

arts



Photo: NIGEL TURNER

A work of art from *Correspondences*, a show now on at the Art Gallery of York University which features five artists.

Psychological implications hidden in AGYU's *Correspondences*

By BECKY BAINBRIDGE

Correspondences, showing at the Art Gallery of York University until December 16, features five artists of varying strengths who, collectively, stimulate comparisons of technique and ideas. The paintings of Tim Zuck and Christopher Pratt, photography by George Legrady, two sculptures by John McEwen and kinetic "environmental sculpture" by Tony Brown all correspond to one another in their use of conceptual imagery.

All five artists have psychological implications hidden behind their off-handed coolness to the viewer. The works do not appear emotional, but we can sense a hidden form of expression, which it is up to the viewer to interpret.

The stillness of McEwen's two pieces set the stage as one enters the gallery. They give us major clues as to how the show should be considered, explaining why these artists have been exhibiting collectively. While both of McEwen's pieces have a playful quality found in their distortions of size and the placement of object, there seems to be a focus on universality of thought and action exemplary of the show as a whole.

Brown's kinetic piece is the most interesting work; Brown sets up many intriguing formal appositions as well as conceptual ones. The fast-spinning motion of a house is played against the fact that it goes nowhere and that

everything repeats itself. Brown juxtaposes images of the floor and interior views of the house vertically over the revolving rooms.

Christopher Pratt's paintings use transparent walls as well, like cold shells, or windows between rooms instead of separating inside and outside. All these constructions are very neat and perfect, but empty. Pratt gives a stronger sense of emptiness and stillness than do Zuck's paintings, in which the work seems to be more of a narrative that the viewer must discover. Pratt's work ends with the images he gives us. There is no emotional quality to allow for personal interpretation beyond what is already depicted.

It appears to be Tim Zuck's ambiguity that qualifies his work to be included in this show, his "floating signifiers" which Ferguson suggests in the *Correspondence* catalogue. Following this interpretation it appears that Zuck has simply repeated his painting formula to give the viewer the same ambiguous situation to interpret over and over.

George Legrady's photographs are strengthened by their collective placement which allows the work to be viewed as a single piece of art. Each photograph uses floating elements and texture, too obvious in their repetition to be compelling as individual works. Legrady's emphasis is process. He attempts to work out the same issues for himself that he wishes the viewer to experience.

Emma, queen of the anarchists

By PAUL PIVATO

The blood and fire of the anarchist movement comes alive on stage in *Red Emma*, a musical drama about the early life of revolutionary Emma Goldman, playing at Theatre Glendon.

Red Emma is an entertaining but ultimately directionless play. Due to a lack of focus in Carol Bolt's script, the play swings from a fascinating look at the politics of Goldman's anarchist circle to the melodrama of love triangles. At its best, the play dramatizes the anarchist struggle; at its worst, it degenerates into trite bedroom farce.

Jorma Lindquist steals the show as Johan Most, the passionate German anarchist with the disfigured looks of a man "who eats children." Most becomes the mentor of a naive young New Yorker named Emma Goldman, played by Peta Coffeng. The prophet of anarchy, Most falls in love with Goldman who burns with revolutionary zeal. Another of Most's disciples, Alexander Berkman (Peter Keleghan) also becomes infatuated with Goldman as she rises to the stature of a powerful activist whose idealism and brimstone oratory spellbinds audiences.

The dramatic counterpoint to the anarchist clique is Frick (Sam North), a captain of industry. Along with his Pinkerton henchman, Frick is the stereotypical capitalist pig who spouts capitalist cliché. He is more a badly drawn caricature than a flesh-and-blood adversary of the anarchists.

Red Emma is engrossing when it portrays the sincere, sometimes comical, spirit of Goldman and the other revolutionaries. ("An anarchist needs a sense of humor," advises Most.) Playwright Bolt succeeds in bringing out the inconsistencies of the anarchist movement (e.g., Berkman makes up a list of rules for anarchists; Johan Most is unable to "work in chaos.") Berkman's character is a dichotomy of body and spirit. A fanatic, Berkman tries to kill Frick, believing it is not murder but an act of liberation. Yet once in prison Berkman cannot live up to his revolutionary ethics by committing suicide; he loves eating and drinking too much to forfeit life.

The songs by Phil Schreiber act as a chorus. One sardonic song has Frick singing, "It is hard to be an instrument of God" in a Gregorian chant. Often, however, the words are sung too softly, delivered by the performers in statue-like states.

As the mad anarchist prophet, Johan Most is the richest character. After his love for Emma has soured, Most betrays his ideals and condemns Berkman, who carries out Most's maxim that "a bloodless revolution is no resolution at all." In refusing to give Berkman money, Most forces Goldman to become a prostitute so that she can buy a pistol.

In the end, *Red Emma* flounders about, at once portraying the bloody, confused idealism of the anarchist movement and the petty love affairs of its members.

(*Red Emma* runs at Theatre Glendon until Saturday. Curtain rises at 8:30 p.m.)

Duelling a dual-faced play

By ANNA GRANT

In the midst of this campus there is a small, inconspicuous Theatre Department—a cultural seedbed for the future generation of (if they are lucky) starving Canadian artists. Tonight at 8 p.m. at the Atkinson studio some of these artists, third-year undergraduate performance and production students, are presenting a "performance workshop" of *Dreaming and Duelling*, a Canadian play by John Lazarus and Joe Lazarus, directed by Ines Buchli, a graduate student in the department.

Unlike other performances on campus, these workshops are planned at least a year in advance by the Theatre Department for whoever will be invited to continue in an intensive actor-training program. Ostensibly, they provide experience and further training outside the framework of class-oriented instruction. Each year, the performance students and the production students (those who opt for training in behind-the-scenes operations) are required to present about three or four of these workshops, which could mean anything from improvisation to a mounted production, all under the guidance and supervision of graduate students and faculty members.

In the case of *Dreaming and Duelling* the workshop is a full-length production, complete with everything one would expect from a theatrical venture: costumes, lighting, sound and set. But the production here is more than just a culmination of feeble attempts at semi-professionalism—some downtown productions would pale in comparison.

However, a polite warning is in order. This particular production is occasionally uneven: its monotony is, by some few moments of extraordinarily genuine emotion. But, to be fair, perhaps the unevenness owes more to the problem of the play itself: it's chock-full of lengthy, precocious, at times self-eulogistic speeches, difficult for any actor to pull off with a sense of conviction.

What is admirable about the production is its emphasis on mood, created by the set, which is artlessness to perfection. The actors manage to jump, leap and lunge in absolutely no room

at all, creating a sense of limitless space. From the very beginning, the conflict between fantasy and reality is established and descends eerily onto the opening scene, where two shadowy figures, Joel and Eric, are engaged in a slow-motion fencing match. As the motion speeds up, we are awakened out of a dream amidst a flood of lights and some humorous rough house from the two young fencers.

From here on in, the rest of the play deals with the reluctance to accept maturation, to ascend from this little-boy fantasy into a boring and rather mundane existence of real life, people and events. As it turns out, Joel (Jordan Merkur) never quite succumbs to this process of repressive maturation in the same way that his bosom buddy Eric (Eric Trask), does.

Against the background of a typical high school environment, the growing rift between the two young men is nourished by the temptations of a hypersensitive, birth-marked Louise (Candy Chorley), the bully-boy antics of jock Skelly (Brian Martel), and the subtly domineering—but "I'm all for you"—athletics coach, Mrs. Thorpe (Colleen Subasic). As the conflict between Eric and Joel intensifies, we see the destruction of their intimacy, the flirtation with power and repression, and the pull of a nightmarish fantasy which draws them ever closer to the brink of a real-life crisis.

There are moments in all of this, between Eric and Joel, which are dynamic and poignant. But there are also moments, which, can only be described as curious. At times, one isn't quite sure if the actors have simply forgotten their lines, or if they hope that by dwelling on the use of a pregnant pause or a penetrating stare, they can intensify the emotional impact.

They seem at times to be merely pretend "listening," or pretend "reacting." And all actors, in general, appear to be isolated from the activity on the stage, which have the audience members squirming in their seats.

Except for moments of real crisis, it seems that all the actors are reluctant to forsake the security of their comfortable idiosyncracies: the awkward movements, the screeching voices, the losses of memory.

But even so, those few moments of heart-felt emotion are well worth watching.



A scene from Charles Tidler's *The Farewell Heart*, currently at the Tarragon Theatre.

Tarragon's *The Farewell Heart* sings like a ballad of the sea

By NANCY WEBSTER

Charles Tidler describes his newest play *The Farewell Heart*, running until December 30 at the Tarragon Theatre, as "a sea shanty" with the usual elements of a ballad—hero, villain, simple conflict. Its milieu is taken from Tidler's own experiences: he was a draft dodger in the late 1960s and eventually became an inhabitant of a small town on Vancouver Island.

The hero, an inspiring singer named Barlow, who is capable of closing the gap between generations in the Gulf Island village, is portrayed convincingly by Joseph Ziegler. Ziegler easily charms the other characters and the audience alike. The play is rather slow in pace until the entrance of the charismatic Barlow. When he finally exclaims "I'm not a God, I'm a man," we, as the audience, know exactly what Barlow is because we are objective

viewers—yet we can still empathize with the other characters' adulation for him. Apple, a liberal female who is indiscriminate in her offerings of sexual favors, treats Barlow and the poet Duncan, to a strange dance mostly consisting of a gyrating pelvis. She is the character who is most satirically extreme in her values and ideals.

Duncan is an obvious self-parody (Tidler himself has written five books of poetry). This character proudly reams off his verse, including one entitled "Double Irony" which is amusing as well as appropriate to its time.

The play as a whole is an appealing work—the dialogue is fresh, lively, interesting, and the plot is clearly drawn, flowing to its logical conclusion. When one considers the hippy's philosophy it is obvious that it had an unsure footing. The search for some kind of guru is natural and Barlow fits the bill.