

Play still popular after 320 years

# Bokkor dusts off Moliere

by Dragos Riui

Pierre Bokkor was sitting in his office at Faculte Saint Jean drinking coffee when I found him.

He is the principal director of the Theatre Francais D'Edmonton, as well as a drama instructor at "The Fac". Mr. Bokkor has directed two movies and worked in theatre and television all his life.

This season he is also directing the first play in the Walterdale Theater's season. Like the Theatre Francais, the Walterdale is a volunteer company, so nobody gets paid.

The play, which opens on Sept. 24, is a renown French comedy by Moliere entitled *A Doctor In Spite of Himself*. Moliere is "one of the biggest comedy writers in the world" according to Bokkor. This is the tenth Moliere play Mr. Bokkor has directed.

When asked why this particular play was chosen, Bokkor replied, "It is a very famous,

very good French comedy." Most of Moliere's works were done in verse, but this play differed from the norm and was written in prose. The Walterdale will be doing an English adaptation of the French play.

This play was written 320 years ago in the 17th century, but it has been playing on and off ever since it premiered. It is done in the style of "Comedia Dell' Arte." Let me paraphrase Mr. Bokkor's explanation.

"Comedia Dell' Arte" is a style of play that originated in Italy. The term stems from a period of time two centuries ago, that was in Mr. Bokkor's words "the apogee of the development of playwriting." The style involves the use of masks throughout the play combined with a great deal of body expression.

One of the things Mr. Bokkor discovered when he first started directing this play is that modern North American culture differs from

the 17th century French culture. "Some of the jokes that were funny in French came out... flat in English. But other things are funnier in English," says Pierre.

"I have tried to dust off the play... to make it more contemporary. My cast consists entirely of young people, from 18 to 25 years old. Even older characters are played by young people." Mr. Bokkor positively glowed when he described the work of his cast and stage crew.

"Because this is amateur theatre, and some of the people involved work eight hours a day, you cannot demand work from them... but often they are so enthusiastic, because this is their hobby. The people I worked with were 'Dynamite'. Each rehearsal was an anniversary."

We will see if his "dusting off" is successful on Wednesday when the play opens. Stay tuned.



Director Pierre Bokkor photo Stephen Pandke

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## ESO makes good

review by Juanita Spears

The Edmonton Symphony Orchestra (ESO) members were exchanging their 11th hour contracts (the ink was still wet) for their instruments last Friday night as they kicked off the 1986-87 season at the Jubilee Auditorium.

The season premiered with Bach's Concerto in D minor for two violins performed by Czech violinist Joseph Suk and ESO concertmaster James Keene.

The first movement, a lively vivace, revealed the duo's balance with some enchanting exchanges. At times, though, one wanted more from Keene as his tone, perhaps not as broad as Suk's, tended to blend in too much with the rest of the chamber orchestra. This was due in part to the fact that he was playing second fiddle, the lower tessitura matching more closely that of the rest of the violin section.

The second movement, Largo ma non tanto, offered some of the evening's most exquisite musical moments. The long sweeping phrases tumbled off effortlessly as the duo passed the melody to and fro. By the start of the final Allegro, both soloists seemed relaxed and receptive to the audience.

Throughout the work, conductor Uri Mayer led very unobtrusively, allowing the soloists and the orchestra to respond freely to each other. Though the orchestra some-

times tended to be somewhat understated, it was always supportive and never overpowering. All in all, it was a most engaging start to a very promising season.

Concluding the first half of the evening's performance was Mozart's Violin Concerto No. 2 in D major, K.211 aptly performed by Joseph Suk. Although there were moments that swept you away, the overall performance was somewhat understated, leaving you screaming for more — particularly during the cadenza which, while faultlessly executed with technical bravado, left you looking for emotional impact.

By far, the evening's highlight was the concluding work, Rachmaninov's Symphony No. 2 in E minor. Here, the orchestra became less reserved. Of note was the clarinet solo in the Adagio played by principal Steve Amsel whose warmth of tone and sweetness of melody helped erase the rest of the orchestra's overriding feeling of reserve.

Tentativeness notwithstanding, the ESO sounded in fine form. Technically, the orchestra performed like a finely tuned machine. If a finger must be pointed, it would be at their lack of abandon. Surely this can be attributed to opening night jitters. If Friday night's performance is any indication of what is to come, Edmonton can look forward to a very exciting season.

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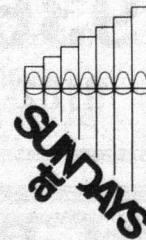
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