

Entertainment

She's an anodyne for ennui

By William Cook

Although statistics aren't kept on the frequency of visits to art galleries, I feel certain I hold the world record for visits to the McMichael Gallery in Kleinberg (102 visits as of Sunday).

This predilection, or proclivity, will no doubt be mitigated after my visit to the York Fine Art Gallery last Thursday.

The occasion was the opening night for Helen Bird's showing of oils, watercolors and acrylics.

I would say the opening night was an unqualified success. The gallery was packed with an appreciative audience.

This appreciation was manifested by a number of purchases.

Helen Bird is a very competent artist (and a charming person). Her love of painting and life shows through in almost every work on display.

The main theme of the show could be said to be nature in all the seasons, with a modicum of nostalgia.

Many of the outdoor scenes reminded me of

property near Sharbot Lake. The artist confirmed this by telling me about her summer at the Schneider School of Fine Arts at Actinolite (near Tweed).

It isn't possible to list all of the paintings on display.

A cursory glimpse at the titles gives you an idea of the scope and range of the settings and moods: Woodland Stream-Glenville Pond, Horses and Barns-Snowball, Old Barns-Bathurst St., Summer Hills-King, August Afternoon-Lake Joseph, Towards Aurora, Barn and Rocks-Tweed, March Break, Spring Flooding.

The prices of paintings seemed to be extremely reasonable, ranging from around \$70 to \$280.

These days we're all suffering from the interminable winter depressions and ennui. But there is an anodyne that really works—a visit to Mary Gilbert's York Fine Art Gallery to be rejuvenated by Helen Bird's joyful and sensitive paintings.

It's an easy drive (2 1/4 miles west on Wellington

St., Aurora). The show will continue until Sunday March 13. I'll see you there.

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Ya-ya-ya-ya-a-a-a-a

Photo by Hogg

Looking like she really wishes she hadn't waited until dark here is Iris Stringer playing Susy in rehearsal with Len Sedun playing Roat for the Curtain Club's March 25 to April 9

production "Wait Until Dark". Stringer plays a recently blinded young woman in the Frederick Knott psychological thriller.

Roses to 'Carnival' cling

By Timothy Buell

The itinerant circus or carnival, with its entourage of trapeze artists, magicians, bareback riders, freaks and misfits, in a colorful and exotic atmosphere, has long provided writers and producers with an ideal background for plays, films and musicals.

The North York Theatre for Performing Arts' recent production of "Carnival", by Bob Merrill and Michael Stewart, was an excellent example of such a production.

Performed at the Fairview Library Theatre from Feb. 24 to Mar. 5, "Carnival" provided a thoroughly enjoyable evening's entertainment for the capacity audiences to which it played.

Set in the late 30's in France, "Carnival" follows the fortunes of the various characters involved with the "Grand Imperial Cirque de Paris," at one time famous throughout Europe, but now playing to diminishing audiences and struggling to make ends meet.

At this point Lili, played by Beth Cameron, appears on the scene, looking for a job. Young and inexperienced, Lili

has recently lost her family, and this was her first venture away from her home town.

She immediately falls under the spell of Marco the Magnificent, a worldly magician whose philandering antics are kept in check only by the jealous vigil kept over him by his assistant and mistress, Rosalie.

The puppeteers, Paul Berthalet and his assistant Jacquot, watch these developments with disapproval. Paul was once a great dancer, but a war injury ended his career, transforming him into a shy and embittered man, full of self-pity, and displaying his inner feelings only through his puppets.

Lili's gradual awakening to reality, and her subsequent turning-away from Marco to be united with Paul, form the basis of the drama, which is played out against the colorful and flamboyant background of the carnival and its entertaining personalities.

The difficulties in blocking the movements of such large ensembles of actors and dancers as were required in the production of "Carnival" were for the most part well-handled by the choreography of Nicholas Davies.

At times, however, the grouping lacked focus, and one was often therefore left trying to pick out the principal figure from among a mass of dancing bodies.

The four "bluebird girls," for example, while providing some of the evening's funniest moments, were grouped

in a chorus-line with the tallest girl on the far right, which upset the focus and over-all balance of the scene.

The music was directed by Darrel Steiner, and was provided by a band consisting of a clarinet, a flut, two French horns, two trombones, two trumpets, piano, accordion, bass and drums.

Although the music was generally well-performed, the preponderance of brass created an imbalance in the texture, often drowning out the rather scanty woodwind section.

A little more attention to dynamics might have helped, or perhaps to the conductor himself, to whom, for all his emphatic gesturing, no one in the band, particularly the soloists, seemed to be paying much attention.

The imbalance was partly alleviated by a horn player who decided to exchange his instrument for a camera midway through a section, and proceeded to get some close-ups of the action on stage.

The chorus, too, at times seemed to suffer from an excess of dynamics, this was often combined with poor enunciation of the text.

When singing with Lili, for example, the chorus tended to drown her out.

To compensate, instead of toning down the chorus, the soloist was forced to attempt to top it dynamically. This often resulted in something akin to a competition in fortissimo singing.

Both Lili (Beth Cameron) and Paul, (Brian Percy) however,

possess pleasing and resonant voices, and theirs was a standout performance.

Also impressive was the interplay between Rosalie (Judy Bunker) and Marco (Ron Hodgins). His sleight-of-hand in performing on-stage feats of magic was probably as impressive to the audience as it obviously was to Lili.

Brian Percy's handling of his puppets was also a highlight, as was the performance of Jaquot (Jerry Foster), whose number "Cirque de Paris Ballet" was one of the best-performed of the evening.

Director Gary Peterman and the large and enthusiastic cast of "Carnival" all deserve a great deal of credit for providing an enjoyable and professional evening's entertainment.



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