

The 'other' theatre companies

Professionals get the glory, but community groups thrive — and sometimes produce stars

By Barbara Crook
Editorial staff writer

They give up virtually all their free time for weeks, sometimes months. They juggle deadlines and impossible demands, just like any other harried professionals, but they're not paid a cent.

And at the end, they get a round of applause, a mention in a program, a sentence in a review — if they're lucky.

These are the members of the amateur theatre community who act, direct, design, sew, build, wire, paint and usher their way through dozens of productions every season.

The National Capital Region has a very active amateur theatre community. Although Ottawa's Lakeside Theatre Productions folded last May after 20 years of productions at the Municipal Drama Centre, most other organizations are going strong.

Top marks in the longevity department go to the Orpheus Operatic Society, celebrating its 80th anniversary this season, and the Ottawa Little Theatre, which opens its 74th season Monday with *First Monday* in October.

Even professional actors occasionally return to the amateur stage, not only to hone their craft but to do plays and roles they may not be offered in professional theatre.

"The Ottawa Little Theatre and other community theatres tend to do plays that people like, that are well-known, and that entertain," says professional actress Abby Hagyard, co-host of *The Breakfast Club* on CPGO Radio, whose amateur theatre credits include the OLT productions of *Barefoot in the Park*, *Happy Birthday and Born Yesterday*.

For the people who aren't professionals, there's also a wonderful sense of being needed. You become an important cog in a machine that requires your personal artistic input, and if you're not there, you're really missed. I don't know too many paying jobs that can give that kind of satisfaction.

Here's a roundup of the most active amateur groups in the area, in order of longevity:

ORPHEUS

Named for the god of music, Orpheus began in 1906 as a mixed-voice glee club, led by Ottawa organist and choirmaster James A. Smith. In 1917, Orpheus began performing Gilbert & Sullivan operettas and musical comedies at the Russell Theatre. It moved its shows to Ottawa Technical High School in 1940.



Above, OLT cast rehearses *First Monday* in October, this year's opening play. Left, a young Rich Little in the 1960 OLT production of *Bus Stop*



In 1947, just 12 days before the scenery for *Naughty Marietta* was due onstage, fire destroyed sets, painting supplies, props and the storage building. Although theatre companies from across the country offered to lend sets and supplies, the company rebuilt and painted from scratch, finishing in time for dress rehearsal.

In 1949, Orpheus bought its own home, the former St. Matthias Church on Fairmount Avenue, which was renovated and expanded in 1961.

Well-known Orpheus alumni include ABC anchorman Peter Jennings, singer Joan Patenaude, Hollywood director Bill Glenn and Stratford Festival musical director Berthold Corrie.

Orpheus presents three shows a season at the High School of Commerce Auditorium. This year's offerings are *The King and*

completely paid for — without a grant or government subsidy.

Distinguished OLT alumni include medians Rich Little and Luba Goy, and actor Saul Rubinek and the late Amelia Hall.

This season features *First Monday* in October (Sept. 22-Oct. 11), *Pack of Lies* (Oct. 27-Nov. 15), *Harvey* (Dec. 1-20), *Mrs. Warren's Profession* (Jan. 12-13), *I'll Be Back Before Midnight* (Feb. 16-March 7), *The Glass Menagerie* (March 23-April 11) and *The Au Pair Man* (April 27-May 16). For more information, call 232-8948.

OTTAWA LITTLE THEATRE

One of the longest-standing amateur theatres in the country, the OLT was started in 1913 by members of the University Women's Club. Then known as the Ottawa Drama League, the group entertained troops in an around Ottawa during the First World War, and started performing plays in the Royal Victoria Museum (now the Museum of Natural Sciences).

Soon after the Parliament Buildings burned down and the museum became the temporary home of the House of Commons, league president Duncan Campbell Scott and Mrs. D.P. Cruikshank raised the money to buy the First Methodist Church at King Edward Avenue and Bessier Street and convert it into a theatre.

On July 1, 1967, the Ottawa Little Theatre burned to the ground. The theatre group managed to move on, first at Algonquin College and then at St. Sallie Academy, until members raised enough money — \$300,000 from insurance, \$250,000 from Ottawa citizens and a \$250,000 loan from the Bank of Nova Scotia — for a new 510-seat theatre on the old site.

The new building, designed by W. E. (Ted) Fancett and Malcolm Bell, opened in February, 1972. Five years later, it was

Theatre

From page C1 story:
The 'other' theatre companies

Kanata, as a theatre company to serve the west end of the city and Nepean Township.

Then known as the Carleton Little Theatre, the group presented its first play, *Barefoot in the Park*, in February, 1969. It has moved around over the years, operating out of Woodroffe and J.S. Woodworth High Schools before settling in its current home at Sir Robert Borden High School.

To identify more with the community, the group changed its name to Nepean Little Theatre in 1982. It presents three full-length adult plays every year, as well as a children's play and a workshop of one-act plays to give experience to new directors and actors.

The season opens with *In 25 Words or Less*, Oct. 24-25, 28-30, Nov. 1. *The Tomorrow Box* is planned for the last week of January, and *Dirty Work* at the Crossroads for the last week of May. These plays are at Sir Robert Borden High School.

The children's play, *Peppercorn's Magic*, will be performed at various locations on weekends from November to January. The evening of one-act plays is scheduled for March in the Graham Park Cultural Centre. For information, call 829-2399.

KANATA THEATRE

Now in its 17th season, Kanata Theatre was started by a group of the young city's original residents, and now has about 1,700 subscribers.

Although participation in the theatre is limited to Kanata residents and Earl of March High School teachers and students, the theatre's audiences come from all over the region to sample its program of comedies, thrillers and dramas.

The season opens with *A Bequest to the Nation*, Oct. 22-23. Other productions for this year are *Key for Two* (Jan. 14-17), *Waiting for the Parade* (Feb. 25-28) and *Whodunnit?* (May 6-9), as well as the annual children's play. For more information, call the box office at 592-1713.

TARA PLAYERS

Tara, which gets its name from the seat of the high kings of Ireland, began in 1975 as an amalgamation of The Dauphin Players and the Irish Society of Ottawa Drama Group, and operated out of Hillcrest High School. In 1978, Tara moved to St. Patrick's Hall, 280 Gloucester St.

The group specializes in Irish plays. This season opens with *The Patrick Pearse Motel* (Nov. 13-15, 20-22), followed by *Juno and the Paycock* (Feb. 26-28, March 5-7) and *The Communication Cord* (April 30, May 1-2, 7-9). Subscriptions are available. For information, call 225-6037.

RA THEATRICAL SOCIETY

This cabaret/variety group is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year with a show called *Taste of Twenty*, which will include some of the popular skills and songs from its history. The revue will be presented March 6-7, 13-14 and 19-21 at the RA Centre.

As well, the society entertains at senior citizens and charity functions, and invites seniors to the centre for an annual Christmas concert. The society is open to RA members. For information, call 741-5678 or 822-1805 evenings or weekends.

NEPEAN LITTLE THEATRE

The Nepean Little Theatre was started in 1968 in Glencairn, which is now part of (Theatre page C14)

SAVOY SOCIETY

The Savoy was started in 1975 by Adrian Sly and Tony Bogert, veterans of the Montreal West Operatic Society. It specializes in the operas of Gilbert & Sullivan, and is open to anyone who can pass an audition or who has other non-performing services to contribute.

This year's major production is *The Mikado*, perhaps the most popular G&S opera, set for early April. The Savoy also has a chorus group which performs in senior citizens' homes, hospitals and shopping malls. Members of the Savoy Society will be performing at a Nepean Arts Council concert Oct. 18 at Sir Robert Borden High School.

The Mikado is already cast, but the group can always use production staff, and is currently looking for a producer. For more information, call president Dave Shilton at 922-2410 (work) or 829-1199 (home).

THEATRE DE VIE

Now in its 11th season, the Hall theatre is best known for its professional work but does an equal amount of amateur productions every year.

This year's community productions, to be presented at the theatre at 1 Wellington St. East, are *Les Larons font l'Occasion* (until Oct. 18), *Coeur de Papa* (March 11-April 18) and *48 heures d'angoisse* (May 6-June 12).

Anyone is welcome to participate. For more information, call Yolande Rivard at 770-3952.

NEW EDINBURGH PLAYERS

Founded in 1980 by Ingrid McCarthy, the Players traditionally present a comedy in the fall and a thriller in the spring, at the Chrichton Street School.

The group has added a third play this season. This season's productions are *The Innocents* (Oct. 16-18, 23-25), *Night of January 16* (Jan. 16-17, 22-25) and *The Noble Spaniard* (April 23-25, 30, May 1-2). For information, call McCarthy evenings or weekends, 741-6084.

GLOUCESTER PLAYERS

The area's newest amateur theatre group started three years ago as the Gloucester Amateur Theatre Association, although most of the current members joined the group in the fall of 1984.

This year's agenda includes Beth McMaster's children's play, *Which Witch is Which?*, to be presented in schools in October and November, and excerpts from last season's smash hit, Neil Simon's *The Good Doctor*, which will travel to nursing homes and hospitals.

The group will also be presenting Agatha Christie's *The Hollow* April 9, 10 and 11 at the Cyrville Community Centre.

The players are looking for a musical director, as well as actors, directors, administrators and other volunteers. Non-residents of Gloucester are also welcome. Call 236-6640.

Kanata Theatre

Rehearsals are underway

by Jennifer Haynes

Whatever happened to Kanata Theatre?

Well, ever since the Mayfair Parade and delightful children's play, Kanata Theatre Clowns have been working non-stop painting the town red, yellow, black and blue, in their usual spectacular way!

From the C.I.E.O. Teddy Bear's Picnic where Kanata Clowns donated \$679.50, two fund raisers for the Q.C.H.F. Palliative Care Unit where donations have also been made, Canada Day celebrations in Kanata, the Mite!, Trillium and B.N.R. annual picnics - to name but a few - not forgetting the yearly climax of the Kanata Clowns year at the Ottawa Central Exhibition, this merry band of painters, headed up by the tireless mastermind of the whole operation, Kanata Theatre's President, Ron Maslin, have soldiered on...

Now, with the onset of Fall, Kanata Theatre prepares for and anticipates an exciting new season, commencing with a high powered historical drama - Terence Rattigan's *A Bequest to the Nation*. Directed by Laurence Thornton, this production will be presented October 22 to 25 with an excellent cast: Barry Caiger, Mary Mauger, Liane Freedman, Neil Robertson, Keith Raney, Mark Popovich, Earl McLaughlin, Mike Kearns, Rosemary Keneford, Marianne Wilkinson, Joan McLaughlin, Elsie Bryant and other members of the Kanata Theatre Group.

With rehearsals now underway, Kanata Theatre promises an excellent opening to their 1986/87 season. Telephone 592-1715.

Kanata Theatre will be participating in the Kanata Community Showcase on Saturday, Sept. 6 between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. at Glen Cairn Public School, where some of the history of Kanata

Theatre and various models of production sets will be on display. Box Office and Membership will be open to interested visitors on this day - visit Kanata Theatre at Booth number 17.

For anyone residing in the City of Kanata, or teacher/student attending the Earl of March High School interested in the world of Theatre Arts, Kanata Theatre are holding their General Meeting on Sunday, September 7, 1986, at the Beaverbrook Community Centre at 8 p.m.

This informal meeting, where refreshments and social chat follow, is a great way to meet K.T. members, and only highlights the dedication and hard work that make this successful group what it is today. New members are always needed, and welcomed.

A busy weekend for Kanata Theatre, but marking the start of yet another busy but happy season!

COMMUNITY

WHAT A
LOAD OF
CRAP!

A youth's brave struggle

I take exception to remarks contained in a recent sports column by Citizen writer Earl McRae.

However, I should delineate my state of mind as to make this commentary intelligible. On a Friday night I was sitting beside my son David Nathaniel McIninch on a bed in Room 8, Four West, of the Chl. B'n's Hospital of Eastern Ontario. His legs were jumping and his breathing inhaled his eyes were bright and his perception keen. He was struggling to gather himself for one last magnificent push against Cystic Fibrosis.

For the past 11 years David had waged an almost superhuman struggle against this nemesis. Three times he had gathered from his own courageous nature enough energy to fight off the viruses and bacteria that were periodically ravaging his lungs, digestive system, and latterly, all else of his body.

Even in extreme distress he looked beautiful — a blue-eyed blond with an infectious smile, a lanky walk and a cheeky sense of humor. He was just past a decade, but coming in on thirty.

That Friday evening the Edmonton Oilers were facing off with the Montreal Canadiens. Dave and I fell immensely humbled by the fact that 1½ millions of dollars were being raised, mostly through the influence of the remarkable lady of 14 Sussex Dr., Milla Mulrenny, to find answers to a disease one friend once called a "real brain drain."

That afternoon Dave had been incredibly excited by a short visit from two classy gentlemen — Wayne Gretzky and Mark Napier. David had played house league hockey in Kanata for six years and, in the midst of his final, terrible fatigue, Dave pulled himself together for a bit of jock-talk. He prized a piece of paper that read, "Best wishes to my friend David from Wayne Gretzky-99."

He beamed. He coughed. He cleared his throat and slipped back on his pillow to rest so he could watch the game.

I then turned to the *Citizen* and read McRae's column and felt as if someone had poured gall on my son's life.

Why bother with CF, the column seemed to say to me. Let's really contribute to a fund for grown, socially-spilled men, who, of their own free will, have succumbed to the long night of substance abuse. An

Letter of the day

admirable idea, I thought, but incredibly inappropriate in the occasion. A tasteless lead.

Why involve the Depford's, some of those who Americans? Why not? They know the suffering of patients, parents and friends as well as anyone and have shared their agony with the rest of the world. They were there. Mr. McRae, their symbolic presence as a real reminder of the human cost of CF.

Then I came across a bit of unprofessional drivel concerning the Oilers and a piece of pretty inelegant reporting in *Sports Illustrated*. A low blow McRae and really beneath your dignity.

I pitched the paper across the room and David read the pain in my eyes.

I felt as if someone had just invalidated the struggle of my son to maintain his human dignity in the face of overwhelming odds. I felt as if someone had heaped scorn on the lives of children, all dear friends of David's, who have succumbed this year — the precious presence of Dimitrios, Nina and Chantal. I felt the wounds possibly inflicted on the parents and friends of Jason, Dexter, Kevin, Michael, Marsha, Andrew and all of the rest of these unbelievable and undaunted children.

And especially of Erin.

Early one Tuesday morning David slipped away to a place where suffering is unknown, surrounded by the loving care of Margaret, Chris, Alice and Diane, his incredible mother and his beautiful grandparents. Four West mourns and I am so grateful to those caring people, those loving nurses, who made a hospital just an extension of my home. To Ann, Noni, Vic, Doug, Alex, John, and all other CHZO staff who struggle daily with this menace, I only hope you have avoided the *Citizen's* sports pages.

No doubt Mr. McRae is a fine and sensitive human being. Unfortunately these qualities rarely surface in his sardonic and meandering prose.

And I have the need to expiate.

As an elderly editor told me once as he glowered over a piece of my inefficient writing, "Crap is crap!" And so it is.

Walter Joseph McIninch
Kanata

David McIninch, 11 year old son of Wally McIninch (Sir Andrew Agnew's son in Twelfth Night 2 years ago) died on Sept. 29th. Kanata Theatre made a donation to the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario as suggested by the family for gifts in memory of David.

BELLEVILLE THEATRE (AND CAROL STRONG)

THE CAST

THE PIRATE KING	Steve Forrester
FREDERIC	Garth Poulin
SAMUEL	Wayne Cardinalli
MABEL	Elizabeth Davidson
RUTH	Carol Strong
MAJOR GENERAL STANLEY	Charles Butler
SERGEANT O'ROURKE	Bruce Coward
KATE	Penny Betail
ISABEL	Sharon Mordy
EDITH	Sharon Poltras
PIRATES	
CLARENCE	Peter Kilcher
BUZZ NOBARGE	Alan Kelly
RICARDO	Richard Kerr
SMEE	Jim Westheuser
WACKY	Keith Bider
MILO	Bob Freeland
ERNEST KOO	Darren Cole
ELMO	Bruce Coward
PIRATES/POLICE	
WHISKEY MAC/CECIL SHARPIE	Cameron Gray
PATCH/MIKE MALONEY	Daniel Mullen
BOTTOMS/HARRY JACKS	John Babiak
GABRIEL/MOXIE PENNIE	Dave Roberts
SPIKE/FRANK FOOT	Paschal Malone
DAUGHTERS	
CORRINE	Annette Couperus
LAUREL	Anne Barber
ANASTASIA	Heather Mohan
JACQUELINE	Catherine Brown
PATIENCE	Janet Graham
ALEXANDRA	Lara Ridgway
ORCHESTRA	
PIANO	Cathie Wiegand
VIOLINS	Marion Stratton, Rosemary Gosse
FLUTE	Lisa Kemp
TROMBONE	Craig Perry
TRUMPET	Bruce Parsons
DRUMS	Dwayne Ellis

ACT I

A rocky seashore on the coast of Cornwall

INTERMISSION: 20 Minutes

ACT II

A ruled Chapel by moonlight

PRODUCTION STAFF

DIRECTOR	Melva Grayson
PRODUCER	Pat Gray
Associate Producer	John Babiak
STAGE MANAGER	Bob Long
Assistant Stage Managers	Clair Westheuser, Karen Miller
SET DESIGN	Wayne Cardinalli
COSTUME DESIGN	Jim Westheuser
SET CONSTRUCTION	Earl Tucker, Wayne Cardinalli, Blair Heeney, Mark Yanover, Ron Caswell, John Babiak, Phil Bowerman
SET PAINTING	Wayne Cardinalli, The Grayson Family, The Forrester Family, The Gray Family, Carol Strong, Keith Bider, Dave Roberts
CHOREOGRAPHER	Gary McLeod
VOCAL COACH	Robert Johnstone
PROPS - Swords	Paul Cowen
PROPS - Swords	Kan Ross
LIGHTING	Bruce Grayson, Jim Alexander
MAKE-UP	Paul Sanderson
SEWERS, GLUERS, DRESSERS	Elizabeth Marshall, Lee Jourard, June Simpson, Fran Moorman, Betty Caswell, Lindsey Forrester, Nancy Gates, Elizabeth Davidson, Karen Miller, Kevin Young
MILLINERY	Kevin Young
SOUND	Lee Jourard
SOUND/GOPHER	Jeannie McNight
PROGRAMME DESIGN	Lindsey Forrester
GREEN ROOM DECORATION	Paul Cowen
FRONT WINDOW	Phil Bowerman
SPECIAL EFFECTS	Mildred Hunt
HOUSE MANAGER	Nancy Chapman, Bev Seemungal
Assisted by	Shirley, Adamczyk, Diane Duggan, Eileen MacGaughey, Vivian Lee, Lou Heeney, Joyce Babiak, Mary Ricketts, Maureen Baskin, Marlene Sutton, Claire Gorcey, Doreen Kitcher, Joyce Babiak
BOX OFFICE	Bev Seemungal, Vera Morton, Bruce Nixon

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THE WHAT'SIT SHOP
RON MASON—MOIRA SECONDARY SCHOOL
FOXBORO FABRICS
WILKINSON
SHOPPERS DRUG MART
ANNE MARIE AQUINO
QUINTE PHOTO SERVICES LTD.
GILBERT & SULLIVAN SOCIETY
JIM ALEXANDER
T.A.S.
THE INTELLIGENCER
TRENTONIAN

—FAMILIES OF CAST AND CREW—