

## arts

★ Stargazing ★  
 ★ at ★  
 ★ Theatre ★  
 ★ Glendon ★  
 ★ Tom Jones' comedy a ★  
 ★ a naturalistic play ★  
 ★ focusing on character ★  
 ★ rather than words ★

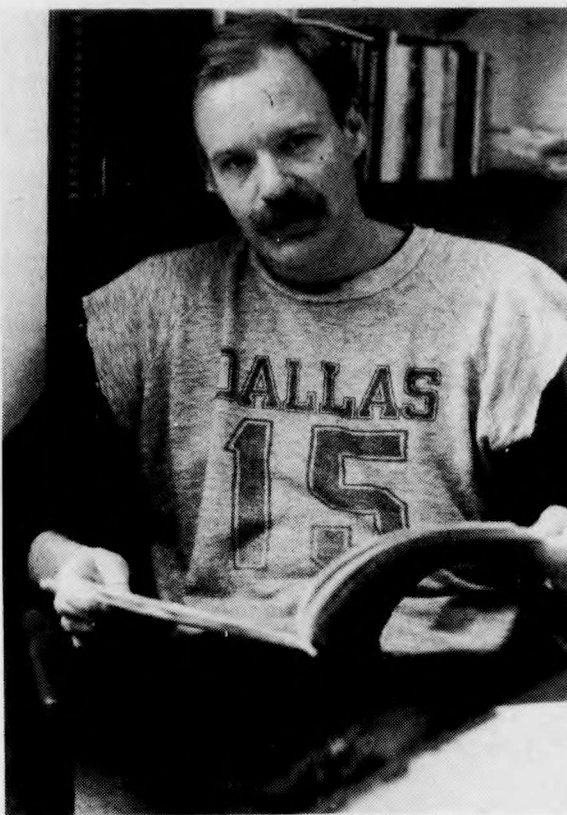
By NORA HOYER

Isolation and the inability to communicate with loved ones are the themes behind Tom Cone's play *Stargazing*, which opened at Theatre Glendon Tuesday. It's a naturalistic comedy, a comedy of character rather than words, and it's set in the north of Vancouver during recurring meteor showers.

Cone, author of *Herringbone* and *Cubistique*, lives in New York, where he writes and directs plays. But he hails from Vancouver, and the popularity of meteor gazing as a sport in his home town doubtless served as the chief inspiration for *Stargazing*.

Director Robert Wallace says he chose Cone's play for Theatre Glendon not only because it hasn't been done in Toronto before, but also because it suited the interests of his fourth-year drama class, and because it was a departure from the kind of plays he usually directs. Wallace, who teaches courses in media and drama at Glendon, has written extensively for television and radio, and he says he prefers writing to directing. But when he does direct, he has tended toward full-blown flamboyant productions rather than quiet realistic pieces, so *Stargazing* represents something new.

Wallace has mounted an ambitious production nonetheless. He wanted to create a real outdoor patio



Glendon professor Robert Wallace, director of Tom Cone's play *Stargazing* currently at Theatre Glendon.

under a midnight sky as the setting, and that created problems. Another unusual aspect of the production is that one of the principal actresses, Mieline Mann, plays a dual role.

The five member cast is a mixture of veterans and new performers. Of the old hands, Peter Leleghan has worked in film, TV, and at the Shaw Festival, and Mann has been with a children's touring troupe, performed in the Simpsons-Sears festival, and has been an extra on TV and film.

So, even if it's a cloudy night, come out and do some *Stargazing* at Theatre Glendon.

## Graduates' Streetcar is right on track

By LINDA JANASZ

The York University Graduate Theatre group (YUGT), a two-year training company under the direction of David Smukler and Michele George, is a company of actors, playwrights, and directors who explore major theatrical styles and concepts with leading specialists. Their latest project was a production of Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*, which was performed last weekend at the Adelaide Street Theatre.

Directed by Larry Lewis, the production was definitely a success, but like most, it did have its failings. The play used two sets of actors that changed for matinees and evening performances. On the performance I saw, the lead roles were played by Sally Singal (Blanche), Ben Halm

(Stanley) and Ellen Cohen (Stella). Taken as a whole the performances were realistic, powerful and moving. Ms. Singal and Ms. Cohen took on their characters and embodied them, creating concrete life and movement. Ben Halm's strong performance was marred only by his poor enunciation—he often slurred his words and ran sentences together. Of the supporting cast, Anthony Dunn's Mitch was the standout.

Included in the production was a group of performers who became the "street scenes"—the representation of a character's thought patterns or emotions. These performers would either dance around the stage, sell flowers or, like the theatre of bygone days, tell the time and date of the forthcoming scene. Though an

interesting technique, it seemed a little out of place in a Tennessee Williams play. At times it added to the drama, but when used excessively, it was distracting and ineffective.

The direction of the play was excellent. The performers moved about the stage effortlessly. There was good chemistry between the performers. In short, the production lived up to the movement, emotion, and excitement of this celebrated play.

The YUGT's next project will be Eugene O'Neill's *Darkness at the Edge of Town* which will be directed by D.D. Krugler and will run from April 11 to 22. The company is highly professional, and those who wish to see good theatre from York talent should give it a try.

## Canadian film festival looks promising

Peterborough will host the most eclectic collection of Canadian film anywhere

By W.E. OVERTON

The most comprehensive festival of Canadian film anywhere takes place next week, and most Canadians probably don't even know it exists. It's called *Canadian Images* and it takes place in the unlikely locale of Peterborough, Ontario, about an hour and a half north-east of Toronto.

The festival is in its seventh year and has expanded this year to six days from the four-day format of the past.

It will run from Tuesday, March 13 to Sunday, March 18, from 9:00 a.m. to midnight, and will screen over 350 films in 12 theatres. Every part of Canada will be represented and just about every type of film—feature length, shorts, experimental, animated, documentary, and an extensive videotape program. There will also be seminars, workshops, premieres, and opportunities to meet Canadian filmmakers.

"*Canadian Images* has booked, year in and year out, the most eclectic collection of Canadian productions attempted anywhere," says this year's festival programming coordinator, Seth Feldman, a York University film professor.

"The festival is universally respected across the spectrum of the Canadian film world," he says.

Feldman has organized the festival into 12 series. Included will be screenings of Quebecois women filmmakers, including a Carole Laure retrospective; a national survey of video productions; independent animated films; and works made for television. There will also be examinations of noteworthy productions of 1983-1984; new documentaries; young Canadian filmmakers; and Canadian classics. In addition to the Canadian films, there will be viewings of at least 10 British Film Institute productions, of which at least nine will be Canadian premieres.

As part of Ontario's bicentennial, *Canadian Images* will have a program highlighting filmmakers from Ontario. "Vision Ontario" will take the form of screenings and seminars attended by Ontario filmmakers such as Allen King and Ron Mann. Particular emphasis will be placed upon the development and history of filmmaking in Ontario, and its contribution to Canadian cinema. This program will go on tour in the province during the summer.

Despite its small-town setting, *Canadian Images* is as sophisticated as film festivals get, and it's well worth the journey. The cost of a festival pass is a very reasonable \$25.00 for admission to all of the films and seminars for six days, \$15.00 for a single day pass, and \$3.00 per screening. Advance passes and information are available from The Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre in Toronto.

## Student anthology a disappointing effort

By KEVIN CONNOLLY

As might be expected from a collection of student writing, the year's first issue of *Existere*—the Vanier College literary journal now in its third year—is a rather mixed bag of prose and poetry, some good, some bad, most somewhere in between. If this were all we expected of it, then this issue would be difficult to find fault with. Unfortunately, this is not the case. *Existere* is financed by the Vanier College Council (to the tune of \$5,000 this year), and it's meant to provide a publishing outlet for the several hundred creative writing students at Vanier, and the university at large. You might expect it to feature a large number of writers, with consideration given to quality. Why then are we treated to a showcase of the same writers issue after issue? A comparison of this year's table of contents with issues from the past two years is all you need to conclude that *Existere* has largely become a publishing venture for a self-proclaimed élite.

True, the editors must set some sort of standard, and must provide an author with a decent presentation of his works, but three or four pages per author, involving as many as a half dozen works, can only be called excessive. It's also true that the success of a magazine/publication such as this one depends largely on the involvement of the students—you can't represent a cross-section of York creative writing without a large number of submissions. Aside from the occasional flyer, there seems to have been little effort on the part of the editors to attract student participation; all it would have taken was a visit to the creative writing workshops to generate interest and boost submissions.

With some notable exceptions it is the poetry that is the least satisfying. Though value judgements are difficult and apt to irritate the sensitive young idealist, it doesn't take much to realize that most of the works are badly flawed. This is not to say that there aren't some lovely pieces (Marlene Goldman's work, for example), but for the most part there seems to be as much pretense as poetry.

Barry Mandelker (sic) offers some nice imagery, but his poems confuse as much as they satisfy. "Sipping Coke under this festive sky" is his best piece—there is a nice tension between the colorful imagery and the subject matter. Yet the visual presentation seems at odds with the poem's intentions. The inconsistent line breaks are annoying and artificial; the poems would work better without them. Bryan Bruce's "dream water" has the same problem, with its inconsistent imagery and its inexplicable formal constructs.

Andrew MacPhail's poems are better, though one-word titles such as "Sext," "Terse," "Matins," and "Compline" are antithetical to the predominantly sincere and well-crafted imagism, as in "Vespers":

*dusk is a city of winds  
 a burnished woman  
 steps to the street  
 flagging her silks  
 to a cab that silvers and fades*

The work of editor Gary Barwin (sic) contains the most obvious linguistic experiments. "James" is a clever piece of concrete poetry, while the wordplay in "Nurse for tune my head sings for you" is witty and well-controlled. Neither poem, however, offers any meaningful thematic statement and as such are really ends in themselves. Although Margaret Cristakos (yes, sic again) shows a nice command of image and language, she too often uses words that are not poetic—too frequently diction become dictionary, and the poems flirt with pretense. Though the imagery is original and arresting, the conceits fail almost as often as they succeed.

Of the fiction, Ross Milliken's "The Excavation of Ray the Rape" is probably the best, a strange account of two boys and a slag heap. Though the dialogue is a little forced on occasion, the story is well-crafted and original. Gerald Smith's piece is either taken from or styled after a journal entry and reveals a good feel for mood and detail. The writing is personal and perceptive, we are attracted to the sincere voice and familiar landscape.

Perhaps the most ambitious piece is the untitled selection by Joanne Clark. Though the author occasionally loses control of the prose and the situations seem obviously projected at times, the highly poetic language carries much of it off. It is one of the few pieces that actually elicits an emotional response from the reader, and is a pleasurable change of pace.

Brain Bowen's four pages seem redundant. The first three are devoted to a self-indulgent series of visual descriptions, presumably for a film or video. The imagery is contrived and overblown, despite the writer's command of a reasonably demanding written form. In the end the message seems superficial after all the visual posturing. Good writing distills and clarifies the complex, rather than complicating and glorifying the simplistic. Bowen's last piece is much better.

Suzanne Collins' "Overdue" is clumsy and confusing despite some good dialogue, while John Wray's "At Gems Andrew's Place" seems crude and unfinished. In fairness to the author, this story should really not have been published—the dialogue is poor, the characters clichéd, the imagery silly. And the storyline is just plain dumb.

Though the current issue does contain some worthwhile reading, there are as many failures as successes. A compilation of the best work from a couple of creative writing workshops would be comparable. *Existere* has been criticized in the past for the same failing, to the point where it has become virtually ignored as an indication of the scope and variety of York talent. With the pool of authors *Existere* has to draw on, York students deserve much better.

The latest *Existere*