

# editorial

## Gang of Four

Put on your Vaurnet Sunglasses and dust off your Topsiders—and prepare yourself for the “Big Four,” or, as they may unofficially be called, “The Ivy League of the North.”

The foursome in question—U of T, Western, McGill, and Queen’s—have decided to break away from the present sports bodies, the Ontario University Athletic Association (OUAA) and the Ontario Women’s Intercollegiate Athletic Association (OWIAA) and form their own intercollegiate athletic conference.

They also state that a major component of their decision was based on the fact that a new conference of this type is necessary for it would allow for competition among those universities that share “similar philosophies.”

What are the “similar philosophies” that these institutions share, but never quite manage to put into words? They won’t say.

The real reasons they want to create the “Big Four” are actually quite simple.

First, due to their outrageous entrance requirements these institutions are having a hard time maintaining, or even fielding competitive teams, and the results have been some embarrassing defeats as we have witnessed first hand this year (the U of T football team in particular). So they want to alleviate the situation the easy way, by taking their ball and going home. Choosing to compete only with those institutions that have similar problems.

Second, by breaking off from the league in this manner they will succeed in labeling themselves as “Ivy League,” academically superior institutions that offer recreation (sport) to its “enlightened student body.” But more important, by dividing the institutions in this manner they will also succeed in insulting all other institutions including York by labeling them as sub-par.

Rather than sulking by refusing to play with the ‘big boys,’ these hard-done institutions should do what York did when they hit the skids athletically: concentrate on re-examining current policies that effect athletics, and revamp their athletic programs in general, rather than finding external scapegoats for what are essentially internal problems.



Excalibur attempts to print as many letters as space allows. Please be brief—letters over 250 words are subject to editing for length. All letters must include the author's name, address, and phone number for verification purposes. Pseudonyms may be used upon request.

## letters

### Homophobia

Editor:

We of GAY ask: What's green, homophobic, and goes around tearing down Gay Alliance posters? . . . Well, we don't know either, but we're very curious. Rather than tearing them down, why not come out and talk to us about whatever is offending you; your feedback would be much appreciated. If you'd prefer not to, then please leave the posters alone, as the joke is already very much on you and your juvenile expressions of intolerance are becoming tedious in the extreme.

—The Gay Alliance at York

### He didn't mean it

Editor:

Jason Sherman, in his review of the Samuel Beckett Theatre Company's production of *Waiting for Godot*, invited response from people involved in the show.

Here it is.

Sherman does not extend the same courtesy to the show which should be given to his own reviewing: both are the efforts of students at an institution of learning and should be approached as such. The dozens of people who worked on *Godot* did so as part of a learning process: Sherman's review is similarly the work of a student. However, the viciousness of the review, indeed, its vulgar, insulting tone, make it difficult for someone emotionally involved in *Godot* to be charitable about the many errors Sherman makes in his review.

First of all, Sherman has trouble with the English language. He says, for example, that “there is little reason to suspect that an audience full of English scholars or Beckett lovers should find in the production the penultimate *Godot*.” The word penultimate means “second from last.” Sherman does not know what the word penultimate means. He ought to, if he's going to use it in print.

Also, since the piece is signed by one person, the proper pronoun to use is not “we” but “I”. Of course, “I” sounds much less pretentious, and would force Sherman to take more personal responsibility for the vicious insults he spews.

An example of one of these insults is: “the . . . musical accompaniment . . .

might best be described as an organ grinder in the last stages of syphilis.” Insults are easy. Example: Jason, I hope you die of leukemia. Slowly. What is more difficult is to offer constructive criticism. What bit of constructive advice can Lisa Moore take from “she had a general problem with sound making . . . leaving us wondering in the course of removing a shoe, whether she was about to defecate or orgasm.”?

What alternatives does Sherman have to offer for the use of mouse by the make-up people, or the use of fishing line to hold up the tree branches? Is Sherman aware of the difficulty, and, more relevantly, the expense of constructing free-standing three-dimensional objects for the stage?

Apparently not. It seems that he doesn't know writing style, reviewing, or the theatre. This can be forgiven: he is, like us, learning. What cannot be forgiven is his cruelty. I don't understand what drives Sherman to be so hurtful. I also don't understand why the *Excalibur* editors don't give him a little guidance. It would spare those of us who work on student productions a great deal of hurt; hopefully it would also spare Sherman a certain amount of embarrassment.

—Robin D. Laws  
Dramaturge, *Waiting for Godot*

### Really he didn't!

Editor:

I am writing in response to the review of *Waiting for Godot* which appeared in the November 8 issue of *Excalibur*, written by Jason Sherman. While I am not in the habit of responding to reviews, whether they be good or bad, I felt compelled to do so in this case as I feel an injustice has been done. The responsibility for this injustice lies with two individuals.

Firstly, it lies with Mr. Sherman who took it upon himself to claim to know better than Mr. Beckett how *Waiting for Godot* should be produced. It may very well be that Mr. Sherman knows better than the half dozen or so individuals who researched Mr. Beckett for two months prior to this staging, exactly what Beckett attempted to discuss in this play.

However, I highly doubt that Mr. Sherman does have this inside knowledge

when he repeatedly criticizes the lack of humor in this production. Mr. Beckett did not write a comedy but rather a tragic-comedy, and any humor in *Waiting for Godot* is to be found in (S. Beckett's own words) “human misery.”

As for my lack of comic timing, Mr. Sherman should be made aware that Beckett is quite specific about where “pauses” are to be left by performers and no such “pause” is called for following the line, mentioned by Mr. Sherman, “That passed the time.”

As for the “amateurishness” of this production, I wish it publicly known that in my 18 years of experience in both amateur and professional theatre and television, this is the most professional cast and crew I have ever had the honor to work with.

Neither Estragon, nor Vladimir wore sweet smelling mouse in their hair. Quite the contrary; both actors had their hair oiled each night and then filled with saw dust and wood chips.

Estragon's feet were covered with blue cheese and Vladimir's costume was perfumed with Essence of Garlic. Any “sweet smell” Mr. Sherman detected came from some lady seated near him in the audience.

The list of demonstrated ignorances in Mr. Sherman's review goes on and on. The mound of dirt which was somehow transformed into a rock in Mr. Beckett's own description of the mound in his *Director's Book*, 1979: “. . . both stone and trees to be bone-colour.”

The second individual to bear the responsibility of this injustice is the editor who not only sent this reviewer, who appears to have little knowledge of either theatre or journalism, but then allowed this atrocity to go to public print.

This letter will probably not be printed, but I shall gain some satisfaction in the knowledge that the individuals responsible have been notified of their obscene transgression. As to whether their megalomaniacal personalities can accept this criticism is another matter. (You see gentlemen—I too can bring constructive criticism down to a personal level.)

In short, I suggest that the *Excalibur* consider cleaning one's own house before sending people out to criticize others'.

—Kevin Prentice  
Director

## excalibur

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