

Stratford's 20th Anniversary Program

[A Report by an American Shakespearian Scholar Who
Has Just Returned from Stratford and Who Wishes to be Anonymous]

A fanfare on silver trumpets. The crowd in the gardens and the modern theatre lobby begins to stir. A troop of Girl Scouts from Waterloo mixes with levi-clad college students from Ann Arbor and Toronto and neatly labeled Rotarians from Vancouver. In the evening, levis and street dresses mingle with evening gowns and tuxedos, red velvet bow ties and ruffled shirts, and the family jewels.

A second, more urgent trumpet.

A teen-ager downs the watery dregs of her coke and a freshly-scrubbed banker casts a glance toward the bar. Conversation dwindles. An air of expectancy as the crowd moves through the entrances and enters the space around the stage.

This is the 20th anniversary of the annual Stratford Ontario Shakespeare Festival. The Festival began in 1952 as the inspiration of Tom Patterson of Canada and Sir Tyrone Guthrie of England. The Festival has grown from two plays performed in a tent before 68,000 people in 1953 to ten plays, to be performed in three permanent theatres before an audience estimated at 400,000, in 1972. It is one of the outstanding success stories of the modern English theatre. The unique stage design, intended for maximum contact be-

tween players and audience, was realized by Tanya Moiseiwitsch from Guthrie's concepts. Among the directors have been Guthrie himself, who supervised the Festival's first season, and Jean Gascon, a French-Canadian who brings a special touch of romanticism to the productions and who is currently senior artistic director. Although Stratford productions are in repertory and avoid the star system, the role call of players includes names like Sir Alec Guinness, James Mason, Christopher Plummer, Irene Worth and Kate Reid.

Today the festival company numbers over 680 employees in its various departments. It operates on a budget of some 3.25 million dollars, partly from ticket sales and partly from generous subsidies from the Canada Council and from numerous individuals and corporations. Its international status has been recognized by performances in England, Europe, and the United States. A full-scale European tour is in the works for 1973.

But in the theatre the play's the thing. The three plays currently offered in the festival theatre (Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* will be added beginning July 24) are *King Lear*,

