

black wardrobe not needed

by Mark Moss

Published four times per annum, *Existere*, Vanier College's arts and literary magazine, is entering its 12th year of publication. This year's first issue is a slim and handsome volume, professional looking, yet retaining the touch of a polished student journal.

But *Existere* is not a quarterly to be judged by either size or appearance. As editor April Simone said, "The first issue is usually small but it grows as submissions come in." Composed predominantly of poetry with some prose, illustration and photography, *Existere* is looking for, and needs more, submissions of prose and criticism.

This year's first issue was launched at a well attended read-

ing last Tuesday. Contributing poets read works in progress, pieces from the new issue and poems from previous issues. The poems that were read, and those in the issue, represented a wonderful juxtaposition of themes. The diversity was eclectic and esoteric, running the gamut in inspiration and origin from popular culture to personal relationships. A marked propensity for the experimental and pseudo-avant-garde pervades the issue, yet overall the poems are refreshing and accessible.

A selection of the talented group includes Tim Archer, the recipient of a Canada Council grant, who read from a work that was truly in progress, only a few hours old.

Uninhibited and possibly too dependent on *Roget's*, Samuel

Peralta read from a number of his poems in a confident and dramatic manner, sincerely conveying a mixture of ephemeral emotions. His wonderful "Prayer for Lisa" is included in the new issue.

The highly imaginative Deron Mitchell read from the issue, his "last words for humphry chong", a somewhat macabre speculation on a friend's death. Mitchell's "the collected nights of bela lugosi blasco" is a provocative and surreal journey into a bizarre and nostalgic place. This sampling of poetry is enough to peak one's curiosity and stimulate a search for back issues of the magazine.

This rather delightful and suprisingly good magazine will obviously appeal to those with a taste for poetry and other literary fare. In its nonpretentious, non-everybody-dressed-in-black manner, *Existere* is an excellent introduction to those who are generally ambivalent about poetry. *Existere* is available for a mere \$1, if you can find it on a table in Central Square, at Vanier College or in creative writing classes.

Future issues should see an expansion in the areas of prose and critiques, and the deadline for submissions for the next issue is October 30.

York playwrights tackle serious issues

Fourth year theatre major Pam Bustin, playwright of *Saddles in the Rain*.

by Laura Martins

Despite a lack of publicity, the first in a series of play readings by York theatre students got off to a successful start last Wednesday in Winters Senior Common Room.

The evening began with a reading of *Saddles in the Rain*, a play by fourth year theatre major Pam Bustin, directed by Christina Uriate. The play, a work in progress, is about a family's horrific experiences with an abusive and destructive husband and father.

The play shifts from the present-day life of Kat, the eldest of two daughters, to her memories of her



Elizabeth Prior

painful childhood on a farm in Saskatchewan. Kat (read by Karen Svendson) moves to Toronto to get away from the turmoil and gets a call from her younger sister Babber (read by Dianna Klassen). Babber tells her that their stepfather Jake (read by John McIntyre) has raped her. The urgency of the situation forces Kat to leave for Saskatchewan to testify against Jake and to also convince her mother she must do the same. The play is an engrossing look at a serious problem, reading like a Sam Shepard play from a female perspective.

The second reading of the night was *Garden Games* by fourth year theatre major John Blakey. This is a comedy of manners that takes a humorous look at the jealousy and pettiness that can exist between friends and lovers.

Beverley (read by Gina Brenton) is the central manipulator in this play. She invites her so-called friend Fiona (read by Lina Barnett) and Fiona's gay ex-husband and his lover to her birthday party.

This play has everything from mistaken identities to various twists in the plot, not to mention that it is very witty. For most of the play, the humour exploits the shortcomings of the characters. However, by the end, the characters are forced to confront their weaknesses, and the atmosphere is darker than the previous scenes.

The reading was directed by Rhea Akler, who is in fourth year directing, and the actors are all fourth year performance students.

Since the evening was devoted to play reading, attention to sets, costumes, props and lighting were not of primary concern. Instead, the readings, aside from entertaining the audience, allowed the playwrights to sit back and get a new perspective on their plays.

"It's mainly for me to hear it, and to be totally removed from it, and then decide what I want to change," said playwright Pam Bustin.

For Bustin, the audience's reaction was encouraging. "There are some parts of the play that I wanted to have some comic relief because it's so heavy. I was glad when people every once in a while laughed. Actually the actors who were reading told me they were sometimes thrown by where people would laugh. I was so glad! I told them yes! They are supposed to laugh!"

The presence of an audience was necessary to give her extra feedback.

Saddles in the Rain is Bustin's first play, and she hopes it will be staged next March at Samuel Beckett Theatre at York.

The actors reading the plays were absorbing and effective. One was quickly unaware of the absence of proper lighting, costumes, and sets. The readings continued Thursday with fourth year student Todd Vercoe's play *Wake me Gently*.

Future dates for the play readings have not yet been announced.

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