

## ARTS



by Ron Howe

It was just after WWII that Carolyn Cassady met up with the beginnings of the Beat Generation and its characters. She married its literary hero, Neal Cassady, the manic Dean Moriarty from *On The Road*. The author Jack Kerouac, was a lover of hers for a time.

No one can claim to be as close to the two main proponents as Carolyn Cassady. And I, atten-

ding the reading, intentionally wore my seediest clothes.

Looking around the room at all the highbrow intellectuals and stuffed-shirted BMW drivers, I had to question whether they had ever read the books. Did it mean anything to them? I also thought about the \$10 ticket price and the general consumerism of things and reasoned that someone's money had to fly her over from England.

The first half of Cassady's lecture consisted of all the problems she had getting the book released, mainly securing permission from Kerouac's wife to reprint letters.

Then there was to be a screenplay from the book, choice of leading men (Nick Nolte...), possible shooting locations, lawyers, parties, etc.

It was a lot like Charles Bukowski when he recounted his tales in *Hollywood* all about the making of *Barfly*. They both arrived at the same conclusion, Hollywood is filled with the most vile, conniving, lying bunch of crooks imaginable in humanity.

She read right off the page, pausing and accentuating at all the right passages. You would have thought she'd been doing readings for years, all the madness of the Beat days leaving no noticeable scars.

The second half dealt with life with Jack and Neal, which seemed much to the crowd's liking. I've always had a strange feeling about this sort of thing and it continued into the question period. Wasn't anyone concerned with lifestyle/time period as Mrs. Cassady

With the death of the pair (Jack and Neal) within a year at the end of the sixties, no one can chronologize the methods and the madness of the Beats as well.

This was Carolyn Cassady's first public reading.

Her book *Off The Road* had been involved in revisions and copyright problems since 1973.



Jack Kerouac & Neal Cassady

She presently makes her home in London, England.

An unbelievably, spry and quick-witted sixty-seven, she appeared both motherly and scholarly on stage reading with involved inflections and many a mistake.

When I comment on her surprisingly flawless abilities it is not necessarily a reflection of her advanced age and seemingly legendary stature. This was combined with a mental madness certainly inflicted upon her during a twenty year marriage to Neal Cassady.

The reading was part of the International Festival of Authors what she'd done in the last twenty years, how her life had been affected?

The legendary status afforded Neal and Jack, particularly with their premature unusual deaths, has obviously influenced a lot of people.

Since she is one of the few remaining people alive who was actually there, isn't what she has to say about present day things

more important than asking "Why didn't Jack like Hippies?"

Mrs. Cassady also displays an interesting literary style, which makes me surprised that this is her first publication. That she's merely alive, or rather very alive after a saga like hers is pure testament to perseverance and survivalism with a touch of luck. I would imagine. She is deserving of her legendary status.

The only question I think worth noting is in reference to a statement Mrs. Cassady made in which she said Neal had resolved himself to death about five years before he actually ended his legacy.

"He had just sort of given up. He didn't have any of the spark or enthusiasm, and he saw how the booze was killing Jack the same way as it had his father, and that was killing him. He just got more and more into drugs, started rolling cars, getting more and more out of it. There wasn't much we thought we could do."

And thus ended the Beat Generation, as frantic and searching for meaning as its creators had originally sought.



Carolyn Cassady

## A tale of good versus evil

by Suzanne Kennedy

**Zastrozzi** written by George F. Walker Performed by Theatre York Directed by Robert Seale

**Zastrozzi** is a tale of revenge of the violent war between good and evil.

It hosts the lives of amazing people who act in unexpected ways as they pass through the social and moral laws of their mysterious and sensual world.

This description of the cast's combat demo, held a few weeks ago, had me hooked even before I knew what the play was about.

**Zastrozzi** was written by Canadian playwright Geor-

ge F. Walker, who has won four Dora awards for Canadian Drama and a Chalmers award for Outstanding New Canadian Play of 1981. His most recent play *Love and Anger*, was 1989's smash hit.

The main character is an evil, corrupt fellow by the name of Zastrozzi, played by both Shawn Doyle and Simon Fon. (The play has been double cast). He is the criminal mastermind of Europe.

Both Doyle and Fon agreed that the character is very egocentric. He likes to figure out how people's minds work, and then do things that he knows will upset them. Zastrozzi was "existential before it was around", says Doyle.

Bernardo, Zastrozzi's sidekick, is played by a very athletic Pedro Guevara-Mann.

Pedro described his character as being similar to a kid hooked on drugs. Bernardo, because of his low self-esteem, is hooked by Zastrozzi's abusive leadership qualities and, cannot escape.

Matilda, Zastrozzi's girlfriend, is played by the double cast of Tamara Bernier and Nicole Oliver.

Bernier described her character (as well as the character of Julia, played by Lori Heath), as being extreme allegorical figures, with Julia the Madonna and Matilda the Whore.

The part of Matilda is a very physical one, which

Bernier said took a lot of practise with hip movement and bawdy body movement incorporated into the character.

Julia on the other hand is constantly described in the play as having a marvellous "gentle sensuality".

Both characters are basically stereotypes which Walker has fun with, but by the end of the play it is discovered that there is more to them than originally meets the eye.

Zastrozzi Daniel Levinson, plays the "good guy." The character is an idealistic painter and Christian who gradually comes to see himself as God's chosen one.

All the actors talked about the importance of

making the characters believable. The most important thing was to make the audience feel sympathetic towards the characters and to ask themselves WHY the characters are the way they are. If this hadn't happened then the characters would have been unbearably ridiculous.

**Zastrozzi** is filled with gory combat scenes which are director Robert Seale's specialty. He has won awards in North America for his combat choreography.

The cast has a fantastic amount of energy and a great deal of talent. Although they admit they still have a lot of learning to do, they are well on their way to some great stage careers.