

Theatre students to perform the Bard's controversial *Merchant*

By KEVIN PASQUINO

Rather than being boring and non-controversial with their first term production, the graduating fourth year theatre students are tackling Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, a play that has recently been in the news due to its anti-Semitic context. The play will run at the Atkinson student theatre from November 10-15.

The choice of *The Merchant of Venice* was due to necessity more than a desire to create controversy. Of the classics the theatre department had in mind, only this play had both the number of female characters needed and the right general age group for the actors. However, once *The Merchant of Venice* was chosen, the need to confront the modern anti-Semitic interpretation of the play, arose.

Recently, the character of Shylock, a Jewish money-lender, who has caused heated debates over the play. Many critics see the play as a harsh attack of all Jewish people and feel that for this reason it should be banned.

Director Neil Freeman and assistant director Zvia Rechler do not see the play as anti-Semitic and hope that their production will dispel this incorrect view of Shakespeare's



MERCHANTILE RELATIONSHIPS: The boys from *The Merchant of Venice* (l to r: Angelo Celeste, Sandy MacMaster and Kevin Prentice) get together to talk about women and the villainous Shylock.

intent.

The fact that he is Jewish is secondary. "Shylock is the antithesis of growth," Freeman says. "He could be Quebecois or anything." But because he is Jewish, many critics refuse to see the relentless evil in the man's character.

Rather than being a play about anti-Semites, Freeman and Rechler see *The Merchant of Venice* as a play about appearances and mutual growth. The male characters in the play swear to do one thing but then do another, thus it is up to the female

character to re-educate the men. If anything, the play's focus is not on the treatment of Jews, but on women

who must teach men about love.

However, even with their vision of the play, Freeman and Rechler realize that the production will create some debate, but it is a debate they welcome.

To help produce questions about the play, the fourth year production is being presented in an alley style setting, with the stage set up between a divided audience.

Instead of putting the play back in Elizabethan dress, a slightly more modern setting has been chosen. "As long as the play's period is distanced enough it can act as both contemporary and myth," Freeman explains, and with this in mind the play uses German of 1932, the year before Hitler became chancellor as its

setting.

Freeman says that Shakespeare does not answer questions, he poses them; with this in mind the director hopes the play will serve as an exercise in education. Freeman and others, including Bernie M. Farber, the director for research for the Canadian Jewish Congress, will help to moderate the discussion after the play.

With the intended discussion after each performance, Freeman hopes that the traditional viewpoint of Shylock and the other characters will be challenged. By posing the question of how a society should deal with anti-Semitism, he hopes the fourth year production will take a new look at an old classic.

Movie makes Moore merry

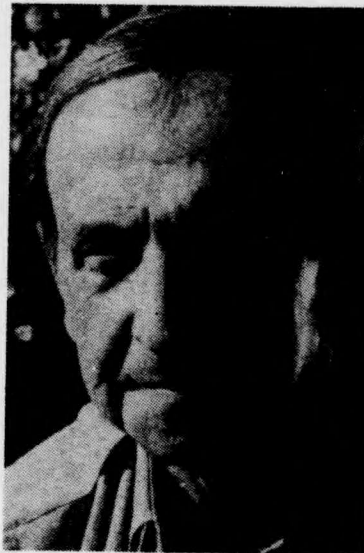
By SUZANNE LYONS

Whenever something is offered for free, such as admission to a play or a film, you become suspicious instantly, right? You think to yourself, there must be something seriously wrong with the production if there is no one waiting at the entrance of the theatre to take a ticket. Needless to say, I was skeptical when asked to review the first of a series of documentaries being screened at the St. Lawrence Centre for free. But, as I learned later, my bias towards free productions was unfounded.

The Lonely Passion of Brian Moore, a National Film Board production directed by Alan Handel, is the first of three weekly screenings which profile the life of a Canadian writer. November 5 and 11 will feature films about Mordecai Richler and Irving Layton respectively. The featured author will be present at the screening of each film.

The Lonely Passion of Brian Moore presents the writer as a man who is "at home everywhere and nowhere, but only truly at home in front of a typewriter." The film chronicles Moore's life by travelling to the various cities where he has lived and worked: Ireland, London, Montreal and California. All of these cities have served as settings for the 15 novels that the author has written over 30 years, including *Judith Hearne*, *The Luck of Ginger Coffey* and his latest, *The Black Robe*. "You can't set a novel in a place that you haven't lived, worked and suffered in," Moore explained.

The audience learns that Moore has indeed suffered. Misunderstood by his family and friends, he immigrated from Britain to Canada in 1948 to begin a new life as a writer.



Writer Brian Moore

As a reporter for the *Montreal Gazette*, a short story writer and novelist, Moore experimented with all forms of writing, including some futile attempts at poetry. However, he prefers novel writing above all the rest.

Moore's first serious novel, *Judith Hearne*, was financed with money that he made from short detective stories that were churned out as fast as he could type. Now, as an established writer honoured with two Governor-General Awards, Moore

is under considerably less pressure. But, he is quick to add that "writing doesn't get any easier," despite a more favourable working environment in Malibu, California.

The film effectively guides the audience through the past of an obscure writer whose works are difficult to classify in terms of literary importance. Moore's novels are curiously absent from the reading agendas of Canadian literature courses. Even though his citizenship remains Canadian, the ambivalent status of Moore's writing places him in a category all of his own. Due to his relatively obscure identity, it is possible the writer isn't taken as seriously as he should be.

The film acquaints the audience with a few samples of Moore's work by dramatizing scenes from various novels. Surprisingly, the style works, and the documentary emerges as an informative and entertaining exploration into the life and creative impulse behind the writer.

Moore attended the screening of the film and later told the audience, "It was like watching a stranger up there who couldn't speak in complete sentences." Generally he was pleased with the film although he felt that the theme of obscurity was perhaps overdone. "They portrayed me as a bit of a hermit," he complains, but in the same breath adds that he doesn't socialize while in the process of writing a novel. "You can't just take off to Acapulco in the middle of a novel," he says. "If you do, your characters will go with you, and may never come back!"

York Community Arts Events calendar

Compiled By JENNIFER PARSONS

GALLERY SHOWS

Until Nov. 14: "Kim Moodie: of Unknown Origin," Drawings 1985-86, Glendon Gallery.

Until Nov. 9: "Spcuailnpt and Tiunrge," Sculptures by graduate student Doug Buis. Founders Gallery, 206 FC.

Until Nov. 7: "Chroma Show," a juried exhibition of color photos by the visual arts students, IDA Gallery, 102 Fine Arts Bldg.

Until Nov. 18: "Nicole Elliot, Toronto Debut for a Quebec Painter," Zacks Gallery, 190 SC.

Until Nov. 14: "Victor Mateo: Acrylics on Canvas," Winters Gallery, 123 WC.

Until Nov. 14: "York Work," sculpture and intermedia artists from from the teaching faculty of Fine Arts. AGYU, Ross N145.

MUSIC

Nov. 12: "Juan Tomas: Flamenco Guitarist in Recital," McLaughlin Hall, 12 noon

Nov. 7: "Student Chambers Concert," performances given by various student ensembles, McLaughlin Hall, 12 noon.

THEATRE

Nov. 7: "Prime Time," lecture given by the directors and designers of *The Merchant of Venice*, Atkinson Theatre 12 noon-2 p.m.

Nov. 10-14: *The Merchant of Venice*, a fourth year production directed by Neil Freeman. 7 p.m., plus Nov. 12 and 14 at 2:00 p.m.

Nov. 18-22: *Crimes of the Heart*, directed by Shyum Selvardiri, showings at 8:00 p.m. with matinees to be announced.

If you are planning an Arts event, drop by Excalibur at 111 Central Square or call 736-3201 and ask for Jenny, Angela or even Kevin.

YORK UNIVERSITY THEATRE DEPARTMENT PRESENTS

Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*

November 11-14

Evening: 7 p.m. Matinee: Wed & Fri 2 p.m.

Tickets available at
Central Square & Burton Box Office

General: \$5.00

Students & Seniors: \$4.00

Discussion following each performance. Guest speaker: Bernie Farber, Canadian Jewish Congress on Tuesday evening, Wednesday and Friday matinee only.

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