

# Stratford festival season attracts thousands

By KATHRYN HORLER  
**STRATFORD, Ont.** — The swans have returned to Stratford from their winter boarding home — heralding the 1979 festival season, June 4 to Nov. 4.

To be presented are: **Festival Stage:** The First Part of Henry IV; Love's Labor's Lost; The Second Part of Henry IV; Othello.

**Avon Stage:** Richard II; Ned and Jack; The Importance of Being Earnest; Happy New Year; The Woman; King Lear.

**Third Stage:** The Taming of the Shrew; Yerma; Victoria; The Third Stage has become a theatre-in-the-round this year with one admission price of \$5.

To make sure you see the play you want on the date you prefer, ask for the brochure, Stratford 1979. Each page is devoted to one month's attractions at all three theatres.

For information, call 363-4471. Already, the box office is a flurry of activity. The day I was there a letter requesting two seats had been received from a gentleman in Holland. Over the years requests have arrived from as far away as Switzerland, Japan and New Zealand.

There's something new at Stratford this year. The Gordon Block at the crossroads of Ontario, Downey and Erie Streets has been shorn of its boardings, renovated, and renamed Festival Square.

It's positively splendid.

It presents a turnout appearance. That is, when you are inside you'll swear you are outside. The main floor shops are designed with bay windows and pine doors facing inside. There are only two entrances to the square with no shop having direct access to the street. It permeates such warmth that shopping on its three floors is a pleasure.

The rooms at the top are The Terrace, beautifully appointed dining rooms and a lounge. The original brick walls and leaded windows still stand, blending with modern furniture.

The luncheon and dinner menus are so attractive you'll want to take one home. The manager, Leo Morgestern, is presenting a sophisticated choice of foods at affordable prices. Besides his daily English tea he has introduced the Attitude Adjustment Hours... cocktails served along with an oyster bar and cheese trays.

Words of praise have already spread about The Terrace as reservations have been made for 500 diners from Detroit, who are coming by the bus

loads to different plays this summer. After-theatre supper parties are planned when the festival opens.

Another new spot on the dining scene is The Old Prune, on Albert Street. Eleanor Kane and Marion Isherwood, two former Montrealers, came to the Stratford Festival every summer and, with the exception of The Church Restaurant, found dining in the town a dreary affair.

So they did something about it! Scouting Stratford they found the house that suited them and set up shop. These enterprising women do all the cooking and serving. The two main rooms seat 20. This year they've added a sun room and terrace. Dinner for two with a bottle of wine is around \$25.

"We know the popularity of Sunday brunches but we just haven't the space to set up buffet tables. Instead we're planning on Sunday champagne breakfasts served at the tables beginning with oysters Rockefeller," Eleanor explained.

The busiest man in all Stratford must surely be Tom Reitzel, who is hoping to have the Thomson Museum ready for public viewing this summer. His task is mind boggling.

This huge barn, built in 1882, was moved to its present location on Vivian Street in 1960, and it's literally piled to the ceiling with every conceivable item.

Standing just inside the front door is a Pierce Arrow five-ton truck with 1919 licence plates, that in its heyday reached a speed of 12 miles per hour. Behind it is a Chevrolet Skidoo dated 1918 and a bicycle so old that the "chain" is made of rope. A hearse-for-all-seasons is equipped with wheels and removable snow-runners. There is even a butter churner that was dog-powered.

This is just a hint of what will be shown once the huge task is complete. The architect's drawing of what the museum will look like shows promise of an outstanding one that should attract many visitors to Stratford. The Gallery-Stratford

— that's what it prefers to be called — is preparing three exhibitions for summer viewing. The first, Posters and Prints, will be shown in Galleries 1 and 2. In Gallery 3, the entire space will be taken up by a sculpture created by Roland Brener, a South African who now lives in Victoria, B.C. He plans to assemble it on the premises to provide a

maze visitors can walk through, around and over. Gallery 4 will be devoted to the paintings of Norval Morrisseau, Ojibway painter. Considered to be one of Canada's foremost Indian painters, he depicts Indian traditions, myths and legends with his personal interpretations. The Gallery is on Romeo Street and this

season's presentations will begin June 4. Choosing where to stay in Stratford, if you plan an overnight trip, is a difficult one. Most people have their own favorite so it may be wise to check with friends who have stayed there. I was disappointed with my original lodgings so drove to the Festival Inn on Ontario Street, a motel

that had been recommended to me by a friend. The bedroom was big, bright and airy and the roast beef dinner delicious. Many people who travel to Stratford take picnics to enjoy beside the pond where the swans live. I investigated picnic

basket lunches prepared in town for take-out. Rundles, on Colbourn Street, provides this service. The Deli, on the lower floor in the Festival Square, would be delighted to provide take-out fare, though not necessarily basketed.

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