social values are intrinsic to any creative effort. The writers tried to remember that. However, they also tried to remember that entertainment is supposed to be entertaining. When some performers forgot this, the *Excal* staff reminded them.

Finally, to everyone at *Excalibur*, thanks for listening, watching and getting me to do the same. It's been an excellent year . . . and that's entertainment.

W. HURST

*Geometry*, at the Tarragon Theatre, is a funny, fast but curious little comedy-- two lead characters are not at all likeable. Scott Gardner (Robert Haley) is the smooth head of maths at a private school. He is also a nasty, self-serving, pompous ass. His wife Helen (Sheila Moore) sees herself as a tender Deborah Kerr, dispensing tea and sympathy to lonely schoolboys. Yet she is a moral coward, staying with Scott almost because of his real character.

Playwright Rachel Wyatt had taken a calculated risk by making her two leads so unlikeable and *Geometry* veers dangerously close to the love-hate abuse syndrome of Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*. Luckily or cleverly, the play focusses on, and sympathizes with, two other characters, Ginny and Wayne. Ginny (Dixie Seale) is a music teacher who loves Scott in an idolizing way. When she finally sees Scott's nasty heart she loses her emotional innocence but gains a likeable, believable indignation. Wayne (Geordie Johnson) is a novice maths teacher who almost succumbs to Helen's 'tea and sympathy' pose and to Scott's urbane manner. However, like Ginny, he sees through the poses and escapes the clutches of both Gardners. The escape by Ginny and Wayne is *Geometry*'s climax. Scott and Helen are left happy in the compost heap of their lives.

Robert Haley's Scott is irritatingly oily from the play's opening and, therefore, Ginny seems to be a bit of a fool to fall for him. Sheila Moore is more illusionary as Helen but then

she also delivers some of the most sardonic humour of the play. Moore deceives the audience as easily as she deceives the nubile Wayne. Her cowardice is a surprising revelation.

However, both Moore and Haley are over-shadowed by Dixie Seale as Ginny. Seale presents Ginny moon-eyed but witty, glumping around the stage with a concave body posture. Seale has a complete woman on her hands. Behind the puppy-dog mooning for Scott, Ginny is very obviously a bright woman and her revelation is only a matter of time.

Scott has used Ginny's crush on him to bask in a chauvinistic glow and when Ginny realizes this, she doesn't run away. She insists on calling him out and letting Scott know how low he is--and the audience cheers.

As Wayne, Geordie Johnson seems, at first, too nice and 'aw, shucks' to be real. However, as the play clips along, Wayne becomes a character who is malleable only because he wants to avoid emotional friction. Finally he explodes, realizing that his humanity has been trivialized by Scott and Helen.

Helen and Scott are left playing the ugly games they have used on each other and newcomers, ensconced in the private school as other people come and go. *Geometry* is not about love triangles and tensions. It's about all the Scott and Helen Gardners, the petty bureaucrats who mishandle and mistrust people they can't 'manage'.

Despite the comedy, Rachel Wyatt has written a play about two very chilling people, the kind who might be everywhere.

## Painter Doris McCarthy

IAN BAILEY

At age 75, Canadian painter Doris McCarthy is a wizened, genial figure with a self-deprecating, engaging sense of what she has achieved in life. *Heart of a Painter*, a film biography soon to appear on the CBC, places her life on a canvas of Canadian art.

The film, which recently premiered at the St. Lawrence Centre, was

produced and conceived by Wendy Wacko, one of McCarthy's former students. It is an intimate patchwork pieced together to characterize the landscape artist.

What the film gets across is that McCarthy, a former teacher at the Ontario College of Art and Central Tech, devoted herself to capturing the visual character of the Canadian landscape. We learn that she is well-travelled, and a variety of other details such as her feelings about her craft. The film is told exclusively by McCarthy; her verbal recollections are augmented by an appropriate canvas or dramatized incidents in her life. For example, the film records her first encounter with the natural splendour of the yukon.

In little vignettes, such as Doris' pondering a blank canvas while she tries to recapture her memory of a mountain range from a Kodak slide, we learn of her tenacity as an artist and her spiritual interaction with the scenes she paints. It is for these insights that Wacko's film is valuable. However, *Heart of a Painter* resonates to its own beat. The film lacks a contextual sense of place in the larger scheme of Canadian art. There are no witnesses or associates to testify to her character or to clarify the perspective the film has taken. *Heart of a Painter* clings too closely to its subject for its own good and loses the opportunity to note her significance. No matter how genial McCarthy is it would have been useful to examine her worth as an artist among her peers.

In the future, the film may be valuable for capturing a character to accompany McCarthy's artistic legacy. Today *Heart of a Painter* is only a portrait of an interesting character--so intimate it's exclusive.

## Off Off Broadway proves that's where it should stay

CAROL BRUNT

Billed as an 'adult comedy', *Off Off Broadway*, failed to reach any comic proportions in the opening of a run which began April 6th at the Fairview Library.

The story revolves around the conflicts and frustrations of a group of actors and actresses involved in the production of an off-broadway play, "the Southern Boy". The play's director is in New Jersey and gives direction to the Stage Manager by telephone.

Presented by the Son-Shine Caste, a community theatre troupe formed in 1972, this three-act play was written by their Artistic Director, Bruce Mellott. Originally a two scene skit, the idea was enlarged to a full-length play specifically for the Caste.

Playing to a small audience, *Off Off Broadway*, has an unexpected start as the stage manager (Charles Kyazze) appears, signaling the commencement of the play. Kyazzes' performance throughout is quite boring and his repeated frustrations with the actors are expressed in the

form of a wimpered exclamation which by the fourth repetition makes the impact quite stale.

The first half of the play is anticlimactic and contradicts the otherwise powerful fade to black technique at the end of each scene. Nikki Pascetta, as Myra, added a refreshing character, as a silent maid to a bad script with undeveloped plot lines (the director on the telephone was written out after Act I).

An encouraging sign was the use of lighting to create the effect of two separate rooms. The acoustics, reputed to be quite good at the Fairview, did nothing for the cast who seemed to be afraid to speak, at least in Act I. During the second act, vacuming from the library cleaners proved distracting.

The humorous incidents were those, unfortunately, that weren't supposed to be laughed at. For the money involved, the resulting production was not worth it. *Off Off Broadway* enters a second run April 13th to April 16th, at the Fairview Library, 35 Fairview Mall Drive. Tickets \$5 at the door.