

Uxbridge Celebration of the Arts

Wide spectrum of art is showcased at Uxbridge Celebration of the Arts

Kate Gilderdale
Correspondent

The 1997 Uxbridge Celebration of the Arts has been expanded to five days and showcases a wide and wonderful spectrum of artistic achievement.

Wednesday's Film Night opens the festival with the delightful *Henry & Verlin*, a Canadian production shot in Claremont which garnered an astonishing 17 international awards.

Thursday night's Books and Authors will include readings by John Fraser, Erica De Vasconcelos and Marilyn Simonds, whose latest novel, *The Convict Lover*, was named one of the best

books of 1996 by the *Globe and Mail*, *Quill & Quire*, *Elm Street magazine* and *Maclean's*.

Friday is Music Night, with the incomparable chamber trio Amici adding the Music Hall to its list of international tour venues. Tickets for Jazz Café, Saturday's Evening Gala, are going fast. Trudy Desmond, backed up by the Boss Brass Rhythm Section, will perform a fabulous program of music, which will include the timeless standards of such greats as Cole

Porter, Irving Berlin and Ira and George Gershwin.

Younger patrons of the arts can enjoy a fine production Sunday at the Music Hall, where performances of *Patchwork* by Carol Lauck will take place at 1 pm and 3 pm. The play is recommended for children aged four to 12.

Other Celebration events include the weekend Studio Tour, featuring more than 20 artists and artisans from Uxbridge and surrounding areas, the first

Juried Art Exhibition, which runs September 14 to 23 in the municipal offices and a series of free noon-hour concerts beginning September 15.

Performers include folk trio Faded Denim, the Baptist Church Choir, Stuart Beaudoin, Lesley Jousten, Anne Baker and Thomas Fitches.

The Uxbridge Chamber Choir will conclude the series with a performance of *Medieval Bestiary*, an original work by Murray Schafer, at the Foster Memorial September 20 at 12:15 pm.

Brochures, tour maps and tickets are available from Presents and Blue Heron Books in Uxbridge and Many Colours in Port Perry.

Readings, music, performers and works by local artists will be at the five-day celebration.

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Canadian authors will read from their books Sept. 18

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While a last-minute scheduling conflict has forced Nino Ricci to bow out of the Celebration's Books and Authors night at the Music Hall September 18, Kingston writer Marilyn Simonds has been added to the stellar line-up.

Simonds will join John Fraser, former Peking correspondent of the *Globe and Mail* and author of the mystery novel *Stolen China*, and Erica De Vasconcelos, whose first novel, *My Darling Dead Ones*, was enthusiastically received by both

critics and readers.

Simonds' latest book, *The Convict Lover*, was published to wide critical acclaim and appeared on the *Globe and Mail* best-seller list for five months.

Book based on convict's letters

The story was inspired by a collection of letters and notes Simonds unearthed from under the eaves of her home in the summer of 1987.



Marilyn Simonds will be reading from her book.

The letters were written by Joseph Cleroux, a convict in Kingston Penitentiary from 1918 to 1920, to Phyllis Halliday, a 17-year-old whose home overlooked the prison quarry.

Simonds' painstaking research revealed that the

couple first corresponded when Cleroux tossed a note into the quarry ditch and Halliday retrieved it.

Her discovery was, said Simonds, "a writer's dream," a remarkable story about a convict and a school girl which forms the nucleus of her riveting book.

The author was meticulous in her research, which included the scrutiny of 70-year-old newspapers, prison archives, reports on royal commissions and an

exhaustive study of the penitentiary's long and chequered history.

The result is an intriguing mystery, a fascinating documentary of the harshness of life in the prison system and a compelling love story, which recently

went into its third printing.

Simonds has the ability to probe into psyches of real people

"A tour de force," wrote Sandra Gwyn in the *Globe and Mail*.

"Simonds' prose is alluring, her historical detective work is flawless, and she evokes the texture of small-town life in Old British Canada as if she'd actually lived there. The quality that makes

The Convict Lover soar off the page, though, is Simonds' ability to probe into the psyches of real people and to find there imaginative truth."

The author will read excerpts from her book September 18 at the Music Hall.

Tickets are \$5 and are available from Presents and Blue Heron Books in Uxbridge, John Lord's Books in Stouffville, and Many Colours in Port Perry.

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Henry & Verlin captured imagination of critics and can be viewed during festival

Henry & Verlin is a cinematic gem which captured the imagination of critics and movie-goers alike when it was first released.

By turns heartrending and hilarious, the film documents the unique friendship between a mentally handicapped man with the sweet innocence of a small child (portrayed by Gary Farmer) and his nephew, 9-year-old Verlin (Keegan MacIntosh). The young boy is autistic and Henry is the only person who can share his private world and create an awareness of life beyond it in Verlin's mind. In a series of adventures and mishaps, the two blithe spirits take the audience on a roller-coaster ride of emotions, making an eloquent case for understanding and tolerance of the diversity of human nature along the way. The conclusion is uplifting, funny and sweet, without falling prey to treacly clichés or heavy-handed moralizing.

Shot in Claremont, *Henry & Verlin* received 17 international awards including the first UNICEF award from the Saskatchewan International Children's Film Festival. The film will be shown September 17 at the Uxbridge Music Hall at 8 pm. Tickets are \$5.

Uxbridge Players

Celebration of Arts - Childrens Play for Children of all ages

Patchwork by Carol Lauck
Directed by Michele Hempen
Sept. 21 - 1:00 & 3:00 pm

Our Exciting Fall Production
Neil Simon's *The Good Doctor*
Directed by Dorothy Splonick
November 6, 7, 8 / 13, 14, 15
Dinner Theatre - Nov. 8 and 15 only.

For more information or if interested in joining us please call
Betty Bignell / 852-5740 or Michele Hempen 705-357-2927

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Books & Authors Evening Featuring

Erica de Vasconcelos author of *My Darling Dead Ones*
&
Marilyn Simonds author of *The Convict Lover*
&
John Fraser author of *Stolen China*

Members of USS Literary Guild

Book on sale before & during event.

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Congratulations Celebration of the Arts on 12 years of success!

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