

Kanata Theatre
presents



**The
PRIME
of
Miss
Jean Brodie**

by Jay Presson Allen
from the novel by Muriel Spark

EARL OF MARCH THEATRE

January 27 - 20, 1996 at 8 pm

All tickets reserved \$12.00

Students and Seniors half-price, Wednesday only

Box Office: 829 - 1138

The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie
by Jay Presson Allen

Directed by Jim Holmes

CAST

SISTER HELENA
MR. PERRY
JEAN BRODIE
SANDY
JENNY
MONICA
MARY MCGREGOR
MISS MCKAY
GORDON LOWTHER
TEDDY LLOYD
GARDENER
MISS CAMPBELL

Sandy Wynne
Shawn Abramsen
Bev Brooks
Erika Johnson
Amber Godfrey
Holly Merritt
Meaghan Dickinson
Marg Anthony
David Lavoie
Paul LaRose-Edwards
Ashok Gupta
Carin Goodman



Arts and Entertainment

Jean Brodie costumes challenge designer

Kanata Theatre

Costuming any theatrical production with 18 characters is a challenge, but when the play spans six years in Edinburgh in the 1930s, the job is a brute.

There are 10 school girls in the cast. We first meet some of them when they are 11. By the end of the play they have grown into mature young women of 17. Their clothes must reflect the progression from childhood to young womanhood.

The play seemed a natural choice for Kanata Theatre after its production of *Daisy Pulls it Off* two years ago. That show used many tunics lent by Elmwood School, and it was expected that costumes for *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* would be available from the same source. Unfortunately Elmwood has

discontinued the use of the distinctive green uniforms for its senior students. Costume designer Judy O'Riordan has had to design new outfits for the senior girls.

Miss Brodie, played by Bev Brooks, is in 24 of the play's more than 30 scenes over the same time frame. The playwright makes much of Jean's taste for the flamboyant. O'Riordan has put Jean in a dazzling succession of outfits of the 1930s.

The story, unlike the famous movie which won Maggie Smith her first Academy Award, is told in flashback. The narrator is a nun, Sister Helena, played by Sandy Wynne. O'Riordan has created a full nun's habit based upon that of a prominent order.

This is O'Riordan's first

production for Kanata Theatre, but it is not her first show. A Bridlewood resident and a teacher at Earl of March, she designed the costumes for last year's *Me and My Girl*. As soon as *Jean Brodie* is over, she will turn her attention to the Earl's production of *Crazy For You* for which she is also designing the costumes.

O'Riordan is assisted in the daunting task of dressing *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* by Eufon Williams, Brenda Carruthers, Mary Holmes and Martha Johnstone.

The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie runs Jan. 17 to Jan. 20 at 8 p.m. It is Kanata Theatre's second last production in the theatre of the Earl of March School. Tickets are \$12. The box office number is 820-1138.

ENTERTAINMENT

THEATRE REVIEW

Without menace of misused power, Kanata's Miss Brodie falls short of its prime

The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie

Kanata Theatre

When: Jan. 17-20, 8 p.m.

Where: Earl of March Secondary School, The Parkway, Kanata

Tickets: \$12; phone: 829-1138

By Iris Winston

Citizen correspondent

A charismatic teacher can be inspiring. She can bring books to life and make learning exciting. She can also be dangerous, particularly when she misunderstands the responsibility that charisma carries, blurring the

line between reality and fantasy.

Jean Brodie was such a teacher, a woman who boasted that if a girl came into her charge at an impressionable age, she was hers for life. In her adaptation of Muriel Sparks's novel, playwright Jay Presson Allen portrays an evil, manipulative, deluded woman.

It is, therefore, essential to keep the danger of misused power front and centre if a production of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* is to succeed on all levels. Yet the Kanata Theatre production, which opened Wednesday, frequently pushes it to the background, emphasizing instead the romance and

charm of a teacher who was different.

It seems director Jim Holmes has succumbed to Miss Brodie's superficial charms and her clouded view of the world as a romance novel. The result is a gentle slow-moving tale about a teacher at an Edinburgh school in the 1930s. The production has the authentic look of a private school, but rarely communicates the darkness of the times, though Hitler, Mussolini and Franco are mentioned frequently. Neither does it spell out the future danger for girls encouraged to step outside the moral code of the day. (On opening night, the drama inspired more laugh-

ter than concern from the audience.)

Bev Brooks is effective in presenting Jean Brodie as a charismatic teacher, but less clear in demonstrating the reason for her power. Yet her explosive handling of a key confrontation with school principal Miss MacKay (Margaret Anthony-Lepage) shows the potential is there. Like the Cavaliers and Roundheads of the English Civil War, the battle lines are drawn between the "wrong but romantic" Brodie and the "right but repulsive" MacKay, and the play springs to life.

But the electric charge is cut short by frequent set changes, which slow the

already leisurely pace, and by a lack of chemistry between Brooks and Paul LaRose-Edwards as her erstwhile lover, art teacher Teddy Lloyd.

Anthony-Lepage maintains the steely control of the British headmistress. Erika Johnson, Amber Godfrey, Holly Merritt and Meaghan Dickinson are believable as Miss Brodie's favored pupils, and David Lavoie has a suitably stolid look as her second lover.

But without a constant overlay of menace, the perspective is skewed to Miss Brodie's view of herself and *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* loses much of its punch.

Arts and Entertainment

KANATA THEATRE

Miss Jean Brodie practises what she preaches

Kanata Theatre

It must be said that *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, Kanata Theatre's next production, is a very funny play. The marvel is that it deals so biting with issues that will remain alive as long as there are schools, teachers, and students.

Jean Brodie seems to be everybody's idea of the perfect teacher. Dedicated to her pupils in her prime, she preaches the doctrine that good education is a "leading out" of the best in her charges, as opposed to the con-

ventional view embraced by her adversary, the head mistress Miss McKay, that a certain amount of "putting in" is also involved.

But Jean Brodie does not always, as she confesses very early, "practise what she preaches." We find as events unfold that she is indeed "putting in" the heads of her disciples a variety of questionable notions, with dramatic results.

Teachers like Jean Brodie are still to be found in Canadian classrooms, as is evidenced by recent widely

publicized incidents in Alberta and Nova Scotia. The charismatic teacher with his or her own teaching agenda and with control over impressionable minds is with us still. In this play we begin to understand how this can happen, for Jean is a magnetic personality who charms the audience as well as her students.

Playwright Jason Presson Allen, in adapting Muriel Spark's novel of the same name, has filled the script with wit, romance, drama, and humor.

The title role is played by Bev Brooks. Margaret Anthony makes her first appearance in 14 years as her adversary, Miss McKay. They are joined by a very large cast that includes 10 young people, some of whom are seen to age from 11 to 17

in the six-year time span of the play from 1931 to 1937.

The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie runs from Jan. 17 to 20 at 8 pm in the theatre of the Earl of March Secondary School. Tickets are \$12 with special prices for students and seniors Wednesday

night. The Kanata Theatre box office number is 829-1138.

The production will be Kanata Theatre's second last in the Earl of March. The company expects to be in its new home, the Ron Maslin Playhouse, early in 1996.

BEST BARGAIN IN TOWN

An 'incredibility of books' to give or read over the holidays

By Patricia Skarzynski

I wanted to make a list for

