



THE OXFORD
BOOK OF ESSAYS
Edited by John Gross
Oxford University Press, \$42

By ALAN MACINROY

John Gross, theatre critic with the Sunday Telegraph, has put together a heterogeneous collection of short works, *The Oxford Book of Essays* — 700 pages of wit, observations and criticisms by 120 of western civilization's best-known writers.

This collection covers a period of 400 years, beginning with 16th-century philosopher Sir Francis Bacon's definition of truth and ending with Clive James's biting, articulate and extremely amusing trashing of Princess Daisy by Judith Krantz.

Included is an essay by American-born British novelist Henry James concerning his first trip to London, described with a reverence one might expect from an awe-struck visitor from the colonies. While walking along the Strand he was overcome by literary associations. He wrote:

"I pause before the granite por-

The Wit and Wisdom of Western Civilization

tico of Exeter Hall and it evokes a cloud of associations which are none the less impressive because they are vague: coming from I don't know where — from Punch, from Thackeray, from old volumes of *The Illustrated London News* turned over in childhood."

At first, James seems to have

been totally captivated by the

place and his essay presents a

view and a feeling that would

encourage many modern North

American readers to take the

next plane across the pond. But

later, during a bout of terminal

homesickness, he lamented,

"London was hideous, vicious,

cruel and above all over-

whelming."

Happily, this melancholy soon

passed and James ended by

cheerfully chirping the city's

praises like a proud native.

Henry's brother William, a

renowned psychologist and phi-

losopher, contributed to this

anthology with a cynical yet comi-

cal putdown of the insatiable

desire of American universities to

acquire a teaching staff composed

entirely of PhDs: "It is indeed

odd to see this love of titles —

and such titles — growing up in a

country of which the recognition

of individuality and bare man-

hood have so long been supposed

to be the very soul."

In a slightly more serious and

thoughtful vein, *The Haunted*

Mind

by Nathaniel Hawthorne

skillfully captures that sense of a

mind without a rudder that

accompanies an interrupted

sleep. Hawthorne wrote that the

comforts of a warm bed on a win-

ter night could sometimes, con-

trarily, evoke images of death:

"You think how the dead are

lying in their cold shrouds and

narrow coffins, through the

dreary winter of the grave, and

cannot persuade your fancy that

they neither shrink nor shiver,

when the snow is drifting over

their little hillocks, and the bit-

ter blast howls against the door

of the tomb."

Humor constitutes a large part

of this collection and a fine exam-

ple is G.K. Chesterton's slightly

sarcastic *A Defense of Penny*

Dreadfuls, which playfully states

a case for "romantic trash" as essential reading.

The book has a distinct scarcity of female contributors, outnumbered 11-to-1 by their male counterparts. This may be, rather than an oversight on the part of the editor, a sign of times past, since the first woman represented here had to change her name to George Eliot in order to get published 150 years ago.

The few female writers present in this volume balance the odds of their wit. Not least among these is Rebecca West, an indomi-

table feminist whose long-standing romantic and profes-sional relationship with H.G. Wells became legendary. In *The Stern Sex*, West pokes vicious fun at two institutions that she obviously held in low regard: marriage and the church. She described one memorable occasion when she found herself handing out pamphlets on obtaining a "cheap divorce" to guests at her cousin's wedding breakfast.

The Oxford Book of Essays offers direct and intimate insights into how these distinguished men and women of letters viewed their society and their respective roles within it. □

Alan MacInroy is a Vancouver freelance writer.

Power monger brought out of the shadows

By ALAN MacINROY

If the name William J. Casey doesn't set off any alarms in your memory bank it isn't too surprising. The man made a career of staying in the shadows while controlling the campaigns and executing the covert operations of American presidents from Dwight Eisenhower to Ronald Reagan, culminating in his involvement in the Iran-Contra Affair.

Joseph Persico has written a biography of this enigmatic power monger in an attempt to reveal the human as well as political side of a man for whom politics became the only game in town. The author gives equal time to Casey's charming and human side — a man who loved his wife and daughter and who could win over opponents with a smile and rough flattery.

Persico does not canonize Casey nor does he paint him with a tar brush. However, the image that dominates is a man so entranced by political intrigue and power that friends, family and home became secondary.

Casey began his professional life as a social worker and yearned to help others less fortunate. After an ideological turnaround, he ended up an anti-communist millionaire whose political stance was somewhere to the right of Nancy Reagan's.

Studying social work in the early 1930s may have satisfied Casey's idealistic streak, but, as the author points out, it also served another purpose. Casey realized that welfare administration was the biggest growth industry in the United States at the time and he would almost certainly be guaranteed a job upon graduation. Looking out for number one became a philosophy of life that Casey retained regardless of his changing political tendencies.

The social worker quickly became disillusioned with the welfare state. The author quotes from a letter Casey wrote to his mother in February 1935, one that reveals his racial feelings: "We had a hard time getting the unemployed to clean the streets. They couldn't see why they should shovel snow for sustenance when the government doles out sustenance to them anyway. Some of these negroes of a certain attitude won't ever work again."

As Persico notes early in the book, Casey's mother was very proud of her son. "I never knew my Bill to undertake anything where he didn't rise to the top," she said. Casey became a corporate lawyer and became wealthy by shrewdly handling other people's money. He wrote several bestselling self-help books on financial management. He also built successful publishing and broadcasting companies.

Casey had been involved in several undercover intelligence operations during the Second World War and was responsible for installing more than 100 espionage units behind Nazi lines. But it wasn't until 40 years later, when he became involved with Oliver North and the operation to keep the Contras supplied with money and arms in their fight against Nicaragua's President Daniel Ortega, that Casey guaranteed himself a place in history. North and Casey shared a virulent hatred of communism that soon bound them together in a web of political deception that nearly toppled the Reagan administration.

By May 1987, while Reagan complained about losing his memory, Ollie North became a celebrity as Defender of the

CASEY: THE LIVES AND SECRETS OF

WILLIAM J. CASEY

By Joseph E. Persico

Viking/Penguin, \$29.95



WILLIAM J. CASEY with wartime slogan: controlled covert U.S. operations

American Way on the nightly televised investigation committee hearings. Mean- while the principal player in the Iran-Contra affair quietly died of pneumonia ...

... and took his testimony to the grave.

William Casey was not to find peace even in death. Persico quotes a posthu- mous lecture Casey received from the bishop who officiated at his funeral: "I am ... sure that Bill must have thought the U.S. bishops blind to the potential of

a Communist threat to this hemisphere, as we opposed — and continue to oppose — the violence wrought in Central America by support of the Contras ..."

Persico has written a thorough and personal expose of a man most of us knew little or nothing about, but whose actions, directly or indirectly, concerned us all. ◇

Alan MacInroy is a Vancouver freelance writer.

PLAYWRIGHT DAVID KING

'Reaching the audience'

Playwright David King has never studied theatre. In fact, his academic career in general seems remarkably undistinguished.

Born in Winnipeg, King was a high school drop out; or more precisely a "kick out" ("I was asked to leave.") When pressed to elaborate King chose to remain mysterious.

By Alan MacInroy
News Contributor

After playing in a rock and roll band he moved to Montreal where he worked for the National Film Board. It was while living in Toronto that King became a professionally produced playwright.

In 1972 Toronto's Factory Lab mounted *Gesture of Concern*. With that first venture into the precarious profession of playwright, King appeared to have found his artistic niche.

Moving to Vancouver in 1978, it was four years later that the theatre community in this city began to take King to its collective heart. His first production in Vancouver won the 1983 Jessie Richardson Award for "Best New Play." *Garage Sale* was a hit with audiences and critics.

This initial success was followed by *Issues of the Nighttime*, *The Lights of North America* and most recently, the popular Touchstone production of *Life Skills*.

Theatre goers enjoyed not only King's witty dialogue but also his talented delivery as he played the community television host opposite Nicola Cavendish.

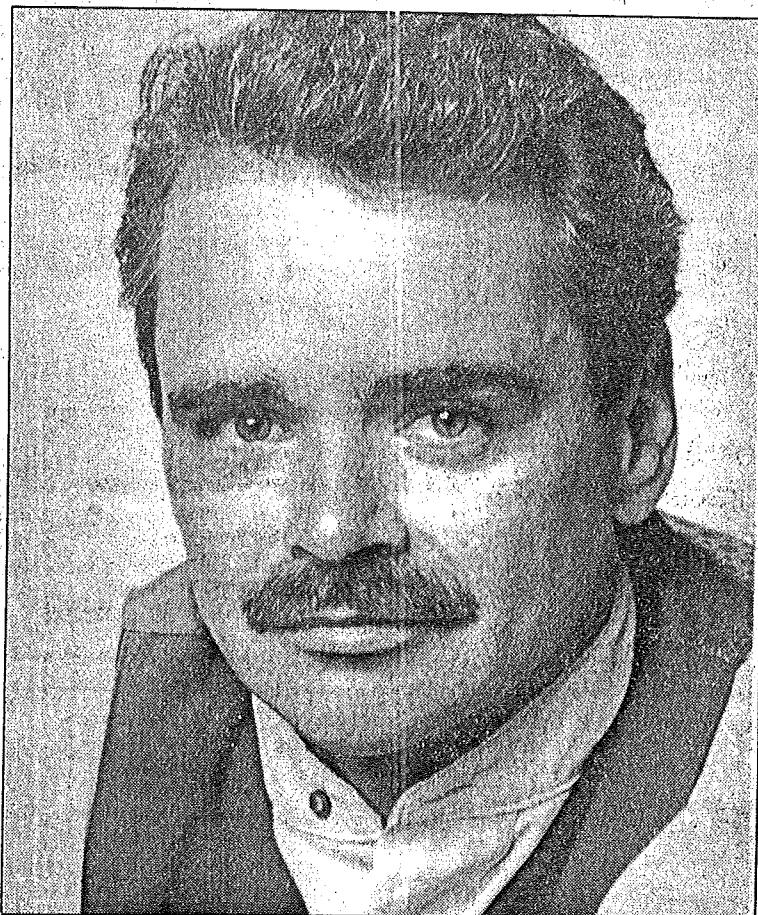
Does King consider that he's a success?

"Yeah. Sure. I feel I'm getting somewhere in my work," he said.

"I'm finding an audience. Maybe I'll lose them every once and a while with a show (he laughed) but I know they are there."

Although King's *Life Skills* was a 'hit' in a lot of ways there was some criticism for his use of television monitors and videotape portions in a theatre production. King believes there are lots of things that could be done in theatre that aren't traditional.

"Theatre needs all the innovation in the world. It needs video. It needs music, a lot more music.



Vancouver playwright David King feels confident about his work and audience.

Photo Contributed

It needs dance.

"It's just very hard to compete with film, with the popular mediums like film and television," he said.

"In the case of *Life Skills* it (video) was almost a device to facilitate costume changes. If it serves the content, whatever it is, video or slides ... as long as it serves the content of the piece then use it."

King's plays seem to have a wide, mass audience appeal which make them possible candidates for film or television production.

"I have written half-hour scripts, half-hour dramas for the NFB and the CBC. Both times it was a fairly good experience," he said.

"One of the most encouraging films for writers was *My Dinner with Andre* which was one-and-a-half hours of static conversation which was wonderful. Conversa-

tion is an art and it was nice to see it elevated to that position."

Most theatre companies in Canada are suffering from both a lack of funding and the lack of a growing audience. What's the future of theatre in this country?

"Well, it seems to be getting more and more commercial but I think it needs to be more innovative and exciting. It should be an event. Going to the theatre should be an event."

"If you don't come away like you've experienced something you might as well be home watching a sitcom."

David King's newest play *Backyard Beguine* is currently onstage at the Waterfront Theatre on Granville Island.

The S.

Your donations fund cell change studies

by Alan M. MacInroy

There are hundreds of cancer research projects underway in Canada at the present time. They are investigating the causes, prevention, detection and treatment of cancer. Many of the projects are funded by public donations to the Canadian Cancer Society that are allocated by its research arm, the National Cancer Institute of Canada.

One of the people currently involved in research is Dr. Tony Pawson of the Department of Microbiology at the University of B.C. His project, entitled "Transformation by acute leukemia and sarcoma viruses," is an attempt to discover the underlying mechanisms by which a healthy cell becomes transformed into a cancerous cell.

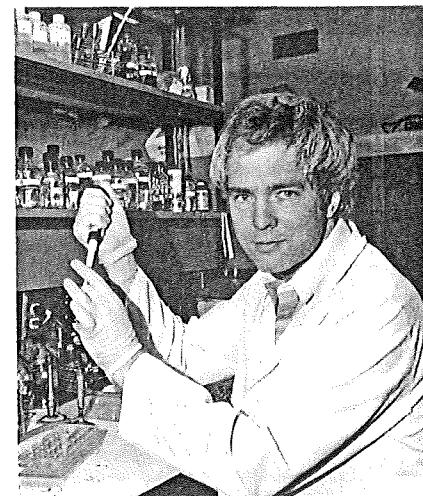
Dr. Pawson and his team have been involved in this project since 1981, with the major portion of their funding coming from the Terry Fox Marathon of Hope Research Programs. They are looking for the cause of cancer, the "initiation agent" that allows the cell to be transformed from healthy to potentially malignant.

One reason why this work is so important is that cancer treatments can have a devastating effect on the patient. Chemical agents

cannot distinguish between normal and cancerous cells; consequently many healthy cells are destroyed.

Other problems arise from the fact that some cancer cells can develop a resistance to chemotherapy, rendering the treatment useless.

Why do normal, healthy cells suddenly become receptive to harmful invaders? How does the invading agent trigger the switch from normal to abnormal? With continued help in the form of public donations, Dr. Tony Pawson and his team hope to have those answers soon.



Dr. Tony Pawson at work in his lab at UBC.

Do you know where your money goes?

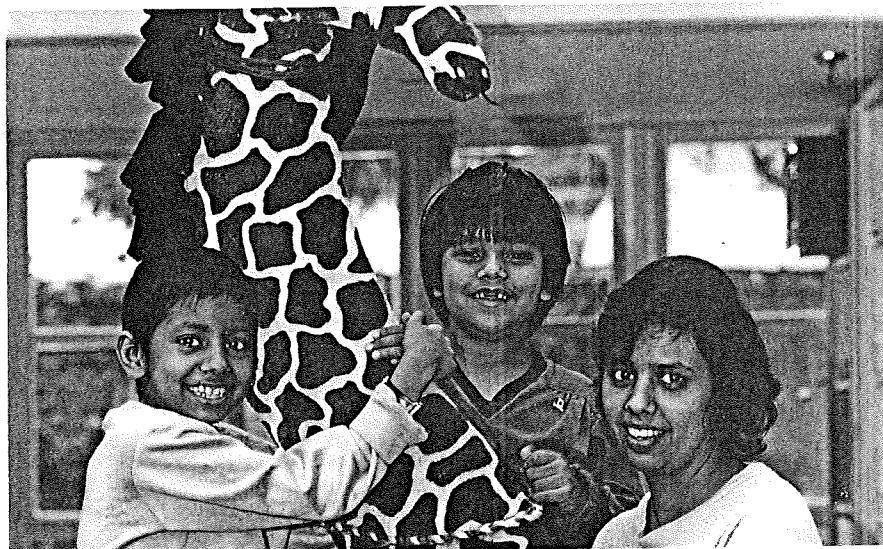
As our April campaign nears, it's time once again to point out that the Canadian Cancer Society and Cancer Research Society Inc. are two separate organizations.

The Canadian Cancer Society's investigations reveal that Cancer Research Society Inc. is a Montreal-based operation with little or no representation outside of Quebec which is attempting to raise funds from the people of B.C. and Yukon.

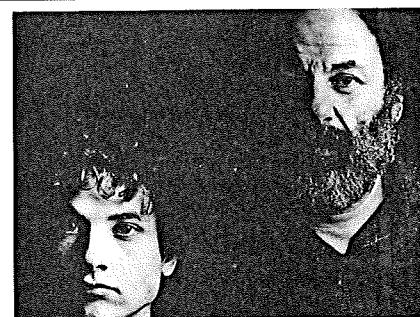
The Canadian Cancer Society is the primary research funding body in Canada, the largest source of lay

education about cancer, the only Canada-wide volunteer organization providing emotional and financial support to cancer patients and their families, with 10 fully-organized divisions covering all provinces and territories.

A recent Gallup poll revealed that more than three-quarters (76%) of Canadians said they donated money to cancer-related organizations to further research and research programs. Two other frequent reasons given were "to help people with cancer" and "to feel good, it's a worthwhile cause."



Dipika Nand from Fiji (left) is glad the CCS is funding her family's stay during her cancer treatment in Vancouver. (See story page 6.)



The photo on the front cover is one of four which will be featured in our April campaign. Our thanks go to Ronalds-Reynolds & Company Limited for their donation of time and expertise in the creation of campaign materials.

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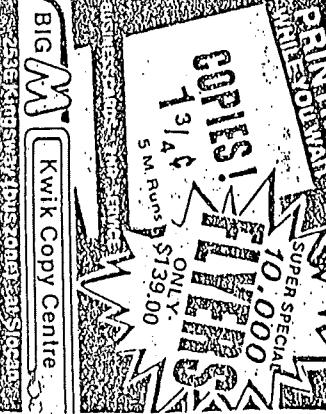
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Volunteers make Collingwood work

BY ALAN M. MACINROY

In this age of shrinking operational budgets and funding cuts, many non-profit organizations face an uncertain future.

Despite financial constraints, Collingwood's Neighbourhood House continues to maintain its existing programs and even to expand on these, with additional services offered to people in the community. How can any organization expand in view of these financial hard times? An answer for CNH and many others in the non-profit sector can be found in one word — Volunteers. CNH is committed to just

COLLINGWOOD

From page 1

began her association with CNH as a volunteer herself.

Now as a paid staff member, Margaret is quick to point out how valuable volunteers are in helping her run the office efficiently. "Without the volunteers we can't work. They help us with many jobs around the office. Sometimes we run out of volunteers and then we face a very difficult situation. They are very important to us."

While some volunteers do word processing, answer the telephone and provide general information, others serve on the Board of Directors of CNH and fill the ranks of the many committees and sub-committees. They also help out with the After School Child Care Program, Playschool and the Seniors' Wellness Program.

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Turn to page 7

While they provide needed services to the organization, the volunteers benefit too. The valuable experience gained working in the office is particularly helpful to new Canadians who want to break into the local job market.

That is a mixed blessing as far as Margaret Joseph is concerned.

Margaret Joseph and her committee look for a potential volunteer for CNH? "First of all, friendliness. And also those who are able to fit in well with a cross-cultural organization, because one of the main things we do at CNH is to provide support to the

people in this community and there's a wide variety of ethnic groups living here."

Six years ago Bonnie Eddie, that her association with CNH began.

"My first involvement with CNH was when I joined the Babysitting Co-op out of a need — not being able to find

Bonnie decided that working as a volunteer on the committee would help her to get to know what services were available and it was a good way to get to know her neighbours.

Bonnie Soon has also been an outspoken advocate of city wide recycling and was determined to make Collingwood more actively involved.

She began to enthusiastically organize CNH's Re-Cycling Committee. Bonnie feels that the committee has made a substantial contribution to the municipal recycling plan. "They (the City Engineering Department) were really interested when I asked

them if they were going to put the re-cycling information on the Blue Boxes in different lan-

guages. I knew that many people in Collingwood wouldn't be able to understand if it was just in English."

The City of Vancouver decided that it was such a good idea that the instructions were printed in four languages.

When asked what benefits she has derived from working as a volunteer with the Collingwood Neighbourhood House, Bonnie smiles. "What I've gotten in return is an immense feeling of being valued and the people (staff of

CNH) have shown me that they appreciate what I have to say and that is a big thing."

Collingwood Neighbourhood House will celebrate its volunteers and their contributions to their community at Volunteer Recognition Night with a special Potluck dinner on Wednesday, September 19th from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. at 3185 Kingsway.

Anyone interested in becoming a CNH volunteer is encouraged to call Margaret at 435-0323.

ARTS

At Home in the Sexual Wilderness

Heterophobia, homophobia, and even phobiaphobia inspire comedy

THEATRE

Shared Accommodation

By Alan MacInroy. A Real Life production. At the Vancouver Little Theatre until June 27

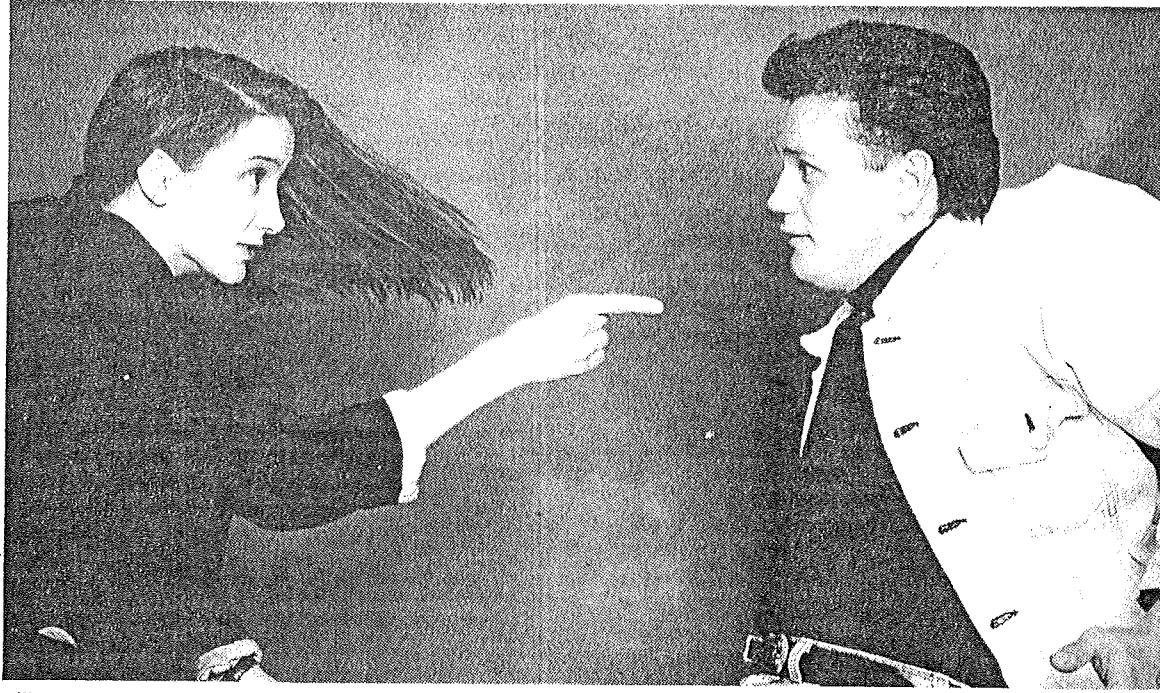
• BY JO LEDINGHAM

David finally gets rid of the room-mate from hell, then the light dawns: he can't pay the rent on his own. And so it begins again. The ad in the paper: "GWM seeks room-mate to share heritage home." The kinky phone calls. An uneasy interview with Curtis, a prospective roomie. And the not-so-enthusiastic handshake as the deal is struck: 400 and some dollars a month plus half the utilities. Curtis moves in under the suspicious eye of Betty, David's friend and confidante from the apartment next door. She's heterosexual and dateless. Curtis is hetero and recently dumped. David is gay.

Sound familiar? Sound like people you know? *Shared Accommodation* by Vancouver playwright Alan MacInroy (*Night of the Stuffed Iguana*) covers a lot of familiar territory in a scintillating and witty way. While admitting that the effects of prejudice are ugly, MacInroy suggests that sexual prejudices are, in themselves, pretty funny. Heterophobia, homophobia, and, yes, even phobiaphobia—all inspire comedy.

Shared Accommodation doesn't attempt to plumb the depths of angst, but flirts with the serious: the pain of rejection, a peripheral death by AIDS, and violence against gays. Mostly it's about caring, and if that sounds corny, don't worry. MacInroy's script is acerbic enough to avoid the sentimental.

The play's ending, however, is slightly unsatisfying. *Shared Accommodation* goes out not with a whimper, but a bang, like throwing a lighted match into a bag of fireworks. This twist offers lots of dazzle and fun, but it's not quite credible. The play is good enough to deserve more. However, the conclusion is just a blip on an otherwise entertaining piece.



Ellie Harvie and Russell Ferrier play the heterosexual sides of a comic triangle in the Vancouver Little Theatre production of playwright Alan MacInroy's funny and thought-provoking *Shared Accommodation*, playing until June 27.

The characters are endearing, engaging, and all too human. Shawn MacDonald (as David) is camp, self-pitying, withering, courageous, and otherwise delightful; Ellie Harvie brings a comically acrid feminism to Betty; and Russell Ferrier (as Curtis) makes believable the otherwise difficult idea that not all bike-riding, beer-drinking heterosexual males are brain-dead. There is good direction by Beata Van Berkum, and great live music from Chris Walker and Larry Kirby.

Shared Accommodation doesn't try to be Great Art, but chances are very good that it will make you laugh out loud—and you may even catch a glimpse of your own sexual stereotyping. ■

Music. Ruth Nichol, Diane Stapley, Sandy Winsby, and Laurie Murdoch are all well-seasoned, well-respected stor/singers with credits a kilometre long. Individually and as an ensemble, they work hard to make it all work. And—mostly—it does work.

But there's a crunch. *Closer than ever* gives me the same kind of knot in my stomach I get from listening to school band, hoping and praying they're all on the same page. Too many times, Shire's score and Maltby's lyrics go off on their own tangents, leaving the singer out there, alone and vulnerable, cantilevered in place. While I appreciate this is the current rage, I don't have to like it.

It's not singable, it's not memorable, and it makes me decidedly nervous.

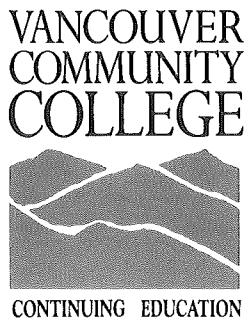
Maybe—like raw oysters—music that's hard to sing is an acquired taste. As it is, I'm immensely grateful for Ruth Nichol's comic styling, Laurie Murdoch's boyish charm and consistently solid delivery, Sandy Winsby's powerful "Next Time", and Diane Stapley's soaringly beautiful voice. Her bitter-sweet delivery of "Patterns" and "It's Never That Easy" are definite highlights. Maltby's lyrics are simply too true, too honest, and too funny to dismiss. Criticism of Shire's music aside, there's still a lot to enjoy, especially if you don't expect to leave the theatre singing your favourite tune. ■

ERNIE POOK'S COMEEK

By Lynda Barry

WHAT IS GREAT ABOUT SUMMER

It's called a compound eye. When he looks at me he sees around 300 of my heads.



May 1, 1991

To Whom It May Concern:

Alan MacInroy enters his second year of teaching in the Writing Program at Vancouver Community College. Writing For The Media, which he designed, continues to be a very popular course in each semester it is offered.

Alan has shown himself to be a co-operative and conscientious instructor who is committed to providing good quality instruction to his students. He is well liked by his students and is rated highly as an instructor.

I am pleased to offer this reference for him.

Yours truly,

Wayne Decle

Wayne Decle
Program Coordinator
Continuing Education Division