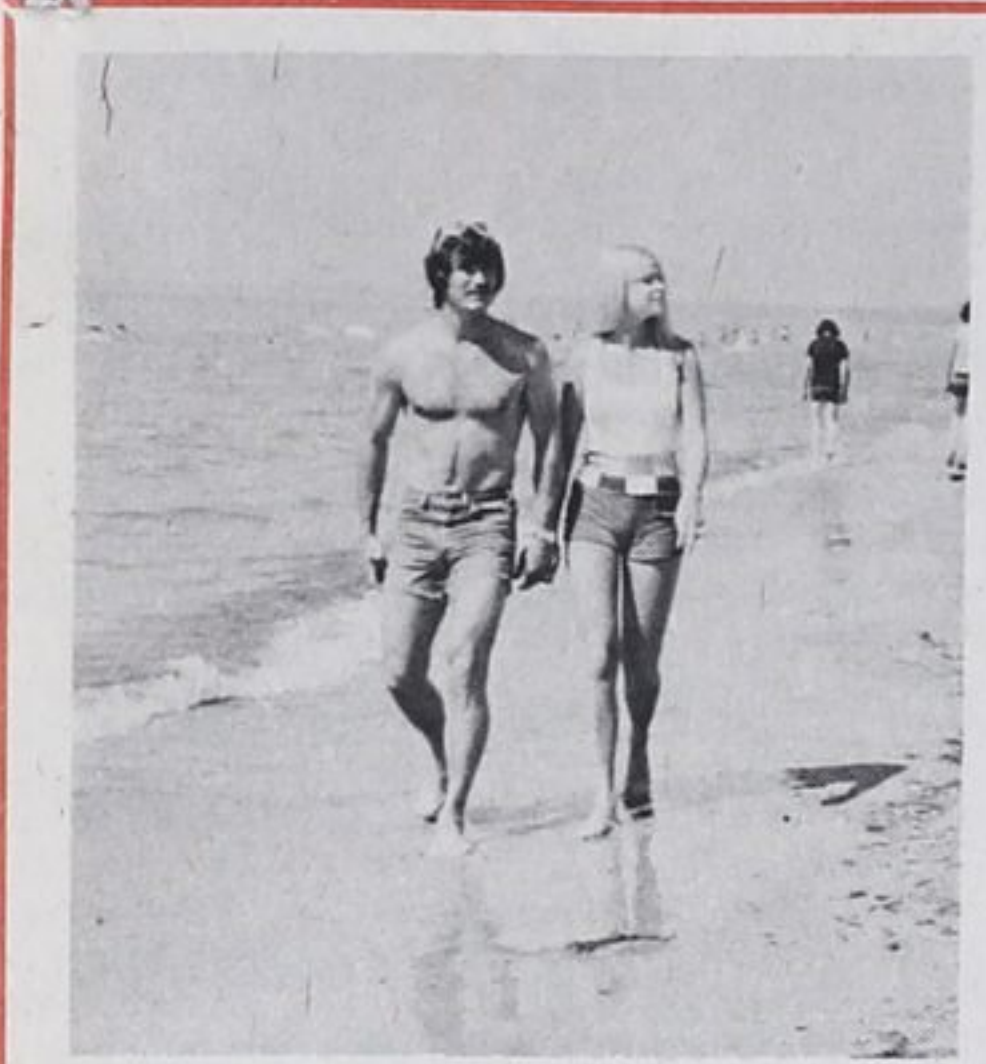


Under Sean Mulcahy's direction

Gryphon Theatre: a glittering success



The heat's on

Summer's here, and with it comes the hot weather and crowded beaches. The sand and waters of Georgian Bay are not taken for granted by area residents who swarm to water's edge for a little rest and relaxation. But Huronia has much more to offer than clean beaches, clean air, and clean fun.

"Old Home Week" continues

Penetanguishene continues its 100th birthday celebration this week, after a kick off parade on main streets last Saturday. On the town dock tomorrow night, the Midland Town Band will provide a bit of its music for the crowds between 8 p.m. and 9:30 p.m.

On Friday night, the Naval and Military Establishments will open its doors to the visiting public, while the Community Centre at the waterfront hosts a French Dance contest, and also a fiddling, step dance and square dance contest. An appreciation dinner at the community centre will help wind things down, while a Big Band Dance will take place afterwards.

Summer school of music - unique and ambitious

"The school's going terrifically and the kids are just fantastic," said Paul Hoffert, Director of the Blue Mountain Summer of Contemporary Music last Friday.

The ten-day program which ends Wednesday is exploring all aspects of contemporary music from jazz to rock and roll to folk.

The course of study includes individual instruction, group sessions and seminars and instruction on all aspects of contemporary music and artist management.

The students study arranging, composing, writing and recording studio techniques. In addition they are exposed to expert advice in the fields of equipment, road crews, touring, managers, agents, lawyers, publishers, record companies and promotion.

Hoffert says the school is the first of its kind in the world and is a very ambitious undertaking since there were no precedents to go by.

"It's incredibly unique and revolutionary," he said. "I'm concerned with quality and turning out a total musician. Many kids are coming here with classical training but there hasn't been anywhere for them to receive formal education in contemporary music."

He added that about 90 percent of the music we hear on the radio is played by musicians who have picked up their talents through years of experience but not formal training.

Hoffert brings impressive credentials to his job as Music Director of the school. He is founder and manager of Lighthouse, one of Canada's most successful groups who have been voted "Group of the Year" three years in a row. He has written and arranged musical scores for dozens of television and radio shows as well as for films and documentaries. Most recently he wrote the score for Sunday in the Country starring Ernest Borgnine.

He was musical director of a CBC variety series, has written chamber music, written scores for German and English films and records and performed as a soloist with the Toronto Symphony and the CBC. In addition, he conceived and directed "Ballet High", a collaboration between Lighthouse and the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, the first rock ballet ever performed in North America. He has also been a guest conductor with the Toronto, Edmonton and Vancouver Symphonies.

He has been commissioned to write a flute concerto which will be performed at Blue Mountain in August by jazz flautist, Moe Koffman. He says the concerto is pretty well in shape and will combine country and city influences.

Students at the school are staying at the chalets of Tyrolean Village. Next year Hoffert hopes to expand the program to integrate the classical and contemporary schools of music in an effort to turn out better-qualified, "total musicians".

PENETANGUISHENE MAY BE 100 YEARS OLD, BUT I'VE GOT RELATIVES THAT ARE OLDER THAN THAT!

by Shirley Whittington

It could be opening night anywhere on the big league theatre circuit - New York, Los Angeles, Toronto. A concert band is arrayed on the lawn outside the theatre, and fills the summer twilight with throbbing, bright melodies.

Shiny automobiles pull up the sweeping drive and pause while passengers alight. Young men, wearing plastic boaters, stand at the ready to open car doors and assist the ladies from the cars.

The men park the cars, and join their ladies in the lobby and everybody socializes in a nice blend of formality and gregariousness.

There aren't many casual pant suits or patio skirts. On opening night the ladies are dressed. They sweep by in crepe and jewels, expensive looking tans and freshly done hair-dos.

The men are in summer safari suits, or white jackets and black ties. The air quivers with the

scents of Arpège and Brut, and the whole scene rivals the lobby of the O'Keefe Centre, for people watching.

An elegantly gowned lady strolls through the crowd tinkling a silver bell, to signal curtain time. The crowd files into the theatre, handing tickets to pretty ushers in long gowns.

The red carpeted theatre is divinely air conditioned, the seats are comfortable and the acoustics are good. The

rising curtain reveals a set which inspires spontaneous applause.

This play has two intermissions, and during each one, there's an exodus to the lobby for a smoke, a drink, and comfortable chatter about who's here ("I just saw Herb Whittaker from the Globe"), the play ("I adore Sean. Did you hear him on the CBC last month?") and the weather ("Looks like another thunder storm. Remember last year

when the lights went out in 'The Unreasonable Act of Julian Waterman?')

And when the play's done, and the first night curtain has fallen there's a reception upstairs, with flower arrangements, and food, drinks and dancing. The cast removes make-up and joins the party.

It's a pretty haute monde evening, all right, and it happens in the town they used to say was full of retired farmers - Barrie.

They say that success is a matter of the right things happening at the right time. The glittering success of the summer theatre Gryphon summer theatre in Barrie is a result of unquestionably right things happening with choreographed precision.

First, there's the Gryphon's artistic director, Sean Mulcahy is an electric personality, confident, crisp and absolutely determined to get what he wants. What he wants is first rate summer theatre in Barrie, and he's getting it.

Mulcahy was born in Bantry and studied, performed and directed extensively in England and Ireland.

His professional credits in Canada are impressive, and include hundreds of roles in radio, television and film. With Andrew Allan, he was associate director of the Shaw Festival for the first three years. He was artistic director of Montreal's Instant Theatre, has worked with the Beaverbrook playhouse in Fredericton and later was artistic director of the Citadel Theatre in Edmonton. He helped give birth to the Sudbury Professional theatre company and he's been in Barrie for two summers.

Urjo Kareda, of the Toronto Star, characterizes Mulcahy as "an Irishman with extraordinary energy. Gryphon theatre is decidedly plugged into that energy."

After all, in summer theatre, the play's the thing. Last year's offerings included Neil Simon's *Last of the Red Hot Lovers* and the Canadian premier of *Da*, by Hugh Leonard.

This year begins the fifth Gryphon season, and began with Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Ernest*. *The Sunshine Boys*, (Neil Simon again, begins July 7, and is to be followed by *Playbill* - three one act plays - *The Boor*, by Chekov, *The Tiger* by Murray Schisgal and *It Should Happen to a Dog*, by Wolf Mankovitz. Anthony Shaffer's *Sleuth* begins August 4, and the season ends with a modern comedy, *Don't Start Without Me* by Joyce Rayburn.

Gryphon is not a rep company, and the actors are toprung pros. Paul Kligman and Guy Sandivo will appear in *The Sunshine Boys*. Angela Fusco who appeared in last year's *Last of the Red Hot Lovers* is returning this year for *Playbill*. Ivor Barry is travelling north from Los Angeles to play the lead role in *Sleuth*.

Set designer Jack Timlock produces magic on stage. He's resident designer and Production Manager at Sudbury Theatre Centre and works with St. Catherine's Press Theatre, as well as at the St. Lawrence Centre in Toronto. His sets are ingenious, accurate and supremely functional, and regularly receive applause when the curtain is raised.

The theatre itself on the campus of Georgian College, is a knockout, with technical facilities unparalleled in the area. The Georgian Foundation for the Performing Arts rents the theatre for use by Gryphon. The spacious and well appointed auxiliary areas add immeasurably to the pleasure of theatrical evenings.

The frills - the racials, refreshments, and parties are arranged by the 70 member Theatre Guild - a hard working group of Barrie residents whose constant support is fundamental to the success of Gryphon. They sponsor an annual Antique Show, an Artist's Tour and arrange for ushering, fund raising and other special events.

Put all this together, and add the support of corporate and government grants, and you have the recipe for exceptional summer theatre, which may soon be extended to a year round season.

The audiences add the final touch. Enthusiastic and loyal they are best epitomized by those who arrive on opening night. They are driven to the entrance, and the boatered boys rush to assist them from their cars.

But they, like all Gryphon patrons, are so anxious for the action on the stage, that they forget to wait. They open their own doors.

And that is the way Sean Mulcahy and his Gryphon Theatre do things.



Actor-director

Sean Mulcahy, artistic director of the Gryphon Theatre, Barrie, plays Algernon Moncrieff in Oscar Wilde's social comedy, *The Importance of Being Er-*

nest. His imposing Aunt Augusta is played by Morna Wales.

A Wilde night in Barrie

The Importance of Being Ernest is a stylized verbal operetta - an ornate and glittering frame for some of Oscar Wilde's most glittering epigrams. ("In married life," says Algernon, "three is company, and two is none".)

Last week, Barrie's Gryphon theatre played the mannered social satire with elegance and wit. One would not have been surprised to hear the plump ghost of Queen Victoria pronounce, at the play's end, "We are, indeed, amused."

Sean Mulcahy wore two hats in this production. As director he paced the play with precise propriety. In a play where dialogue is everything, lines must be spoken with absolute clarity and balance. Mulcahy's players performed their word ballet admirably.

As Algernon Moncrieff, the Victorian playboy with a penchant for Bunburying, Mulcahy was elegantly flippant and reacted well with his friend (and later, we discovered, his brother) John Worthing, played by John Gardiner.

Gardiner will be remembered by Gryphon theatre patrons

as "Charlie now" in last summer's production of *Da*, by Hugh Leonard.)

The imposing Lady Bracknell was played with upholstered magnificence by Norma Wales. Had a member of the audience misbehaved in any way, it is certain that Lady Bracknell would have silenced them with a glare of regal indignation.

Even the pauses between her haughty speeches were eloquent. Gwendolen, her daughter, was played by Jennifer Watts who seemed at times too robust and self assured for the role of a totally submissive daughter.

Wendy Hicks was Miss Prism, the governess and drew a delightful portrait of the genteel inculcator of correct deportment. When romance descended, in the clerical person of Rev. Canon Shasuble (Gerald Crack), she became quite girlish, and how she dissolved under Lady Bracknell's indignation in the final scene!

Cecily, Algernon's ward, was played delightfully by Mary Haney, a young actress of great grace and promise.

She was the embodiment of sly girlish innocence and anyone could forgive Algy for falling madly in love with her.

If I had to choose Merriman the butler, played by Geoff Reid, and Lane the manservant, played by Robert Tanos, Merriman would get the nod. His impeccable aloofness seemed absolutely incorruptible. Tanos was perhaps not quite convincing in his pompous severity.

It is hard to imagine two girls basing their love for their beaux on the gentlemen's given names, and the old mistake-in-infancy trick has been used by everyone from Shakespeare to Gilbert and Sullivan. Yet so devastatingly clever is Wilde's dialogue and so deft his satire of the hear-no-evil, see-no-evil Victorians that *The Importance of Being Ernest* remains a perpetual delight.

Gryphon wisely played it straight, with absolute fidelity to the script. The result was a glittering comedy of society as it once was, and will never be again.

column



by Shirley Whittington

Being normal - a very heavy burden at times

Lacking allergies, ulcers or interesting rashes, I sometimes find it difficult to know what to talk about at dinner parties.

I am not bothered by feelings of inferiority, superiority, insecurity, latent hostility or sibling rivalry. I get along well with my mother, my mother-in-law, my kids, my boss and my husband.

I pass all those tests in magazines and find myself smack dab in the median as far as popularity, married happiness, sexiness, emotional fulfillment and elevated consciousness go. (I always read magazines from the back to the front - this isn't a compulsive thing, mind you - so I usually get to the answers before the questions. I'll be okay until Woman's Day runs a test for cheaters.)

I don't get hay fever, insomnia or spastic colon. I'm not even left-handed or colour blind. In short, I am as normal as a geranium.

I just have this one little problem. I go nuts in a room where the windows won't open.

When I was a little kid, I was taken to a

strange house and put to bed in the spare room while my parents played bridge downstairs somewhere. The family dog wandered into the bedroom and went foraging in the closet. Even then, I was curious and unafraid. I followed. The door swung shut and locked behind doggy and me.

It took a long time for the bridge players to track down the source of the hysterical yelping and yelling. Finally we were sprung, and put back in our separate beds.

But the experience left its mark. Ever since, I get hot and uneasy if I am in a room where windows do not open.

Our first house was built by a man with two over riding phobias. He was afraid of draughts, and burglars. To preserve his health, he had sealed all the windows with ossified bubble gum. And to foil the burglars, he had nailed the windows shut.

The Squire never got to carry me over the threshold. I was too busy prying open all the windows, so I could breathe.

I once worked in a school where temperature and humidity were controlled

automatically. Pure and properly moistened air blew in through large vents in the walls. An open window anywhere in the building upset this delicate balance, and the effect on the rest of the building was rather like what happens when somebody turns the garden hose on while Daddy is taking a shower.

I didn't stay at that school very long. Last week I spent a day in the city in a modern office building with giant sealed windows. Outside, the real wind blew merrily. Inside, we were captives, dependent on an electrically operated life-support system. All day I gaped at the windows, like a goldfish in an aquarium. I could hardly wait to get home to my windowless house.

When I got home, all the windows and doors were firmly shut. The Squire pointed out that it was hotter outside than in. Normal people, he explained, shut their doors and windows on sizzling days, and luxuriate in the cool within.

Heated words followed, although I must say that I remained mature and rational in

my remarks. I pointed out that the Squire's refusal to recognize my need for fresh air was a demonstration of his male chauvinism: that he was suffocating me because he didn't love me; that he knew that I get violent headaches if I am deprived of fresh air; that his behaviour was a manifestation of his own resentment and jealousy because I had flown to the city for a day.

Eventually things cooled off outside, and we got those windows open, but I had trouble getting to sleep that night. Several unanswered questions kept me tossing and turning for almost ten minutes.

How long will it take that insensitive brute to realize that I am right and he is as crazy as a bed bug?

How could someone as perfect as I, someone who has passed all the pop psych tests in the homemakers' magazines, find happiness with such an unbalanced psychotic?

I tell you - being normal and well adjusted is a very heavy burden at times.