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CANADA/AUSTRALIA LITERARY PRIZE AWARDED

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
MINISTÈRE DES AFFAIRES EXTÉRIEURES

It was announced jointly today by the Department of External Affairs, the Canada Council and the Australia Council that the winner of the first Canada/Australia Literary Prize is the Australian playwright, John Romeril. The prize, valued at \$2,500 (Cdn.) is intended to help make better known in Australia and Canada the work of writers of the other country, and has been established following the success of the Canada/Belgium Literary Prize, first awarded in 1971 for French-language authors. The Canada/Australia award honours English-language authors.

Each year an Australian or a Canadian writer will be chosen by a panel of judges from the other country. This year the Australia Council submitted works by six young authors to a Canadian jury. Next year the procedure will be reversed. The prize is not restricted to any particular category of writing (novelists, poets and playwrights are equally eligible) and is awarded for a writer's total output rather than for a single work. Canadian participation is financed by the Department of External Affairs as part of its programme of Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries. The award is administered for the Department by the Canada Council who also selects the jury. This year the jury consists of Earle Birney, Claude Bissell, Irving Layton and William New, under the chairmanship of Naim Kattan, Head of the Writing and Publishing Section of the Canada Council.

At 34 years of age, John Romeril has published three plays, "Chicago, Chicago", "I Don't Know Who To Feel Sorry For" and "The Floating World". Since 1970 he has been closely associated with the Australian Performing Group and many of his individual works and collective scripts have been presented by this company at "The Pram Factory Theatre" in Melbourne. The Australian Performing Group grew to a professional theatre from a workshop of young actors, writers and filmmakers who gravitated together at the "Le Mama" theatre in Melbourne in the late 60's.

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