

**First performance of play**

# Writing is a parachute for Ray Cosgrove

By FORSTER FREED

If Raymond Cosgrove is counting his cigarettes more often these days, there's a good reason for it. Cosgrove, for whom cigarette counting serves as a much needed anxiety-valve, is presently sitting through final rehearsals of his play, Cue to Cue.

The production, mounted by York's Graduate Programme in Theatre (P.E.A.K.) this coming Monday and Tuesday (December 15 and 16), will be the first presentation of any of his plays. And that, in itself, would be enough to keep Cosgrove (or any other young playwright) counting all the tobacco from here to Texas and back again.

The fact is, however, that for Cosgrove, Cue to Cue is not just another play. When I spoke with him last week, he was anxious to point out that he regards this play as his "gift" to John Juliani and the P.E.A.K. ensemble. And Cosgrove, who acts as well as writes for

P.E.A.K., adds that the play is part of an almost religious search for self-knowledge that has occupied him for at least five years.

"I began writing as a safety measure, in the same way that if you were to step out of a plane you might take up parachuting. It is an integral facet of my life — the way I work out my conflicts and chart who I am, where I've come from, and why."

Cosgrove started to write in 1959 when he was still living in his native Montreal. Aged 19 at the time, he had just failed his last year of high school, and was working for CPR. Looking for a way to cope with the routine imposed by a work-a-day existence and attempting to come to grips with a "demoralising working class background," he found it necessary to write. But writing (first poetry and prose, and later drama) was just one of the answers he found.

In addition, there was theatre. While taking some evening classes

at Sir George Williams, he auditioned for the school's drama club — on the dare of a friend. He got the role, and was soon to become an active member of the Sir George club — his first real exposure to theatre. "When I confronted the theatre it was a revelation; a whole different way to be. It posited a radical difference in the way I led my life."

**THE LAST STRAW**

Work at Sir George was followed by four years of acting in semi-professional theatre in and around Montreal, and a subsequent three years of trying to crack (with only mixed results) the growing professional circuit. Disillusioned with theatrical life, the last straw was provided by, of all things, an appearance with the Maurice Chevalier show at Expo. "It was a disgusting experience, but it gave fast money. And it pushed me to my limits."

Responding to a suggestion from his parents, he enrolled in St. Joseph's teachers college where he spent two years. A summer with a theatrical community, and three years teaching theatre in the Eastern Townships followed. It was the latter experience which led to a period of intense introspection and personal questioning.

"I made a frantic retreat to my one and only spiritual base — Roman Catholicism. I had nothing else to hang on to at the time. Eventually, I took a night course in theology at Loyola, and it proved to be a significant choice."

At Loyola, he met Peter Richardson, a professor who helped validate and give structure to Cosgrove's need for religious belief. (It was for Richardson that Cosgrove wrote his first full length play, a religious drama with St. Paul and St. Stephen as the central characters). And although at one point during this phase he considered monastic life, he opted for the opportunity presented by John Juliani and P.E.A.K. The irony, of course, is that the demands of working the the company required an intensity and commitment comparable to the more traditional callings.

"I'm in a holy craft right now," comments Cosgrove, "as holy as a monk or a priest. The art of the theatre as exemplified by P.E.A.K.



Raymond Cosgrove performing with P.E.A.K. in Poland.

is holy in the demands it places on my time, space, intellect — and my soul."

Perhaps as important, P.E.A.K. forced him to the kind of psychological exploration which, coupled with previous experiences, resulted in the writing of Cue to Cue. A series of "one on one" confrontations or impasses between opposing characters, the play could never have arisen without the kind of personal interaction preached by Juliani.

Then again, Cosgrove has designed the play so that the P.E.A.K. company will be able to use their technique of "streaming" (spontaneous acting) between the

individual scenes or "matches". In every sense, then, Cue to Cue is linked to Cosgrove's P.E.A.K. connection.

"I know it may sound odd — almost as if I'm giving some kind of super-testimonial for Encyclopedia Britannica — but P.E.A.K. opened up my ability to love." As the first fruits of this labour of love, Cue to Cue should prove a unique experience for performer and audience alike.

P.E.A.K. will present Cue to Cue by Raymond Cosgrove at the P.E.A.K. Passage, MacLaughlin Dining Hall Monday, December 15 at 12.00 and 7:30, Tuesday, December 16 at 7:30.

## Stong's poetry - folk night is anything but amateur

By EVAN LEIBOVITCH

There had been little advance notice of the Poetry and Folk night in the Orange Snail, Stong's weekend bar and weekend coffee shop. I went expecting a sort of amateur night.

After listening to the guy at the counter put down the Complex One pubs because they didn't sell Guinness, however, I loaded myself down with meat pies and Tootsie Pops, and sat down near the front, not knowing what to expect next.

**NOT AMATEUR**

The night turned out to be anything but amateur. It seemed as if nobody could do any wrong that night. Hollis Rinehart started out and informally M.C.'d the proceedings. Variety was there from traditional to Dylan, including a near perfect version of the story of Alice's Restaurant by Tim Kidwell. Allen Koretsky read and explained some excerpts from Chaucer, and Bob Casto read some of his own poetry, sometimes abstract, but entertaining and often amusing. There was standing room only by the time Karen Cohl and Susan Ungar took the stage. The performance left no doubt that this duo could easily become professional, switching guitars and a melodica back and forth and singing in voices perfectly matched to each other. When all the performers finished, they started over and each did a second set.

**THE BEST THING**

The best thing about the night, which lasted until past one, was the atmosphere. Most of the songs were lighthearted, and many were humorous, such as the 'I don't know where I'm going but I'm going nowhere in a hurry blues'. It was a very entertaining night, one of the few excuses for someone from Complex One to drag himself to Stong.



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