

Entertainment

"Perhaps we wished there was not so much time."
-Thomas McGuane-

Fearless David Eisner

Born to laugh

Elliott Lefko

"An actor cannot fear failure; he has to take on challenges. If you can't, get out."

David Eisner is on the phone, looking to stir up some publicity for the Carl Reiner play, *Enter Laughing*, which he's starring in at the Leah Posluns Theatre. But he's also out to settle a score on a libelous headline which appeared above a profile of him in *Excalibur* last year. The offensive tag read "David Eisner: Fear of Failure".

The 23-year-old wasn't upset by the incorrect spelling of his surname as much as the inference that he is a weak-kneed actor who avoids taking risks. That just isn't true, he argues.

Eisner is a working actor who has made a dramatic rise since he joined the art theatre production company (known then as the Beth Tikvah Drama Guild) seven years ago in hopes of channeling some of his abundant energies into acting. *Enter Laughing* represents a homecoming to the company that gave him his start.

"It's like having a son return home," says Reva Tward, the

company's artistic director since Eisner joined. "In the meantime both our company and David have grown. So it's exciting to watch him return as the star of the play."

After appearing in numerous art theatre productions he auditioned for, and won, parts in a couple of television commercials, a guest role on *King of Kensington*, and later a semi-regular job on the CBC comedy.

Jack Humphrey, *Kensington's* producer, liked Eisner, read the notices he was receiving from critics, saw his fan mail, and called him when he was casting *Hanging In*, a new CBC comedy-drama that sees Eisner playing a big-brother-type social worker in a community centre.

Along the way he's picked up parts in films, first with *Running*, and last year in John Huston's colossal mistake, *Phobia*, and in the upcoming *Happy Birthday To Me*, another Canadian horror flick.

Enter Laughing marks the fifth acting project for Eisner in the last year. It's the only stage role of the five though, and that's something

he'd like to see corrected in the near future.

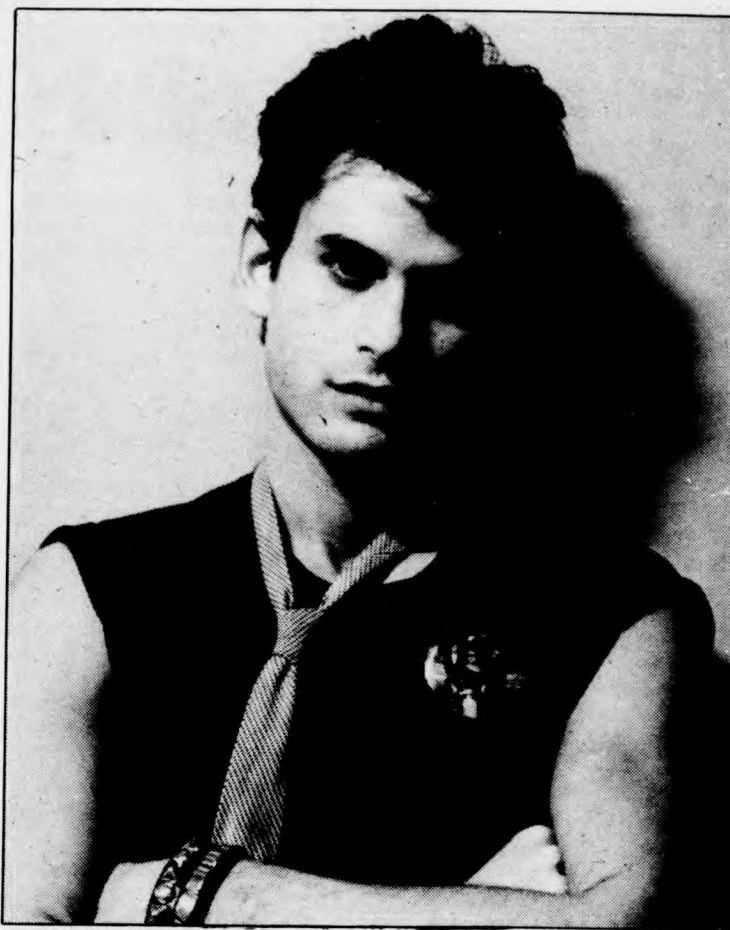
"Right now, I need the responsibility of being the top man in the production. It means I have to go out there every night and make it work because it's my name on the marquee."

"I've had two months to work this character. Slowly but surely I've fine tuned it, sculptured it, and refined it. I think the challenge is here, and I want to do it."

While Eisner is excited over *Enter Laughing*, he is also bubbling over with the news that *Flowers in the Sand*, a drama in which he plays a mentally retarded youth, has been bought by the CBC.

The film represents a change from the snarling punk, effeminate young man, and wise-cracking social worker roles that he's played in the past. It is a demanding role that requires him to undertake both vocal and physical challenges.

Next month Eisner travels to California to meet his new American agent and map out some strategy for the time ahead. He says he wants to remain in Canada, but



In *Phobia*: "I open root beers with my teeth."

if an audition, or possibly a role, materializes in the United States, he'd gladly go.

Hanging In has managed to blend enough socially current issues with the right amount of quips to win it at least another year on the air. Eisner enjoys the television series, and the chemistry between himself and co-star Laly

Cadeau, so he'll continue if asked.

All his time isn't filled with acting but he does attend workshops, whenever he can, to keep himself sharp.

So he goes about his work, and hopes that one of his projects will make it big and the writers will be phoning him and not vice versa. And spelling his name correctly.

Get your socks off

Ronald Ramage

Just before Reading Week, first and second year theatre students were given free rein to spread their vulnerable acting wings with over 90 performers in 14 hours of production, spread over three days.

The opportunity showed that York does indeed attract students of talent and commitment, and not all graduates will suffer dishpan hands and waiter's foot.

The batting average for student work is generally weak. Four out of five are too long, poorly acted and uninteresting—at best, interesting. But that one in five—Wooba!—will blow your socks off!

On Thursday night Guy Babineau won both socks. His playlet "Clutch", while problematic, was in the words of the play, *quelle amusant*. And later in the program, as a singer-songwriter, in a powerful solo about being gay, dedicated to police chief Jack Ackroyd, he triggered the most electric moment of the entire weekend.

Other high points on Thursday night were mime Rob Berry, and Jim Millan with his large animated

cast in "Bop Hop With The Wildcats."

An overly long program Friday night gave new truth to the old adage, "The severest critic is a sore ass."

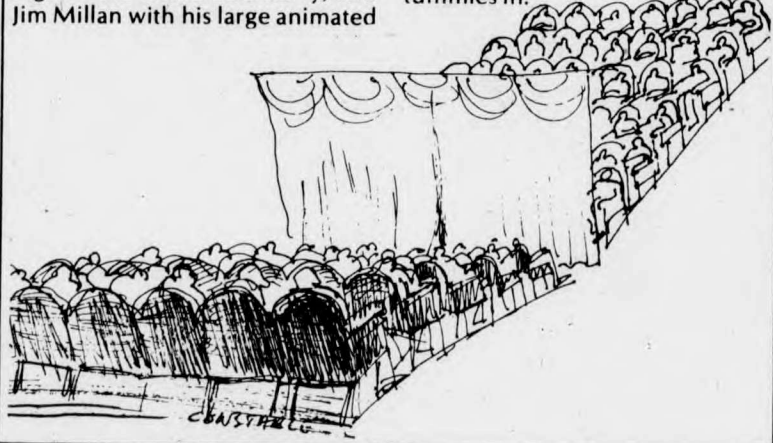
"No More Snowball", written by Donna Lypchuk, proved the most successful student-created play of the weekend. Later, a strong performance by George Robinson kept "Hold Me", by Jules Feiffer, from being totally lifeless.

Saturday night had two highlights: the comedy monologues of Steven Sherry and David Jorgenson in Sherry's "University Zone", and Keith Kemp's production of "Do You Really Love Me" by R.D. Laing.

There were moments of magic (in "An Evening At Fred's" and "Angel"), and mistakes that are forgivable only if never repeated.

Of special notice were the make-up and costumes of "The Marauders", and the set of "MacBeth".

Also, let's not forget—performers in tights should learn to pull them up and hold their tummies in.



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Webb bowls us over

Nadine Raciunas

Wilson's Bowl, by Phyllis Webb, Coach House Press, 1980, 89 pp. \$7.50.

Wilson's Bowl is reading for the 'Dostoevski man' or just the average moderately insane person. Phyllis Webb is one of our 'great Canadians' and this, her



latest collection of poetry, from Coach House Press, is very welcome indeed.

Although she shows great range and variety, all of Webb's poems seem to voice very strongly the poet's own struggle for freedom and its inherent loneliness. The first set of poems deal with anarchy and failure, which at times seem to be the same thing. Webb writes of the Russian revolutionary Kropotkin: "The Prince is in his dungeon/exploring his way." But she sympathizes with his situation, as in her own life she must decide between "Russia, Suicide or France."

Yet she calls this "Solitary Confinement" a "Crime":

*It is a delusion.
The cell is not quiet.
A tree falls in the forest
with no one to hear.
The forest is falling.
It hears itself.
...It is just a cell like any
other cell barred
hard very principled
and guarded.*

However, the most interesting

and compelling poems deal with a friend's suicide and the curious tale connected with the death. The friend "walked into the sea" months after the suicide of a man with whom she had had correspondence. Before her suicide, the woman left with Webb her letters from anthropologist Wilson Duff. As Webb explains their history, she mentions that "their correspondence had a peculiar intimacy, perhaps made possible by the fact that they never met."

As the title of "Found Poem" implies, Webb did not compose it. Rather it is derived mainly from an essay by Lorca in which *Duende* means 'sensing the presence of death':

*Duende
Dark song
'does not appear
if it sees no possibility
of death.*

Duende

Where is the Duende?

*An air smelling of a child's
saliva, of pounded grass
announcing the constant
baptism of newly created things.*

*...It burns the blood
like powdered glass.
Duende!*

With "The Days of the Unicorns", Webb recalls a beauty, a life weaved to tapestry:

*It seemed they were always near
ready to show their eyes and stare
us down, standing in their creamy
skins, pink tongues out
for our benevolence.*

*...I knew where they slept
and how the grass was bent
by their own wilderness
and I pitied them.*

With this pity and tender melancholy, the beauty still exists, and for Webb, it exists in its own sadness.

Lobster's choice

Off-Campus Celluloid: New Cinema is back on its feet in Toronto with a festival that began last Friday and continues on to Friday March 20.

The films come from all over the globe. They're generally inventive, socially orientated, and made by a first time filmmaker. Most of them won't receive distribution so the opportunity is indeed a rare one.

Tonight: *The Fragrance of Wild Flowers* (Yugoslavia).

Friday and March 14: *One and One* (Sweden).

Saturday and March 8, and 15: *The Lover's Exile* (5, 7, and 9 p.m.) (Canada).

Monday, and March 18: *Nine Months, and Women* (Hungary).

Wednesday, March 4, and 9: *Germany in Autumn* (Germany).

Thursday March 5: *Magicians Of The Silver Screen* (Czechoslovakia).

Saturday March 7: *Alambriata* (USA)

Wednesday March 11: *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* (USSR).

Thursday March 13: *Like A Turtle On Its Back* (France).

Monday March 16: *When Joseph Returns* (Hungary).

Tuesday March 17: *The Opium War* (China).

Friday March 20: *Pleasure At Her Majesty's* (Great Britain).

Tickets are \$4.50, or a five film pass for \$15. Each film is repeated twice each night, except for *Nine Months* and *Women* which are on the same bill. The first show starts at either 7 or 7:30 p.m., the second at 9:30 p.m. the Festival Cinema, 651 Yonge (below Bloor). 925-6400. Free yourself.

Reel Note: Stay tuned to this column for details about the Reel Extravaganza on March 19.

Cabaret returns this Thursday at 9 and 10:30 p.m. and Friday at 9, 10:30 and midnight with *Shakes*, directed by Janet Sears. This is Sears' first directing assignment, so it should be interesting to see the results. At Mac Hall, licensed, free, and doors open a half-hour before each performance. Rattle and roll.

Theatre: The Atkinson cafeteria has been the scene of countless hearty meals, but from tonight to Saturday it will nouse—a production of Alan Ackbourn's hearty comedy, *Absent Friends*. Directed by Alex Galatis, this free production features six York acting stars. 8 p.m.