

Entertainment

Microcosm comes to life with Curtain Club's play

By Tom Davey

Thornton Wilder's *Our Town* is an unusual play which takes a slice of life from a small town and transforms it into a meaningful theatrical experience—but only for those willing to submit to the author's unorthodox approach.

Currently staged by the Curtain Club, it won the first of his two Pulitzer prizes when first produced in 1939. There are neither heroes, villains nor eloquent dialogue. It is not an epic drama like *Richard The Third*, or *Tiger At The Gates*.

Instead, a sleepy little New Hampshire town called "Grover's Corners" set at the turn of the century, unfolds before your eyes.

The production is not without initial tedium for audiences weaned on fast moving TV shows and I had grave doubts that this play could survive the passage of time.

But the charming, confident narration of Barbara Scott, helped us over the difficult early period until we relaxed

and adjusted to the slow, rural pace and values of a small hamlet which truly becomes *Our Town*.

Stunning The staging is both tremendously original and stunningly effective. Consider the funeral scene where a dozen people sit still on a bare set, yet wholly convey the sadness and pathos of a graveyard.

There are no headstones, crypts, or caskets, yet unmistakably you are in the sombre presence of the death.

By comparison, there is an exquisitely crafted piece of theatre dealing with the mixed up emotions of teenagers. We become emotionally involved as Terry Harford squirms his way, quite unwittingly, into the finality of a marriage proposal, over a soda, to his girlfriend, beautifully played by Martha Buell.

The props totalled two chairs and a single piece of flat board, yet somehow the scene was charged with authenticity and feeling.

During one scene, a character mentions that they are going to bury

some newspapers in the foundations of a new building, in order that posterity may know something about the lives and feelings of the people. This, I think, was Wilder's aim. To capture on stage, a little slice of history, preserved intact for ever, as other artists do on canvas.

And, by the combined magic of the playwright's pen and the stagecraft of the cast, a microcosm of New Hampshire history has been brought to life to deeply involve those willing to loan their psyches as Wilder's canvas.

Flawless work Difficult to single out individual acting performances as all the cast turned in flawless work. But the producer, Michael Matyas, and director Cicely Thomson, must be commended for their courage in producing this unusual and difficult play.

Not everyone will like it—even those who will admire the acting—but others will find it a worthy theatrical experience. Number me and mine among the latter.

Messiah first production York Philharmonic Choir

Tickets are now available for Handel's "Messiah", the well-known oratorio, which will be performed here Dec. 7.



EDWARD LUKA

There are a number of choral and solo pieces in this that are familiar and popular with a great many people, and Christmas is the time when Handel's glorious music is so eagerly and enthusiastically welcomed.

Audiences will be assured of a great musical performance.

"Messiah" will be performed by the 100-piece York Philharmonic Choir, accompanied by the York Philharmonic Orchestra. This will be the orchestra's first concert appearance since its formation early this fall.

The music director of both the choir and orchestra is Edward F. Luka. Mr. Luka has established a reputation for perfection and is capable of bringing forth the best from chorists and instrumentalists alike.

Well known

The soloists for "Messiah" are all very talented and well-known musicians. The soprano solo will be sung by the choir's own Brenda Luka.

She has delighted audiences in the past in "Messiah", "Creation" and "Elijah" with the choir.

She is studying at the Royal Conservatory and is soloist at the Timothy Eaton Memorial Church.

Janice Taylor, contralto, is well known for her work in recital and oratorios throughout Ontario. This year she performed in Edmonton; at the Shaw Festival, the National Arts Centre and in the Place des Arts, Montreal.

She also sang with the York Philharmonic Choir in May when "Elijah" was performed at Seneca College, and in Richmond Hill.

The tenor part will be sung by Erwin Powrie who has for the past several years served as

soloist at a number of musically-prominent Toronto churches.

Last year he sang in a presentation of Haydn's "Creation" at Chataqua, New York, and in May of this year he sang the tenor role in "Elijah" with the York Philharmonic Choir.

Alvin Reimer, bass, comes from London, Ontario, to sing "Messiah". He studied in Detmold, Germany, and has received several scholarships to further his vocal training.

He has sung major operatic roles, was performed at the Stratford Festival, and has sung "Elijah" by Mendelssohn, "Creation" by Haydn, as well as the bass role in "Messiah" previously.

Messiah x 3

Three performances of the "Messiah" are planned. Tickets for all concerts are \$3.

Senior citizens and student ticket prices are \$2. The first performance is at Our Lady Queen of the World Church on Bayview Avenue, Richmond Hill, on Sunday, Dec. 7, at 8 p.m.

"Messiah" will be performed in Newmarket at the new Grace Church on Carlson Drive, on Friday, Dec. 12, at 8:30 p.m.

The final performance will take place in St. Gabriel's Church, Sheppard Avenue East, in Willowdale on Sunday, Dec. 14 at 8 p.m.

Tickets are available from Violet Wulckow, Richmond Hill, 884-4532; Gillian Burke, 895-4597; Jean Russell, Willowdale, 493-8516.



(Photo by Hogg)

Factory Folk Night rolls on

It was only the second such performance of the season, but Aurora's Factory Theatre Folk Night packed 'em in again Friday night at the theatre-coffee-house. Taking part were (left to right): Mike Thompson, Bruce Mercer, Tommy Jensen and John Lott, all of Aurora. This was the second appearance for both Thompson and Lott. The evening concluded with a sing-a-long, and during in-

termission patrons were able to view paintings by area residents in the foyer. Owing to a change in dates for the theatre's production of Dicken's Christmas Carol, the folk artists have had to move their Dec. 12 date up to November, so they'll be back in full force next Friday, Nov. 28. Factory Theatre is on Henderson Drive, just off Yonge Street at the south end of Aurora.

Octagon proves bit of paragon

(Editor's note — From time to time a writer for The Liberal visits a restaurant in the southern York Region area. The restaurant management is aware a reporter will be among his customers about that time, but the reporter comes and goes anonymously, then writes a report for the entertainment page.)

dining out with norm

steak, broiled shrimps and baked Alaska king crab claws. Attractively displayed on the dinner plate with its variety of colours, there was an abundance of meat to feast on. Tender juicy steak followed by crab dipped in hot butter sauce. A marvelous meal at \$11.95.

Always looking for the speciality of the house, I chose the Octagon cut of roast prime ribs of beef at \$8.95. As advertised, it was thick and juicy, filling my whole dinner plate with its size. Very tender but a lot rarer than what I ordered with my plate looking rather bloody by the time I finished.

I was surprised that there were no side dishes of "color" vegetables. Both dinners included onion soup, garlic bread, green salad and baked potato. The good news was the richly-flavoured onion soup served in pewter pots topped with thick cheese. Delicious! The bad news was a salad with pieces of lettuce too large to eat politely, necessitating cutting them into smaller pieces.

We would have liked a glass or carafe of dinner wine but all that the menu offers is half or full bottles. The wine list shows a good selection of domestic and imported wines but there is no list of cocktails available with prices stated.

Service is excellent with complete attentiveness to minute detail. Small things like removing the build-up of crab shells from the table before we were finished and the serving of a finger bowl for the lady, were noticed and appreciated.

Exquisite Out total bill for two including a 6 per cent tip was \$35.95. If you have wine with your meal, the

price tag could easily be in the \$45 to \$55 range.

The Octagon is an exquisite place to dine and centrally located for most of our readers.

Parking is adequate, but the corner of Elgin and Yonge Streets is torn up somewhat for construction. All major credit cards are accepted. Reservations a must every night.

The Octagon; a story with more than one side to it!

Hill man writes

Yule special

A former Bayview Secondary School student has written a special show for the Salvation Army, which will be performed on Hamilton's Channel 11 on Christmas Day.

He is Ian Adnams, 21, who graduated from Bayview in 1972 and later Ryerson, and now works in the special effects department of the Salvation Army as a radio and TV consultant.

Title of Adnams' show is "Noel," a musical presentation, for which he also wrote one of the songs.

He trained the children's choir, which is featured, too, and which, incidentally includes four Richmond Hill residents.

They are: Susan Rhiel, Jean MacDonald, Mary Jo King and Jeannette Adnams.

Appearing as hostess of the show will be the well-known Canadian singer, Catherine McKinnon. Salvation Army Commissioner Arnold Brown will bring Christmas messages from the organization from across Canada and Bermuda.

Time of the show is 1:30 p.m.

Calendar

Curtain Club, Newkirk Rd. — Thornton Wilder's great stage classic, "Our Town," with a large and talented cast; Nov. 26 to 29; Dec. 3 to 6, 8:30 p.m. Call 884-2638, between 10 a.m. and 10 p.m. for tickets.

Earl Haig Theatre, Willowdale — York-Mintdrels present "Most Happy Fella," Nov. 26 to 29 at 8:15 p.m. Call 366-9051 for tickets.

Seneca Theatre Centre, 1750 Finch Ave. E. — George Shearing Quintet, Nov. 27 at 8:30 p.m. Scotland on Parade, Nov. 29 at 8:30 p.m. Call 491-8877 for tickets.

Markham Centennial Centre — "The New Ice Generation," Canada's only professional ice show, Nov. 28 and 29, 8:30 p.m.

Anthony's Dinner Theatre, Toronto — The Clowns, an original musical, wittily and often

brilliantly performed, with Dean Regan, Brian McKay and Jeri Craden; nightly. Call 924-0977 or 924-1886 for tickets.

Poor Alex Theatre, Toronto — Pepi Puppet Theatre presents The Frog Prince, every Sat. and Sun. Call 422-2605 or 920-8370 for tickets.

Hard House Theatre, University of Toronto — Caligula by Albert Camus, to Nov. 29 Call 928-8668 for tickets.

York Symphony Orchestra, St. Andrew's College — Nov. 29 at 8 p.m. with featured soloist, Zenia Kushpeta, at the piano. Call 727-8003 after 1 p.m., and 884-3336 for tickets.

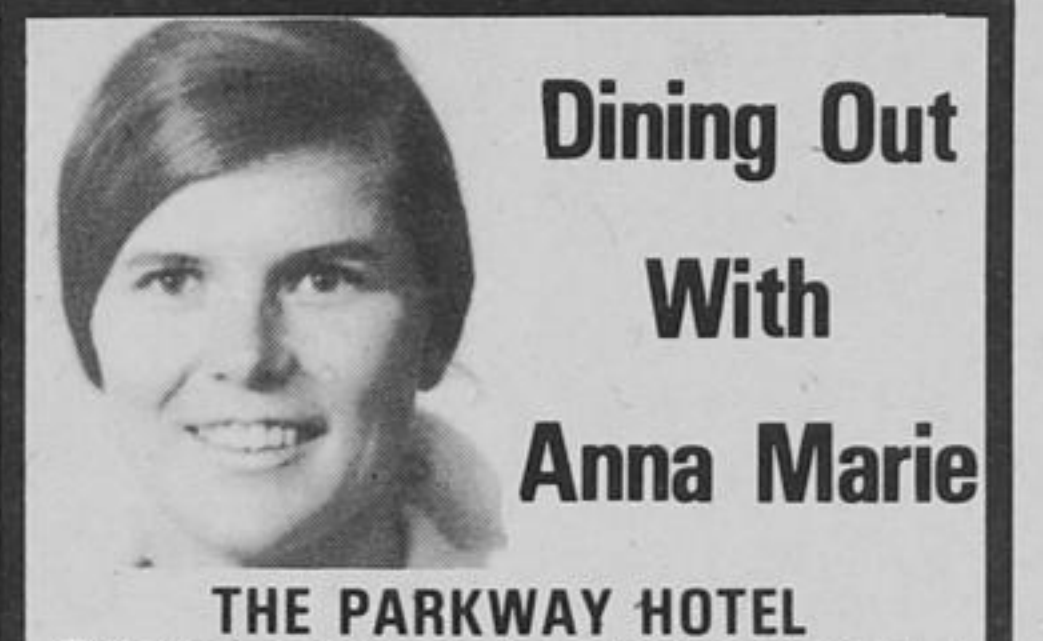
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