

# ARTS

## Atwood law lecture leaves students "star struck"

By CATHI GRAHAM

If you were to think of someone least likely to lecture about law, you might come up with names like Oliver North, Tammy and Jim Bakker, or — even — Margaret Atwood.

Atwood, however, surprised us as the third annual Betcherman Lecture guest, while she "Laid Down the Law" to a large Osgoode Hall audience on January 10.

Margaret Atwood is a Canadian writer and scholar. Educated at the University of Toronto and Harvard, she spent some of her early career teaching at universities, including a year as an assistant English Professor at York from 1971-72. She has been acclaimed for her work, and received the Governor General's Award in 1966.

She is more recently known for her novels *Handmaid's Tale* and *Cat's Eye*.

Atwood's friendship with Rosalie Abella, Chair of the Ontario Labour Relations Board, prompted her to speak at Osgoode. Atwood said in an interview before the lecture, "I got into this thing through Rose. She drags me into these things."

Dragged or not, Atwood drew a crowd. Students and others waited in line-ups in the Osgoode Hall foyer for over an hour. Once Moot Court, where the lecture was held, had been filled to capacity, latecomers were assigned to classrooms equipped with video screens.

Atwood, whose knowledge of the law is limited, was not only an unlikely speaker for the lecture but she barely broached the subject of law. She chose instead to discuss utopias, a tangent to the plot of her dystopian *Handmaid's Tale*.

At most, Atwood made a vague correlation between her profession and the legal field. She said, "Lawyers and writers all use a common medium — words."

Reading verbatim from a self-written script, Atwood jumped immediately into her environmental utopia, the futuristic town of Peterson. Peterson — named for a mythical late-20th century person who lived in an age before the "eco-

collapse" — comes complete with bio-degradable garbage compactors, unbleached grey toilet paper, and enviro-Yuppies.

To this utopia, Atwood contrasted our present declining birthrate, sumptuary dress, and the socio-economic decay of America. As Atwood said, "Human nature interferes with Utopias."

Wandering back to the issue of the legal system, Atwood said that laws are created to restrain people from doing what they want.

"Law creates crime," she continued, meaning that without law, crime would not exist.

"Atwood Lays Down the Law" was Atwood's second legal speech. Her first was known fondly as "Judges and Lawyers," although "its real title was something like 'Justice and the Literary Tradition,'" she said.

Commenting on her unlikely candidacy to speak in a legal forum, she said "I do this sort of thing because I'm able to do it. And one of the reasons I'm able to do it is that I am a writer. Nobody employs me; I can't be fired. Therefore, I'm one of the few people in society who can actually say what they think without suffering absolutely dire consequences."

She went on to say, "I can do this, but if my lawyer started doing it — there are scriptures that say judges



SCHOLAR/WRITER/LECTURER . . . but not a lawyer, Margaret Atwood spoke at Osgoode, January 10.

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## Wedekind's workshop: a Spring Awakening

By ROSLYN ANGEL

Spring awakens early at York as the theatre department presents Frank Wedekind's *Spring Awakening* next week.

The performance workshop, beginning January 23 in Atkinson Theatre, is guest directed by York graduate Richard Rose. Rose graduated from York in 1978 with a BFA in theatre. Upon graduating, his professional career got off the ground immediately. Along with three other York graduates, Rose founded The

Necessary Angel Theatre Company. It is still in existence with Rose as artistic director.

Rose has directed plays in Toronto, Montreal, New York City, Stratford, Vancouver, and Los Angeles. He is also involved in playwriting, often adapting classics such as Buchner's *Woyzek*.

He is currently working on a production of *New House*. Adapting the play in an attempt "to combine elements of *Don Juan* and *Oedipus Rex*," it is set in a futuristic demo-

cracy confronted with a plague. Although the play "is not about AIDS," said Rose, it will address the possible "economic, political, and social implications" of a plague similar to AIDS.

*Spring Awakening*, written in 1891 by Frank Wedekind, "will deal with adolescent sexuality and repression," said stage manager Kimberly Watson. Issues addressed include abortion, teen suicide, homosexuality, and sado-masochism. It shows how adults repress child sexuality,

leaving teens without sex education. Because the play will be seen "from a teenage point of view," said Rose, adults will "seem grotesque and distorted."

Adults "don't want their kids knowing about sex or sexuality," said Watson. They repress sex to the extent that "they don't want it to exist at all."

In one scene, the character of Wendy asks her mother where

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