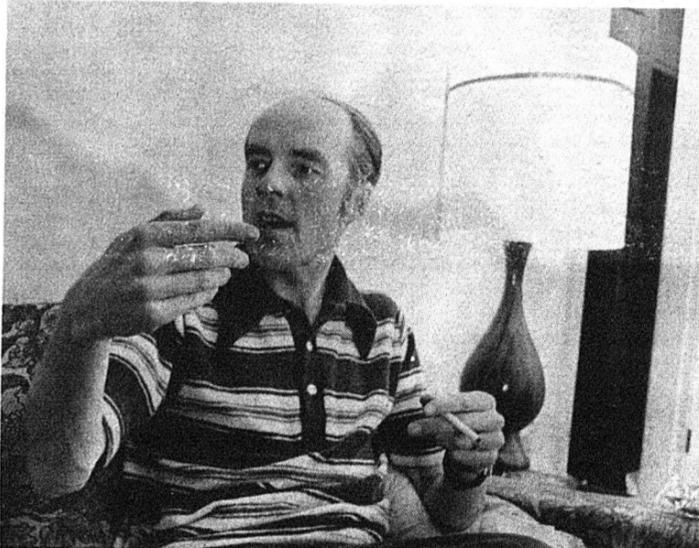


Warren Graves - The Playwrite

Like a man wandering the wasteland in search of God, I set out one day to discover the whereabouts of theatre in Edmonton. After several misadventures, I finally discovered, in the person of Mr. Warren Graves, one corner in Edmonton where theatre was both alive and well.

At present, Mr. Graves is artistic director for Walterdale Theatre Associates, one of the finest amateur theatrical groups in Western Canada. In the past, he has been exposed to almost every aspect of drama, having served as an actor, director and producer of plays. In addition, Mr. Graves is an accomplished (and published) playwright, having placed first in the provincial drama competition for the past five years. Among his prize-winning plays are *Yes Dear, Love in a Greenhouse, The Hand That Cradles the Rock* and *The Proper Perspective*. He was author of the Klondike Melodrama and is currently working on a black comedy entitled *Jump!*

I asked Mr. Graves what it takes to become a playwright:
Graves: A lot of work. Even on the physical end of it, it's hard work. It came as a big shock to some high school students I was talking to that a three act play--about two hours of drama--would require, at the minimum, 120 pages of manuscript. That fact alone, I think, discouraged a lot of them.
Gateway: You don't just wake up one day and write the 'Great Canadian play'.
Graves: Or short story. This year, at the Journal literary awards presentation, I met the girl who won in the short story category. She lived in some small town and worked as a bank teller. She had come alone to Edmonton just to collect her cheque. At the presentation, someone went up to this girl and asked half-jokingly if she had ever written anything other than



Warren Graves a Martin Coles photo

... "But that's the trend."

her one short story. 'Well,' she said quietly, 'I have five novels at home.'

Gateway: Holy Jesus!
Graves: And then there's the woman I met at a recent writer's conference. Perhaps it was a little undiplomatic of me, but I asked her what she had published. She drew back and exclaimed that she hadn't actually published anything but that she had gone to a seminar on writing in Banff, and had taken every creative writing course offered by the university department of extension--and had all kinds of certificates to prove that she was a writer.
Gateway: Jesus!
Graves: But that's the trend. The business of competitions, seminars and workshops will, I think, replace legitimate theatre. The new audience will be the student.
Gateway: What do you mean?
Graves: Instead of going to the theatre to see a play, the future audience will attend a course to buy the experience of being the playwright. The trouble with the old way was that it took a

lifetime to become a playwright. Now all you do is go to a seminar for two weeks and act the part of the playwright. After that, you can go back to selling life insurance. In this way the audience, not the actors are the actors. The actors and the playwright become the teachers, that is, they provide their audience, the students, with the opportunity to act--if you see what I mean.
Gateway: You mean education will become the new drama?
Graves: Yes.
Gateway: It sounds incredible.
Graves: If you don't believe me, look at the great sums of money that go into teaching drama and the pitiful amount of money that goes into the actual production of plays. At Walterdale we have a budget of \$200.00 per play. That buys us nails for the sets. You can also look at the human resources that are consumed by drama courses. At Walterdale we lose a lot of talent that way, the actors are too busy teaching acting to act.
Gateway: It seems like an insidious process.

Graves: In a way, it is. Take Walter Kaasa for example. As director of cultural development, he's too busy developing culture to become a part of it. It's too bad. He's an excellent actor.

Gateway: Why do you write plays?

Graves: Well, I really have two different reasons. I've found that the kind of play that pleases the academics judging playwrighting contests is quite different from the kind of play that will entertain an audience. For this reason I write two kinds of plays. One is to win a contest. The second is to be performed. It's far easier to win a contest than to get a play produced.

Gateway: What kind of play do you prefer to write?

Graves: I like writing plays to see them performed. I get a big bang out of seeing a live audience reacting to something I've written. That's the secret of the theatre. Unlike any other media, it deals directly with

living people. You get a psychological thrill out of that which no amount of mechanical gimmickery will ever duplicate. Once you discover the live element of the theatre, you're hooked for life. It's in your blood. Even Walter Kaasa has to break out once in awhile to do a play.

—W. N. Callaghan, Jr.

MONTY PYTHON

Well, friends, it's been a full week since my last impassioned plea for the return of *Monty Python's Flying Circus* and I am sad indeed that the cataclysmic deluge of mail that I requested to be sent to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (Box 500, Terminal "A", Toronto) has failed to appear.

I hope that those of you who have not yet written will find it in your hearts to do so soon.

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