

Total school effort for The Selfish Giant

A total school effort was thrown into M.Z. Bennett School's play *The Selfish Giant* last Tuesday.

Scenery was put together by students from Grades 2, 3, and 4, while senior grades joined in the cast and production of the children's tale.

Main characters included the Selfish Giant, played by Kim Rhynold, Friendly Giant, Benjie Atkinson; children played by Barbara Freuler, Andrew Kellough, Rebecca Bates, Christina Trotter, Samantha Gudgeon, and Chris White.

Flowers in the Giant's garden were Deanna Wilson and Pat Vince (Rose), Bonnie Lou Morgan and Christie Butler (Buttercups), Christine Hess (Violet), Leigh Anne Vidler and Deanne Blashuk (Pansy), Becky Casper and Tammy Richard (Bachelor Buttons), and Diana Frehs and Brenda Stuckey (Daisy).

Other members of the cast were Trevor Marsh, Andy Brouwer, David McConnell, Michael Hignett, Kenny McConnell, Peter Brooks, Travis Thibert, Elizabeth Ketic, Jason Crawford, Teresa McLelland, Tanya Spicer and Mikey Meyer.

Charlie Bush, Matthew Abbott, Carroll Thorpe, Bradley Hammond, Chris Muir, Scott Rolfe, Julie Robinson, Brian Gibbs, Amy Newman, Ryan Telford, Scott Boudreau, Stephen Burt, Bradley Swackhamer, Laura Henry, Angie Thibeault, Derek Murr, Jae Evans, Kelly Auger, Duane Piper, Ryan Ridley, John Lightle, Julian Richmond, Cheryl Cullingham, Steven Bottero, Robbie Rowsell, and Joany West.

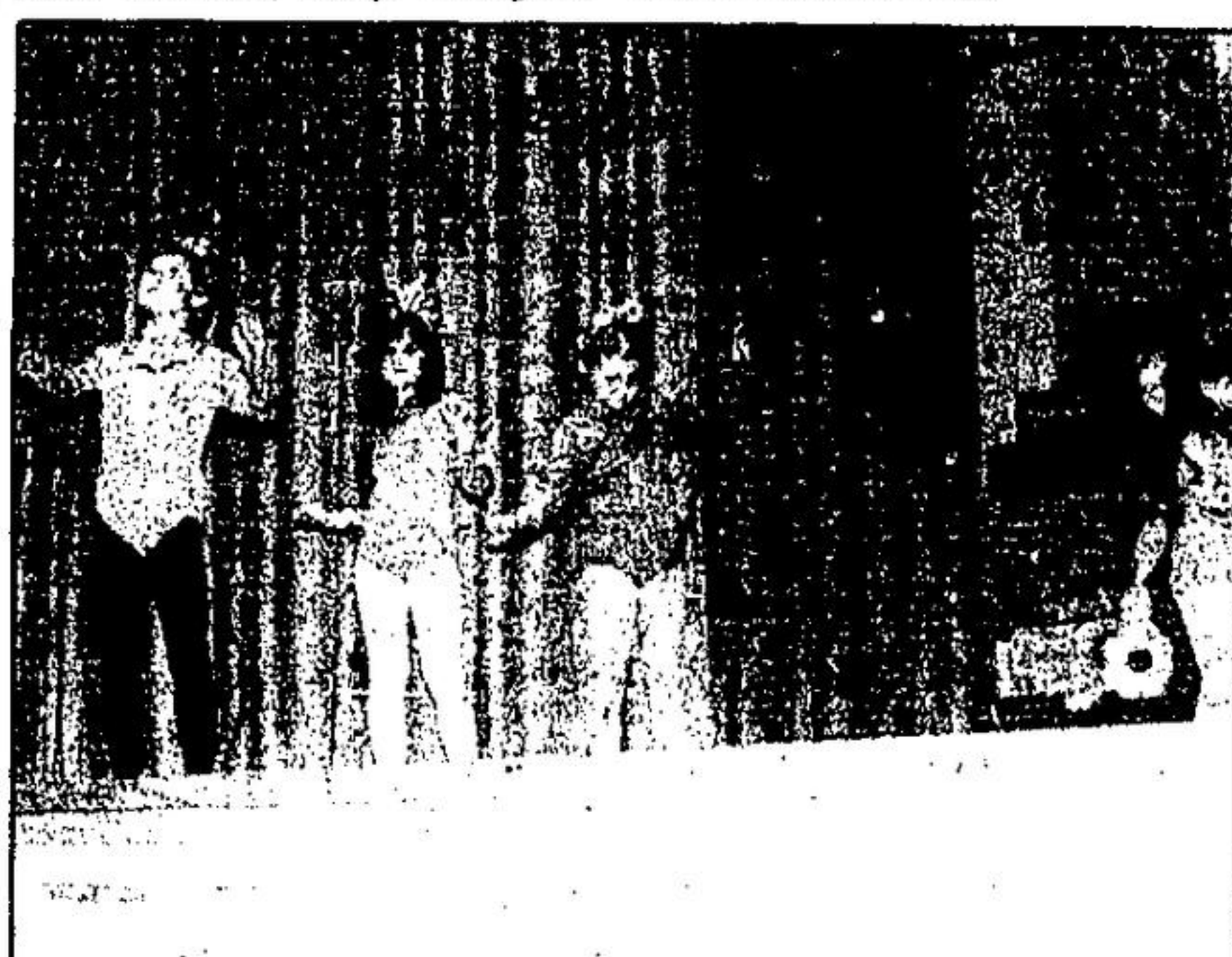
Shane Corkum, Jamie Atkinson, Michael Vielstra, Darrel Bridge, Tammy Hunter, Donny Haynes, Tracy Shortill, Tracey Cripps, Clifford Mangroo, Karen Pope, Stephen Pontbriand, Darla Dale, Bradley Hayter, Amy Butler, Jeremy Cooney, Sharon Donabee, and Sara Floet.

Acton Figure Skating Club and Trinity United Church assisted with the costumes.

The school choir members were: Heather Freuler, Carrie Giles, Jamie Irwin, Irene Law, Corinne Perrin, Laura Allan, Susanne DeForest, Eddy Bridge, Dawn Gordon, Paul Forbes, Kimberley Owen, Carrie Ferguson, Kari Trow, Shannon Fosbury, Monika Meyer, Gregory Burt, Heather Kidd, Kristen Lee, Crystal Bowes, Terri Hunter, Owen Allan, Adam Forrest, Jodi Hunter, Mark Lockwood, Angie Muggridge, Chrysty Newman, Jennifer Noseworthy, Eugene Stuckless, Heather Woods, Tosha Peterson, David Fountain, Emma Cass, Jason Johnston, Ethna Gourlay, Brett Newman, Jason Pun, Tammy-L. Barclay-Smith, Trisha Denny, Ryan Lofthouse, Jason Vidler, Nicl Haessler, Michelle Manuel, Cheryl Jones, Bobbi Thibeault, Kenny Jaffray, Billy Jerrard, Lori Swackhamer, Daryl Hinz, Jason Hopkins, Morgan Vaughan, Chris Schick, Danny Maira, Mathew Smith, David Blaser, Steven Stuckless, Kim Grace, Jamie Wieck, Marcus Higgins, Stephanie Calssie, Amy Leslie, Kathy Gregg.



Maid Jane (Hesty Ann Koehler) and butler George (Chris Rosenquist) from a scene in *Done to Death*.



A packed audience enjoyed *The Selfish Giant* at M.Z. Bennett School last Tuesday evening. Students in the senior grades of the school put on a fine performance, these young girls portrayed flowers.



Costumes were bright and original for the flowers at the M.Z. Bennett School operetta *The Selfish Giant* last Tuesday evening. Parents and friends crowded into the gymnasium for the performance.



Matthew Ginn, Angela Davis and Jen Foster played councillors during the Wednesday evening performance of *The Swinging Piper* at Robert Little School last week.

Done to Death was a masterful "fraud"

by Gord Murray

If you missed the three night run of the Acton High School drama club's production of *Done to Death*, don't bother rushing out to get a copy of the play in the event you heard about the intriguing plot.

Many plays stand as fine pieces of literature as well as theatre, they're a good read, but I doubt Fred Charming's two act mystery-comedy is one of them.

Done to Death was meant strictly for the stage I suspect, it's the actors who grab the audience and keep them until the later stages of the play when the plot twists and turns transform *Done to Death* into a big surprise.

The audience must be conned into believing what they are seeing is real when it's not, the AHS actors pulled off the fraud masterfully.

Many of the quips and punch lines wouldn't produce a twitter if you read them, but actors' timing, facial expressions, inflections, tone of delivery, etc., turn the most predictable or corny line into a good belly laugh.

The premise of the play is that a TV studio brings five famed mystery writers whose books haven't been selling of late together to collaborate on a 13 week series.

In scene one, the actors develop their characters, as well as the characters in their books. They have written in the past about the tough guy detective, the international spy, the Agatha Christie type mystery, horror mysteries, etc. They are intensely jealous of each other's past successes, themes and styles. This jealousy produces a lot of bickering and the authors under the guise of collaborating act out typical scenes, some quite hilarious, from their colleagues' novels.

This collaboration is taking place in front of a TV audience and then the setting shifts to a mysterious island where the authors are to continue their collaboration efforts and wind up finding themselves confronted by a "real murder".

As they try to solve the murder they perpetrate a fraud on the audience, telling us that they are discovering the many aspects of murder that they've fictionalized aren't true in real life. For example you don't move "stiffs" around like they were toothpicks, dead bodies are heavy.

As one by one each author is mysteriously knocked off, the writers act out how their tough guy detective or super spy characters of past books would solve the murder. Invariably the suspects turn out more menacing than they've ever imagined in their books and their heroes and hence their creators wind up in peril.

Finally all of the authors are dead or near death and the plot twists start.

The murderer is the first victim. No it's his brother. No actually nobody is dead. The whole second act has been more collaboration.

No, the whole play has been a TV drama. They weren't collaborating to do a TV show, the collaboration was the TV show and the actors were never on an island but in the studio of scene one all along.

The audience was fished in. See what I mean about plot twists and turns. The last few moments of *Done to Death* contained as many surprises as *Deathtrap* did in the entire drama.

But to build the facade for the fraud took about two hours, so strong acting and character development was essential to maintain audience interest.

Fine performances were turned in by the five main characters.

Joanna Scott and Roman Neuberger were great as the

alcoholic husband and wife writing team of Jessica and Whitney Olive. They were a pair of society types and their high faluting manners and contrived "very, very" English accents were excellent, though a few of Joanna's high pitched lines were lost at the back of the auditorium.

Cathi Beecham played the Agatha Christie type old gal author Mildred Z. Maxwell superbly while Daryl Johnson was brilliant as the effeminate creator of horror mysteries and tough guy detective Jack Club.

Brad Benedict, a young author who achieved success early and never really overcame youthful shyness, was portrayed well by Richard Gardin.

Even though their funny lines about drinking and their mannerisms were quite predictable and could have become tedious, Scott, Neuberger and Johnson were able to keep the audience laughing to the end. One of the funniest scenes involved Jessica and Whitney Olive acting out a typical tough guy detective scene with great help from lovely Stephanie Mildaur, a supporting cast character played by Vickie Curtis. The characterization of Jack Club was as funny as anything in Steve Martin's *Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid*.

The set was a strong asset to the production and make-up excellent, right down to the greying at Whitney's temples.

The supporting cast also contributed strongly. Scott Nowlan played TV producer, Jason Summers dying a convincing death, as well as coming back to life as the alleged perpetrator of all the dastardly deeds. John De Jong played the stage Grip; the Monster was portrayed by Paul Stables; Hesty Ann Koehler was the not so innocent maid, Jane; Chris Rosenquist was "the butler did it" Gregory; Norm Harris appeared as murdering drunkard husband George; Shannon Corson was a decoy on a plane to cover a murder; Monika George appeared as a sexy murder victim; Susan Lindsay was the object of a mad scientist's affections; Corrie Denney played a sexy secretary-spy. Lisa Sansom was the only real murder victim of the night as the box office girl who set the authors off trying to solve a real murder at the end, or was it a real murder or just more collaboration. The audience was never sure.

Directors Suzi Beber and Jan Penick did a masterful job of training the cast for months for a sterling performance.

Following is the list of other behind the scene players who helped make *Done to Death* such a successful show:

Producer—Tom Wright;
 Technical Directors—Chris Stansbury, Paul Stables;
 Artistic Director—Gerda Meubacher; Set Design—Geoff Sansom, Dave Dewdney, Norbert Axtmann; Sound Equipment—Chris Stansbury, Paul Stables; Costumes Advisor—Jane Zarowny; Lighting Advisor—Ruthven Earle; Stage Manager, Properties—Blair Lytle; Asst to the Stage Manager—Tiu Jago; Prompting—Kim Heaps, Carolyn Gibson; Publicity—Joan Boychuk; Treasurer—Bill Coats; Ticket Sales—Susan Burns; Program Design—Suzi Beber, Ticket Design and Printing—Boris Shean, Lisa Sansom, Maria Kril; Construction Crew—Tiu Jago, John Stansbury, Mark Willaie, Bill Ingles, Lynne Buscher, Kelly Courtney, Tim Wruck; Stage Crew—Gina Mancini, Bill Ingles, Tiu Jago, Lynne Buscher; Advertising Crew—Helen Staley, Members of Mr. Shean's Marketing Class; Former McGlan, Jill Hurst, Paul Stables, Anna Querques, Jackie Pries; Make-up Assistant—Rose Disano.

Two casts star in Swinging Piper

Hard work and hours of preparation paid off with Robert Little School's production of the operetta *The Swinging Piper* last Wednesday and Thursday nights.

Two separate casts sang and acted their way through this musical version of the popular children's story *The Pied Piper*, adapted for elementary school production by Val Cheatham. The production had everything from costumes, musicians and chorus to the Butcher, the Baker and the Candlestick Maker, played by Jason Bowers, Wanda Hardy, Troy Winters (Wednesday), Nicole Nibbs, Eileen Thomson, and Christine Duff (Thursday).

The plot is familiar to all. The rats, played by Geoff Burton, Andy Rauwerda, Sean Coleman, Ricky Wuerch, Gerry Hulbert, Kim Dawes, Sean Yamashita, Jason Wegman, Kish Killingback, Todd Demone, Bill Dewsbury and Debbie Patey, are driving the citizens of Hamelin round the bend. Town council hires the Piper, played by Tim Briggs Wednesday and by Charlotte Walker Thursday evening, to get rid of them. The piper plays, the rats disappear, and all is happy and serene until the jig is up and the piper must be paid. The Lord Mayor, Richard Weston and Marty McAfee, and his council try to worm out of the deal. Councillors were played by Matthew Ginn, Amanda Walton, Angela Davis, Christine Jennings, Jen Foster, and Greg Waller.

Town Librarian was Dana Petrillo (Wednesday) and Jimmy Sale (Thursday). Rebecca Moore and Lorena Cosimo each had a turn at playing Christina, the Lord Mayor's daughter.

Townpeople were played by Troy Connelly, Angie Priestman, Tracy Neil, Jamie Lowrie, Mary Beth Dowle, Cindy Uranick, Karl Anne Huisman, and Shawn Galloway on Wednesday, and by Maureen McGillivray, Bryan Dunn, Teri Yaroshak, Kari Andrews, Lisa Richards, Danny Jennings, Paula de Montmorency, and Kathy Nellis in the Thursday cast.

The children were Leanne Prueter, Siobhan Collatin, Jamie Worthman, Jenny Kruger, Tracy Toth, Paul Westaway, Nicole Urghart, Cindy Eccles, Jesse Owen, Susie Pucz, Jennifer Crosby, and Glenn Bossert.

Also in the cast, or helping out backstage, were Kim McCallum, Rose Lowrie, Cathy Waterhouse, Kerri Smiley, Tina Oakley, Michael Tribble, Cathy Coquard, Cathy Waterhouse, Kerri Smiley, Laurie Gillespie (portraying instruments); Mike Shannon, Bell Beaulieu, Paul Glass, Sean Warren, Michael Waskalik, Chrissy Paulsen, Dale Patenaude and Chris Kempton.

Parents helping out were Nancy Cook on piano, Alison Ginn, Dian Bowers and Diana Thomson with costumes, and Lynda Nellis and Denise Sargent doing make-up.



Town Fathers were very pleased when the *Swinging Piper* got rid of the rats in the city of Hamelin, during the play the *Swinging Piper* last week at Robert Little School.



Richard Weston, (left) as the Lord Mayor of Hamelin chats with the librarian, played by Dana Petrillo, during the Wednesday evening performance of the *Swinging Piper* at Robert Little School last week. Candlestick maker Troy Winters, Baker Wanda Hardy and Butcher Jason Bowers looks on.



Two famed authors meet. Effeminate Rodney Duckton (Daryl Johnson) is greeted by society "old chap" Whitney Olive (Roman Neuberger III) who is holding his ever present glass of booze. Jessica Olive (Joanna Scott) is in the background.



Island children were part of Limehouse School's multiculturalism theme which marked an Education Week celebration.