

'All Seasons' play magnificently done

By Jim Irving
AURORA — "Oh, sweet Jesus, these plain, simple men," laments Sir Thomas More near the end of Theatre Aurora's magnificent production of "A Man for All Seasons," which is playing at Factory Theatre, Dec. 9, 10, 11.

And with that remark about the common man, the beleaguered and beset upon More, who is portrayed with equal magnificence by Les Shiner, pretty well sums up the reason for his anguish, to say nothing of the anguish that befalls most of the people in this world.

For, it is through such people as The Common Man, who bends with each passing wind from on high, in order to keep his own kind of craft afloat, that More is prevented from realizing his own intent in life, which is to live the way he feels that he was meant to: following the twin callings of his own heart and of God's will.

Simple enough for More to understand and try to do, but an insurmountable block for one such as Henry VIII, whose scant mores know no other will than that of his own, a will which he also inflicts on the lackeys around him.

They, in turn, have their god in The Common Man and, through him, are able to rationalize the king's and their own weak patterns.

Thus it is that, More, whose moral approval, plus signature to the Act of Succession, are so necessary if Henry is to have a legitimate heir, finds himself facing a tribunal, whose verdict can be guessed even as the foreman is being sworn in.

The charge is high treason, but as Thomas Cromwell says to More earlier when trying to change his thinking, there are really no charges, just "some ambiguities of behaviour."

It is these ambiguities that must be disposed of, however, so that Henry can once more be master of his fate.

The story of Henry VIII, his stormy and various wives, is known to most people in some form or another; the life of Sir Thomas More is less known.

However, Robert Bolt's fine play — along with Craig Kamecke's fine direction — takes care of that, revealing the man through brilliant dialogue and offering great dimensions to the actor who plays him.

And those dimensions are many. The wit, the humor, the gentleness, the strength, the wisdom, the courage and the pattern that he set for all those, who would "to thine own self(s) be true."

Right man
Happily for Sir Thomas More, Robert Bolt and the playgoers of the Factory Theatre, the right actor was found who could convey this man for all seasons.

It is completely impossible to imagine anyone better than Les Shiner in the role; impossible to imagine anyone who could possibly bring this saint-

like, yet very real character, to life, without somehow tarnishing him along the way; without being too maudlin, or too facetious, or too martyr-like, or too cavalier.

Because all those temptations — or maybe that should be pitfalls — are there.

Shiner never once succumbs to any of them; never once loses control of the man he is portraying, never once is there any fear that the



Les Shiner ... on the block

reasoning will suddenly turn to raving, the passion to pomp.

A truly, great performance.

But, then there is a tinge of greatness about the whole show. What a pleasure to hear dialogue that requires thought to utter, as well as to write; what a pleasure to see performers who are as at home in their brilliant, colorful costumes, as they are in their roles; what a pleasure to see a set that can be transformed as fast on the stage as it can in one's mind, and still convey it all.

And, always of course, the fine performances, another one of which is that turned in by Norman Furness, as Thomas Cromwell. More's prosecutor.

Possessed with a wonderful voice to begin with, Furness put everything he could into this crusty, devious man — "Conscience? Oh, yes, the word is not familiar to you," was More's rebuke to him at one stage.

There was never any misunderstanding of what his goal was, nor that he would succeed in reaching it.

Gave it lift
In the first act, when the play sagged ever so slightly, Frank Buck gave it a lift with his blustery portrayal of the boisterous king.

Rose Dyson gave one of her best performances as More's wife, even if she did seem a mite restrained in her goodbye to the condemned man.

Christine Hamley, on the other hand, was every bit the grieving daughter in the final scene, moving the chilled audience in front of her, even if failing to reach her father's captors.

Doug Winger as Master Rich — 'The Common Man' of the upper classes, showed the proper amounts of obsequiousness and ambition, as he helped push More closer to the gallows, in another fine portrayal.

His lesser counterpart, "The Common Man," equally moved by greed, but who knew his place in the scheme of things, was caught in full by Ken

Lloyd, who knew his man every subservient inch of the way.

Other strong performances were turned in by Stephen Treasure as William Roper; Dave Duchesne as the Duke of Norfolk; Cyril Buck as the Archbishop of Canterbury; Jan Ochalski as the Spanish Ambassador; Lloyd MacPherson as Cardinal Wolsey; and Eileen Mitchell as the woman.

A Man for All Seasons is a play for all the ages.

Club play badly named

While the play may be badly named, there's nothing wrong with the Curtain Club's production of The Rape of The Belt, which runs to the end of the week at the club's premises, Newkirk and Elgin Mills Rd.

Among those who gave a top performance is June Abbott, who plays one of the two ruling Amazon queens, who is more fond



Cicely Thomson ... from the wings

of her bath than of battle, but who finds there's plenty of that in her, too, when the occasion demands.

Well directed
The play is directed by Cicely Thomson of Richmond Hill, who gave her cues briefly from a hospital bed, as well as from the wings at the theatre.



June Abbott ... voluptuous vixen

Martha Mann designed the beautiful costumes, and Michael Matyas designed the impressive set.



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1st violinist first

This line drawing of York Symphony Orchestra first violinist George Moseley, is one of the many drawings that will make up Richmond Hill Artists Olga Nickles first local showing of drawings, paintings and sculpting at Richmond Hill Public Library, Dec. 9 to the end of January.

York concert

Comic opera with carols

By Ruth Harris

NEWMARKET — York Symphony Orchestra and St. Anne's Music and Drama Society (Toronto) presented an evening of music in the United Church Friday.

A large and responsive audience of some 450 people was on hand to hear these fine musicians join forces under their gifted leader, Clifford Poole.

The first half of the program was performed by the orchestra, and included two Christmas favorites, Dances from the Nutcracker Suite by Tchaikovsky, and a medley of Christmas Carols arranged by Sir Ernest MacMillan in 1945 for Toronto Symphony's Christmas Pop Concerts.

The orchestra played both numbers with obvious enjoyment. The beautiful harmonies of the carols were well inter-woven, and the brass section was exuberant in its rendition of "O Come All Ye Faithful," and "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen."

Rich tone
In the four dances from the Nutcracker Suite, the violin section excelled in "The Waltz of the Flowers," with their full, rich tone and flowing rhythmic sweeps toward exciting climaxes.

The flutes were excellent in the Chinese dance, and the beautiful melodies of the Arabian dance were sensitively played by the violins against a good rhythmic background from the cellos and double basses.

A special word of appreciation to the pianist, Victor McGorry, who, in the Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy, made the piano sound like the Celeste, for which that part was written.

Four young female French horn players were especially effective in this composition. It is commendable to see so many talented, youthful musicians combining with those of maturity and experience to create such a high standard of performance.

In the second half of the program, the orchestra accompanied the St. Anne's group in excerpts from Gilbert and Sullivan's comic opera, "Ruddigore."

Predominated
Generally, the accompaniments were well

played, but there were a few times when the orchestra was too predominant for the singers.

The seven principal singers were well chosen for their various roles, interpreting well, and in several cases with excellent "Gilbertian" style.

Joyce Clark's portrayal of Mad Margaret was projected from the moment of entry; her facial expression, gestures and voice were equally effective in solos, duets and trios.

Margaret Leach and Janet Maskens were pleasing in their songs and duets. Roger Jones, Roy Schatz, John Woodyard and James Webster all gave good performances in their various roles.

The ladies' chorus work was sung with bright, clear tone and good enunciation; the men's choruses were rich and resonant and very effective.

The next concert in this series will be presented in St. Mary's Anglican Church, Richmond Hill, Feb. 11, 1977. For tickets, call 895-8713; 727-5576; 884-9242.

Entertainment

Calendar

Rape of the Belt — Don't let the title bother you, it's for the whole family; bright comedy, with a great third act. The Curtain Club; to Dec. 11. Call 884-2638.

York Philharmonic Choir and York Philharmonic Orchestra — two Christmas concerts, St. Gabriel's Church, Willowdale, Dec. 10, and Trinity United Church, Newmarket, Dec. 11. Call 297-1577, or 884-4532.

Olga Nickle and Elena Jasechko — Joint exhibition and sale of drawings, paintings, sculptures and photographs at Richmond Hill Public Library; Dec. 9 to end of Jan.

Ah, Wilderness — Unionville Arts Foundation, Fairview Mall Library Theatre; to Dec. 11. Call 362-5960.

A Man for All Seasons — Factory Theatre, Aurora; Dec. 9-11, 8:15 p.m. Call 727-6086.

The Comedians — St. Lawrence Centre, with R.H. Thomson of Richmond Hill; to Dec. 18. Call 366-4734.

Medley of Art — Gibson House Gallery, 5172 Yonge St., Willowdale - 10 Canadian artists show their works; to Jan. 2.

Herongate Barn Theatre — Cabaret, Sing-a-long; Dec. 10-11. Call 294-0426.

OSCAR PETERSON — TONIGHT, Seneca Theatre Centre, 8 p.m. Call 491-8877.

Blithe Spirit by Noel Coward — Toronto Truck Theatre, 94 Belmont St.; to Dec. 25. Call 922-0084.

Robert Aitken, flute, Greta Kraus, harpsichord — St. Lawrence Centre; Dec. 10. Call 366-7223.

"The Red Queen," adapted from Alice in Wonderland — Harborfront Theatre, 235 Queens Quay W., 8:30 p.m., Dec. 8-9. Admission free.

Comedy of Errors — Humber College Theatre; Dec. 8-18. Admission \$1. Call 676-1200, or 354-5544.

Coppelia — a mini version of the famed ballet — Harborfront Theatre; Dec. 11-12. Admission free. Call 967-1212.

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