

## Hypothetical Zigurats and cuneiform highlight Glendon show

By HENRY SUM

**L**es Temps, a collection of contemporary work by Franco-Ontario artists, is on view at the Glendon Gallery until November 25.

But the politics ends there, for these artists are concerned with personal and universal values. If an underlying theme of their work could be expressed, it might be "attrition"; the gradual wearing down of natural and man-made

Two artists who collectively identify themselves as A & B Associés have meticulously constructed a miniature industrial zig-



Pierre Desrosiers' Akkadian style tablet period.

urat lying in ruins. It is meant to be seen from "a hypothetical past, which is the present viewed from an imaginary future after a supposed discontinuity in history."

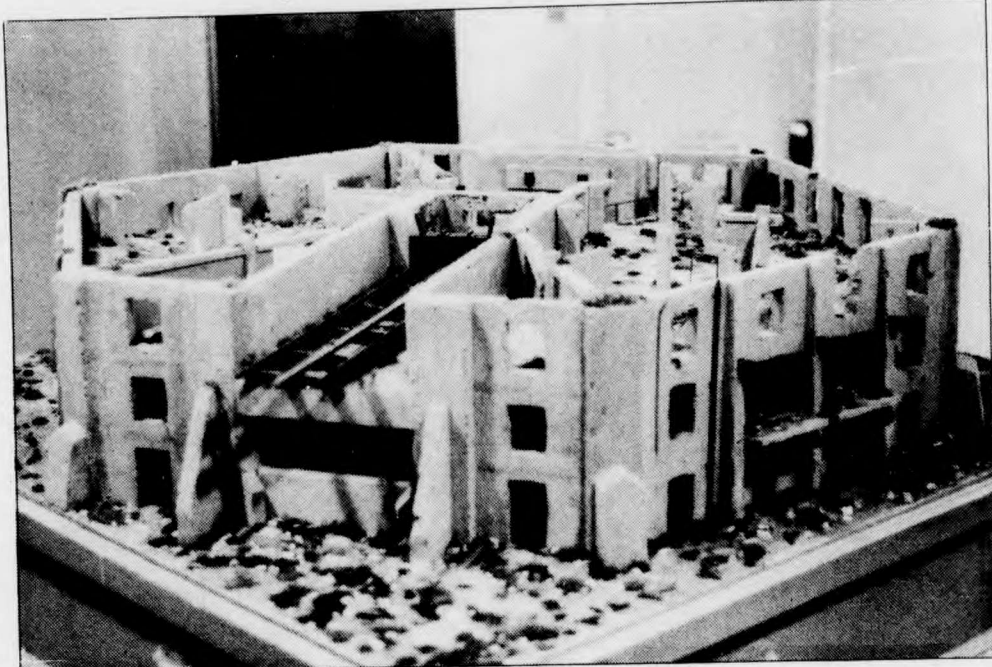
Despite being authentically detailed, the hexagonal model is vague about the building's original purpose. It invites the viewer to participate as an archeologist in search of clues to its meaning. Was it a factory? A power station? Perhaps even a military complex?

Jean Bélanger, on the other hand, collects and assembles raw, crude fragments from our immediate present. His work resembles the output of some inventive beachcomber who fashions art from decomposing flotsam and jetsam. Bélanger's primitive cylindrical piece seems to laugh at all our ideal notions of good design and polished artifacts.

Pictorial artists Anne-Marie Bénéteau and Marc Charbonneau appear to share the same biological concerns. Bénéteau's endearing, childlike collage depicts the natural food chain of birds, insects and fish seriously threatened by pollution. Charbonneau's thick impastoed paintings of stark, headless nudes in oppressive landscapes take the ecological dilemma a step further.

One wonders, after all this, whether Pierre Desrosiers' piece is a tombstone or a monument? Modelling his artifact in the style of ancient Mesopotamia, the tablet comes embellished with cuneiform lettering and esoteric symbols of infinity.

Fascinated by the Akkadian culture, Desrosiers searched out and found a short 30-page



Detailed hexagonal model from Glendon Gallery's new show *Les Temps*.

dictionary of their language. "I wondered if they used words or sentences which I could identify with," he said. Selecting words he uses in day-to-day language Desrosiers then cut these into bricks of cuneiform type.

French translations of the Akkadian words appear along the sides of the tablet. "TROUBLES," "ETERNITE," "FORCE

I once swore I'd make this Ben Cartwright so important, so necessary, so alive, that they'd never get rid of him.  
—Lorne Greene

SEXUELLE" and "ENFANTER" (to give birth) are a few of the words used. This suggests that Desrosiers' anxieties are not much different from those of the ancient Akkadians. Skillfully executed with the accompanying growth sequence of a frog, his piece speaks up for the continual renewal inherent in the natural cycles.

## McLaughlin's benefit performance shows grit and guile of frontier women

By STEPHANIE GROSS

**T**o herald the opening of the women's studies library, Theatre Direct will be performing *Love and Work Enough* on November 15 in McLaughlin's Junior Common Room.

The play explores the condition of pioneer women of Canada and will help provide funding for the Nellie Langford Rowell Library, formerly on loan from the YWCA, now owned by York thanks to a donation from the Jackman Foundation.

*Love and Work Enough's* aim is to entertain, educate and provide a representation of women in a Canadian historical context.

"It might have been men who discovered this country but the women made it grow," says one actress in the play. *Love and Work Enough* fills the gap caused by the exclusion of women in Canadian history books.

The energetic, all woman cast humorously brings to life the writings of some of Canada's first and most famous writers, including Susannah Moodie, Catherine Parr Traill and Anna Brownell Jameson.

The play deals with the hardships of Europeans settling in Canada. The audience is faced with a variety of dramatic experiences; scenes are punctuated with singing, dance and mime.

The play asks the question: "What have women been?" and answers: "resourceful, hardworking, nurturing and courageous."

One particular scene tells about the slaughtering of a pig, and how each part is used for either food, lard, soap and brooms.

Women's resourcefulness is shown in other ways as well. A joke is made when one woman has her newly sprouted tomatoes attacked by chickens. She remedies the situation by boiling the half-eaten tomatoes in a soup with the chickens. One clever woman, travelling on foot through the bush to a settlement in Quebec, hides her jewels in the bottom of a pot full of lard to fool forest thieves.

By telling stories in short, varied scenes, *Love and Work Enough* educates the audience in an agreeable and engaging way. There is always an optimistic humor in the recounting of such

experiences as making maple sugar, coping with extreme cold and the wide disparity between Europe's civility and the sudden roughness of the new country. One woman reads from a diary which documents all of her births, and we recognize how much of women's lives were spent in pregnancy and how high the infant/mortality rates were in Canada's early years. Yet the birth scene is approached with a kind of slap-stick comedy showing the difficulty in getting a doctor or mid-wife to a home in the bush during the time of labor. The play has definite feminist images of women pitted against the realities of their everyday experiences. The point comes across strongly in one scene where one man on a train tells a woman who is sitting beside him about his awful nightmares. His conflict is that he wants "a woman to scrub the floor, stoke the fire" and also to fulfill his so called "spiritual" needs. His wishes for the lady in white lace, dancing at a ball, is seen in all its absurdity when compared to the industriousness of women in early Canada.

*Love and Work Enough* makes use of Cana-

dian customs with song and dance. In one scene a couple, just married, is rudely disturbed by a band of riotous men who bang dishes and sing outside the newlyweds' house until they are forced to come out and greet their neighbors.

*Love and Work Enough* is also important because it shows women relating to other women. They are seen together as workers, doctors and mothers. They are portrayed as creators of the Canadian culture, passing on wives tales and healing remedies learned from the Indians. The quilted backdrop is an education in itself, representing the communally sewn quilts that women made by collecting scraps of old clothing.

Theatre Direct has come up with a most professional production. *Love and Work Enough* obliterates the myth that Canadian history is boring, and the humor in the play stresses the optimism of Canada's pioneering women.

*Love and Work Enough* will be playing at 3:00 to 4:00 in McLaughlin College and will be accompanied by a reading by Margaret Atwood. Tickets are \$5 at the door.

## Still waiting: Directionless *Godot* has got to go

*Waiting For Godot*

by Samuel Beckett

Samuel Beckett Theatre until Friday

By JASON SHERMAN

**I**t comes as no surprise that the lofty claims of the current production of *Waiting For Godot* have little or nothing to do with what is transpiring at the theatre named for the play's author.

These claims, boldly stated in a memo circulated among English professors, referred to the use of Beckett's original notes to the first productions. Even supposing Beckett's interpretations are the most valid, as such an approach seems to, there is little reason to suspect that an audience full of English scholars or Beckett lovers should find the production in any way the penultimate *Godot*.

But the issue is further confused by the fact that, if some kind of unique interpretive approach was being taken by director Kevin Prentice, it certainly wasn't evident in any consistent form during Monday night's opening performance.

We might choose to blame the more immediate signs of amateurishness for the failure of this production. The annoying strains of the specially commissioned musical accompaniment, which might best be described as an organ grinder in the last stages of syphilis, was annoying and unnecessary. The acting was, to be kind, uneven: which is to say, Richard Williams as Pozzo and Randy Swyer as Lucky had stage presence and some sense of how to deliver their lines; but Lisa Moore as Estragon and Jacquie Thomas as Vladimir (with a negligible appearance by Ron Harvey as Boy) were so dull that anyone not familiar with the text might wonder what all the Beckett fuss is about.

Prentice might have been playing a cruel joke in casting the two leads as he has: the dullness is transferred to the audience so

that we, as well as Estragon and Vladimir, feel relieved at the presence of others to pass the time.

It is possible to make the leads, indeed the play, very funny. Instead, lines were thrown away either through inaudibility or incomprehensibility, as in the great insult exchange which ends with "Cretin! . . . Crrrritic!" Screamed as the passage was, it came out sounding much like a preliminary to vomiting. Moore, who delivered "Crrrritic!" had a general problem with sound making, at times leaving us wondering, in the course of removing a shoe, whether she was about to defecate or orgasm.

The famous Lucky speech, which is usually spat forth in performance, was likewise done by Swyer, except that nothing he said was intelligible. This might well be the point of the speech, but only if the words themselves are enunciated. Swyer was quite adept at hoarse breathing, except that he inexplicably stopped in Act II. Williams was by far the most accomplished actor on the stage when he wasn't screaming to make up for the bass voice Pozzo requires. Believe it or not, here was one actor who had a feeling for the lines he was speaking; emphasizing where needed, pausing where dictated, stumbling where appropriate.

Would that the same could be said for the direction. Where Prentice's sense of pacing and comic timing were obtained is a mystery, because it was obvious from the first 10 minutes that not even Beckett's suggestions were being adhered to. As one example of this, after Pozzo and Lucky's initial exit, Vladimir says "Well, that passed the time," which is at once funny and profound—if we are given time to react to it. But Estragon immediately pipes in *his* next line and this moment is lost, as are so many others.

We are aware of Prentice's right to directorial license, and that no text is sacred: we are not aware, however, that Prentice has used his license to positive purpose. Why, for example, is the line "(The tree is) covered with leaves" changed to "Now there are



"Good God, those weren't my notes."

leaves"? In its context, this is a drastic change. Perhaps it was thought too comic. If so, why was there no consistency to the removal of such obvious humor?

There seems, too, a lack of awareness of the playing space. One cannot help but take in the sweet smell of mousse (holding back, rather unsuccessfully, the hair of the female actors), nor help but notice that although the costumes are dirty and ragged, Lucy's rope is brand new (as are the hats and shoes but, we hope, these were conscious choices), nor the papier mache tree suspended by visible invisible string, nor the mound of dirt which has somehow been transformed into a rock, nor the plastic patch serving as Pozzo's bald head. Certainly the close space could have been used to create a greater impression than a strained attention to Estragon's bloodied leg.

There remains much to be said, including a fuller discussion of the worth of doing *Godot* again at an institution with so established a writing program: we would welcome responses from those involved in the production.