



Kanata Theatre

by Bill Knight
 The annual production of the year is THE LITTLE CHRISTMAS CAROL, adapted from Charles Dickens' universally popular tale by Shaun Sutton. It will be presented on December 16-17, 8 p.m. and 8 p.m. on Saturday. Since this is our family entertainment season, tickets for this production will be on a sliding scale, with a minimum of \$2.00 for children 12 and under.

The production will be directed under the direction of Maurice Dubras. Since there are 60 actors performing in it, it is a special event which is a tribute to the Julia Lampard School of Dancing, and it is worth seeing. It is the story of a very naughty, obnoxious boy who is reformed. In the script, all stage capabilities have to be used to maximum effect in the production.

This adaptation is a full length play, and as such, may not be suitable for very small children. In any case, it is suggested that children who attend be accompanied by an adult.

As is traditional for our Christmas production, usually a Children's Play gift for children of needy families are being collected. Anyone wishing to participate in this venture are being asked to bring a small wrapped gift.

Supporters:
 Paul Cratchit
 Marley's Ghost
 Spirit of Christmas Past
 Spirit of Christmas Present
 Spirit of Christmas Future
 Tiny Tim

Others:
 Speaking Parts: Ian Holland, Brenda Robinson, Doreen Ross, Brenda Robinson, Chris Robinson, Elaine Bryant, Robin Williams, Joan Williams, Murray Hayes, Betty Francis, Judy Smith, Gill Mayhew, Kathy McEachern, Mike Farrell, Stephen Jones, Agrielle Martin, Neil Robinson, Beverley Wilkinson, Cheryl Knight, Janet Maslin.

Spirits: Pamela Fortner, Heather Hill, Gwen Mayhew
Street Urchins: Marjory Beak, Suzanne Caple, Michelle Chan, Barbara Gagnon, Jennifer Hyndman, Andrea Posa, Larisa Salterton, Students of Julia Lampard School of Dancing.
Carol Singers: Mary Holmes, Mary Mauger, Marianne Wilkinson, Shirley Westwood, Sally Rose, Joan McLaughlin, Pat Carroll, Ted Mauger, Bob Wilkinson.
 Set Design: Ian Maslin. Lighting: Bill Williams.
 (Including the production crew the play involves over 60 members.)



For example, Laurence Thornton, is selected for a nomination by the two charitable ladies, Doreen Ross and Brenda Robinson. This is one of the many scenes in the production. Photo by Bill Knight. Other photos by Bill Knight.

Page 61, The Citizen, Ottawa, Saturday, December 10, 1977

THE LIVELY ARTS



—Citizen photo

A Christmas Carol

There's plenty of Christmas spirit around the Kanata Theatre right now as the company rehearses its production of that old favorite, *A Christmas Carol*. Maurice Dubras directs Shaun Sutton's adaptation of Charles Dickens' classic, which features Laurence Thornton, left, as Scrooge, Anne Horsey as Tiny Tim, and Dewi Williams as Fezziwig, in the 60-member cast. Ron Maslin has designed the set for the production which runs from Dec. 14 to 17 at the Earl of March High School with performances each night at 8 p.m. and a matinee on Saturday at 2 p.m. Others in the cast include John Gilliland as Bob Cratchit, Carl Anthony, Marley's Ghost, Marg Anthony, Pat Carroll and Connie McLeese as the Christmas Spirits, and students from the Julia Lampard School of Dancing.

Entertainment

pages 62-69

Humbug! to imitation of A Christmas Carol

By Betty Swimmings
Assistant music and drama editor

Kanata Theatre's presentation of *A Christmas Carol* is a pale imitation of the old Charles Dickens classic. It's a pity too, because having *A Christmas Carol* as its production the second week before Christmas was so logical and should have been a good lead-in to the festive season.

But Wednesday night's performance at the Earl of March High School was uneven, frustrating experience.

Ches bungled, crew clumsy

The lighting cues were bungled, the backstage crew was incredibly clumsy and noisy, and the timing was painfully slow. The production plodded along like a tired horse and looked as if it could have used another week for rehearsals. This was particularly annoying when I saw the Kanata Theatre company is capable of much better work.

Some of the blame can be placed on Shaun Sutton's adaptation of the Dickens' story. It is really not a good one. The story of the miserly old Scrooge and his reformation is a kind-hearted fable being in well known.

But Sutton can't seem to make up his mind whether he wants to make his version a musical or a drama, and the result is a mishmash of songs, dances and drama, bordering on melodrama. A most unlikely combination.

Director Maurice Dubras didn't help matters much either because he allowed the pace to drag by using too many Christmas carols, which didn't add anything to the story, a ballad sequence just before the spirits visit Scrooge which was entirely unnecessary, and letting the play go on for an hour and a half without a moment of rest.

Watching a pillow fight or, several

small fry run around chasing each other while the adults look on helplessly is really not entertainment.

It wasn't all a disaster though. Ron Maslin's sets were, as usual, apt and practical. (He used a series of well-designed backdrops to help change the numerous scenes as quickly as possible.)

And Dewi Williams was superb as that charming old gentleman, Mr. Fezziwig. His timing was impeccable and his attention to detail was perfect as he gave a particularly fine mime performance of Fezziwig readying himself to leave his office and make his way home to his annual Christmas party. It was a thoroughly enjoyable presentation.

And Brenda Robinson and Doreen Ross, as the two charitable ladies, gave their small parts just the right degree of dignity and humor needed in the roles.


Scrooge not mean enough

As Scrooge, Laurence Thornton sneered every bit of meanness and cruelty he could muster into his role, but he still couldn't look as unpleasant as the miserable old skinflint was supposed to be. He was much more believable at the end of the play as the magnanimous, joyful reformed sinner bent on righting all the wrongs he'd committed.

A Christmas Carol is not one of Kanata's better efforts. It still needs a great deal of work. Songs need shortening, the spirit's parts need to be tightened up (at the moment there is too much aimless wandering about the stage) and the cast needs to spend more time on their lines.

It's a pity Kanata didn't choose to do the real story of Scrooge and leave the musical version to someone else.

A Christmas Carol continues at the Earl of March High School tonight until Saturday at 8 p.m., with a matinee on Saturday afternoon.



kanata theatre

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

by Shaun Sutton
 from the story by Charles Dickens

ninth season
 1977 - 1978

Director's self-indulgence hurts 'Carol'

Journal Review
By Wolfgang Dlos

Take a straightforward little drama and load it with theatrical irrelevancies until the entire un-
wieldy structure collapses.

That's pretty much what happened at last night's opening performance of *A Christmas Carol* by the Kanata Theatre company. Dickens' sentimental aural tricks that made this episode play lose any kind of cohesion, vitality or dramatic tension it might have possessed.

Among its flaws were a choir which marched back and forth across the stage singing intrusive songs, while a tape recorder up staged the actors with a variety of sound effects louder than those used in most Hollywood epics.

Most of the blame can be placed on director Maurice Dubra's appallingly self-indulgent attempt to be inventive at any cost. Certainly a way, but that requires a conviction and consistency badly missing in this production.

As the show opens, we are treated to three children arguing until their mother arrives to soothe them by promising to relate how the elderly miser, Scrooge, recaptured his Christmas spirit.

The ghost appears, a menacing figure bathed in green light and carrying the chains of his past sins hanging down. Howls of wind and a his arrival is so far off that when Scrooge realizes what confronts him, the result is laughable rather than horrifying.

Even the spirit of Christmas Present turns out to be dressed in a jolly red Santa suit, quite inappropriate considering the lines he utters on being "about to die."

It's a perfect example of this director's tendency to ignore his script for the sake of a highly dubious flight of fancy.

Nevertheless, the acting is competent, if uneven. But annoyingly, the audience is constantly distracted from the emotional core of the play by shifting scenery and a lighting plot that resembles the *Battle of Dunkirk*.

A Christmas Carol continues at the Earl of March High School until Dec. 17, nightly at 8 p.m., with a matinee on Saturday at 2 p.m.

A Christmas Carol

The weather outside was stormy. Inside the Earl of March, on A CHRISTMAS CAROL, the atmosphere was also far from ideal.

A combination of technical sloppiness and what appeared to be simply too large a cast, provided a frustrating evening for the audience.

The Charles Dickens classic is familiar to every age group and was an admirable undertaking for an amateur community group. However, on Wednesday night, lighting cues were off, timing was slow and the audience was subjected to backstage banging and clattering.

Director Maurice Dubra did choose his cast well and there were some delightful moments.

Laurence Thornton, as Ebenezer Scrooge, was totally believable in his role as the miserly old skinflint who reforms overnight into a generous kind person.

The two charitable ladies, Brenda Robinson and Doreen Boss, were lovely, adding just the right touch to their portrayals.

John Gilliland was amusing as Bob Cratchit, father of Tiny Tim.

And Dewi Williams was charming as Mr Fezziwig. His mime presentation of Fezziwig leaving his office and travelling home by carriage was perfectly timed and thoroughly enjoyed by the audience.

One cannot leave out the splendid performances of Anne Robinson as a cockney lad.

The dancers of the Julia Lempert School of Ballet were well directed and obviously enjoying their participation in the production. Their costumes were good and the pace of the production picked up with their entrances.

Undoubtedly this play improved with each presentation. It was a big undertaking for Kanata Theatre. However, it set the mood for the holiday season.

To Maurice Dubra, his enormous cast and crew, our thanks and happy Christmas!

Page 62, The Citizen, Ottawa, Thursday December 15, 1977

Entertainment

pages 62-69

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By Betty Swimmings

Artistic taste and drama value

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The story of the miserly old Scrooge and his reformation to a kind-hearted human being is well known.

But Sutton can't seem to make up his mind whether he wants to make his version a musical or a drama and the result is a mishmash of songs, dances and drama bordering on melodrama. A most unlikely conglomeration.

Director Maurice Dubra didn't help the matter much either because he allowed the pace to drag by using too many Christmas carols, which didn't add a thing to the story, a ballet sequence just before the spirits visit Scrooge which was entirely unnecessary, and letting the children in the play get almost completely out of hand with their bits of business going on much too long.

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SCROOGE



























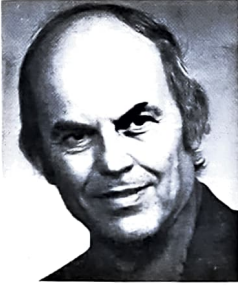




KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOUR

by Connie Monk

(This article appears by Courtesy of Computel Systems Ltd.)



in Sir George Williams College to complete his junior matriculation. After graduation, he and Heather moved to Kingston where he attended Queen's University. It was also at this time that he finally relegated acting to a hobby, not a profession. It was a risky business, and now he had not only a wife, but daughter Sandra to think of.

Lawrence enjoyed university and, in his spare time, worked with the COTC training officer cadets (at the rank of Captain) and acting with the Queen's Drama Guild.

One of the big thrills that year for Lawrence was being selected by Robertson Davies for a part in his play "Fortune, My Foe". Another boost came when he was asked by the head of the English Department to teach English to Engineering Students. Lawrence accepted the challenge, urging the students to regard English as the most practical course they would take in their career. He theorized that once the engineers were in the field, they would have to sell their concepts to non-technical people and, in this way, a command of the English language was essential.

The assignment was a success and for a time, Lawrence considered teaching as a career. It was 1951, however, and the job situation most depressing. Veterans were pouring out on the job market and graduate schools overcrowded. Ph.D's were looking for teaching jobs in high schools.

Lawrence began to toy with the idea of returning to the army on a full-time basis. He decided that if he could retain his rank of Captain (he had left the Army at the end of the war a Lieutenant), he would stay. Administration, however, decided against this, claiming it would be "setting a precedent".

On the advice of a professor, Lawrence next tried some competitions for employment in the civil service. He was hired as a personnel selection officer with the Civil Service Commission in Ottawa, commencing August 1952.

Due to the desperate housing shortage at this time, Lawrence journeyed to Ottawa alone to look for accommodation. After three or four weeks, in desperation, he put an advertisement in the newspaper. Two calls were received, and the Thorntons moved into a home on the Mountain Road.

Their new home was thirteen miles out of the city and very isolated in winter. The Thornton's eldest daughter, Sandra, attended the local one-room school. Neil and Kim, born the year before, stayed home with Heather.

Lawrence enjoyed his new work and decided to fill his spare time by getting back into amateur theatre. He was cast in the role of the father in "Father of the Bride" with the Ottawa Little Theatre. However, the Civil Service Commission sent him out on an assignment to

Regina for a month, forcing him to give up the role. By this time, the family (including Jennifer, born in 1954) was living in the Glebe. They remained at home, while Lawrence left for Regina.

He enjoyed this new experience in the field. When a Regional Director's position became available in Halifax, Lawrence applied. He was successful, and became one of the first to make the move from headquarters to the field, instead of vice versa.

Lawrence was now Regional Director for Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. He loved the work. It was challenging and allowed him to travel regularly throughout his territory. One of the best parts of the job, according to Lawrence, was the fact that "the boss was 5,000 miles away."

In 1961, another regional directorship became available in Edmonton. Again, Lawrence was successful, and the family moved west. His new Alberta territory was stretched from Cardston, near the American border, to the Arctic Circle. The Thorntons liked Edmonton except that it was distant from other cities and, as Lawrence describes it: "very cold for a very long time in the winter."

The Thorntons remained in Edmonton for five years, until Lawrence was asked by headquarters to be the director of personnel, finance and administration for the Treasury Board.

Lawrence made the move back to Ottawa in January of 1966, leaving the family in Edmonton to allow children to finish the school year.

In May, Heather joined her husband in Ottawa to search for a home. By chance, they would up a hectic tour of model homes in Kanata, grabbing all the brochures available. Lawrence had visited the area once before, but had dismissed it as "too rural" for Heather.

This time, however, both were very impressed, particularly with Kanata's spaciousness. They returned every day for a week, and talked to colleagues of Lawrence's who lived there. In July, the Thorntons moved into 20 Kingsford Crescent, one of the first families on the block.

Heather soon became involved in library work and, once again, Lawrence found himself in amateur theatre. The Thornton children had discovered an interesting advertisement in the then mimeographed Kanata Standard and brought it to their father's attention. The ad had been placed by Mary Mauger and invited anyone interested in drama to meet for a play reading at her house. Lawrence soon became a regular.

At first, the group consisted of only twelve to eighteen members. The first spring, they put on two one-act plays, one of which was directed by Lawrence. The second season, it was three one-act plays and the next year they presented a three-act production.

Asked whether he prefers acting to directing, Lawrence pauses momentarily. Always up for a challenge, he regards directing as a lot of hard work, but very interesting. Acting has been part of his life for a long time, however, and he concludes: "I'm happy on stage. I thoroughly enjoy it and I'm keen to get out on stage."

With the rising popularity of the Kanata Theatre, the CBC and the

newspapers always send critics out. How does Lawrence feel about them? He is annoyed when reviews of the same play on the same night differ greatly, but admits that one inevitably rushes out to read them.

Lawrence now works with Consumer and Corporate Affairs as Senior Personnel Advisor (he has been with them for eight years) and enjoys it. The family is all out on their own now and, last year, Heather and Lawrence decided to look for a one-storey home. They learned that the owners of a home they admired on Leacock Drive were looking for a bigger home just like the Thorntons'. On November 20, 1976, the two families swapped homes.

Fortunately for the community (particularly the library and the Kanata Theatre), the Thorntons plan to stay in Kanata. When asked if he has ever regretted not going into professional theatre, Lawrence does not hesitate for a moment. It is one of his first loves, but will always be just a hobby.

"Bah, humbug!" These words have been associated with people who try to put a damper on the Christmas spirit since the days when Dickens first put them on paper in the nineteenth century. But, when you hear Lawrence Thornton grumbling them as Scrooge in the Kanata Theatre's upcoming production of "A Christmas Carol", make no mistake: he is loving every minute of it. Ever since his amateur debut with the St. John the Evangelist Players in Montreal as a young lad of seven, acting has been one of the passions of his life.

Lawrence was born in Westmount, Quebec and received his education at Westhill High School. When he turned sixteen, he quit school and, like so many others in the thirties, began to look for a way to contribute to the family income.

His first job was as an office boy for Eatons, delivering mail throughout the city. Later he worked for Becco Canada, a company which imported major electrical equipment.

Throughout these years, Lawrence had two main interests: Boy Scouts and acting. Lawrence had been a Wolf Cub since he was eight and had remained active in scouting. At sixteen, he and some pals went to the slums of St Henri to run a cub pack there. Every summer, he went to Scout camp in the Laurentians.

His involvement in drama was instigated by his mother. Originally from France, Mrs Thornton had a natural talent for drama, but had not been allowed by her parents to go on the stage. After her marriage, she joined an amateur church group, the St John the Evangelist Players. Naturally, Lawrence and his sister were cast in roles whenever they were available.

In high school, Lawrence had discovered Shakespeare, and at sixteen, he went to study in the Montreal Repertory Theatre School, under the direction of Eleanor Stewart. By this time, he was seriously thinking of trying professional theatre. He acted whenever and wherever he could, but the war broke out and, instead, he joined the army.

After deciding to go into the Royal Canadian Signals, he went to England for Officer Training the following year. Lawrence remembers vividly his passing out parade, on D-Day.

Another significant event of the time for Lawrence occurred while visiting relatives in England. One of their friends, Heather was visiting at the same time. She was a native of London and worked as a radar operator. They started dating and, six months later in June of 1943, were married. The war was still on, however, and for the first three years of their marriage, the Thorntons lived apart, visiting on weekends and seven day leaves, granted every three months.

Lawrence was then transferred to Northwest Europe for signal security work. When the war ended, he was still in Holland and remained there until September. By the end of November, he was back in Canada, but Heather could not join him until May 1946. She had never been to Canada before, but gamely crossed the Atlantic on a tanker with the other war brides and took the train from Halifax to Montreal to join her husband.

Lawrence was determined to continue his education and enrolled