And the Oscar Goes to...

A quick look at Canada's past and present at the Academy Awards

by Julianne Philpott



scene from *Half Nelson*

The votes are in and so is Canada! Several high-profile Canadian films have been nominated this year, and those involved will soon find themselves at the Kodak Theatre during this year's 79th Annual Academy Awards in Hollywood.

Canada has a remarkable track record at the Academy Awards. And in an undoubtedly impressive year for film, Canadians everywhere can be proud that they are a part of the show once again. Since the very first awards in the 1920s, our country's artists have often been recognized for their groundbreaking work in the medium of film.

In 1928-29, Mary Pickford was the first Canadian winner for her part in the movie "Coquette." Recognized for her starring role and as an up-and-coming Canadian actress, Pickford would go on to receive an honorary award for her work in 1975.

In 1941, The National Film Board of Canada (NFB) was awarded the Documentary -- Short Subject award for "Churchill's Island." Over the following years, NFB productions won eight more Oscars. Impressive to say the least, as this number doesn't even include awards for scientific and technical achievements.

It's easy to see that Canadians have been anything but unnoticed in the past 79 years at the Academy Awards. Aside from your classic awards for things such as Best Actress/Actor and Best Film, Canada has received much deserved recognition for more technical aspects of the medium, such as sound recording, special effects, scientific and technical achievements, make-up, design and decoration.

Moving ahead a few decades to the '80s, The National Film Bard of Canada was awarded an honorary Oscar "in recognition of its 50th anniversary and its dedicated commitment to originate artistic, creative, and technological activity and excellence in every area of filmmaking."

More recent decades have also received Oscar's attention. In my opinion, and many others I'm sure, a remarkably progressive film appeared on screen in 1994. Soon after, posters and VHS tapes of "Pulp Fiction" would grace the homes and walls of many frat houses and college dorms. It was the movie to see. It won the Best Original Screenplay award for Quentin Tarantino and Canadian Rogery Avary. With a plot filled by violence, redemption, clever twists, and jumps, no-one was surprised by this win.

In 1997, another debatably great film graced the screens. James Cameron won the Best Director award and Best Film Editing award (with Conrad Buff and Richard A. Harris) for "Titanic." Although most noted as a film that people love to hate, it would go on to win 11 Oscars with another 76 wins and 48 nominations at other awards shows. Pretty damn impressive despite what you may think of the content.

Canada was also recognized for its involvement in the Oscar-winning "Chicago," which was filmed in Toronto. Montreal producer Don Carmody was one of the eight co-producers, and Gordon Sim shared an award for art director. Torontonian David Lee was also one of the engineers who won in the sound category. "Chicago" became Miramax's highest grossing film, excelling at the box office with ticket sales reaching $171,000,000.

Just as former years at the Academy Awards, there is no shortage in 2007. Ryan Gosling, best known for his leading role in "The Notebook," is again nominated for his leading role in "Half Nelson," a story of a high-school teacher with a drug habit who forms a special bond with a young student. A twenty-something from Ontario, Gosling captures audiences with his intense and heartfelt acting.

Deepa Mehta, born in India, but based in Toronto has her latest, "Water" nominated in the Best Foreign Film category. Though filmed in India and entirely in the Hindi language, it is still considered a Canadian submission. This represents the first time a Canadian film that's not in one of our two national languages has been nominated.

Unsurprisingly, the National Film Board of Canada appears again at this year's Oscars. "The Danish Poet," a production by Mikrofilm and the NFB is up for Best Animated Short Film. Writer and director Torill Kove was born and raised in Norway but moved to Canada and studied animation at Concordia University in Montreal.

Remember, the 79th Oscars are scheduled to air from Hollywood on Sunday, February 25th, so tune in and cheer our fine Canadian films as they take their place in cinematic history.

"Unity (1918)" review

by David Arthurs

In the early half of the twentieth century, as developed nations were still counting the bodies from World War I, a flu epidemic swept the world, leaving millions dead in its wake. Though the Spanish flu single-handedly killed more people than all the bullets and bombs of the Great War, it's largely forgotten by reviews of the era. "Unity (1918)", presented this week at Memorial Hall by Theatre UNB, narrates small-town Saskatchewan's struggle with this horrible loss of life. I was privileged to catch an early performance of the show this past Sunday, January 28th. Do yourself a favour and go see Unity during its limited run. Not only is it the best production to go grace Mem Hall so far this school year, it is probably Theatre UNB's most ambitious project to date.

A lot of love went into bringing "Unity (1918)" to the stage. I'm sure we owe many thanks to Professor Len Falkenstein for a keen interest in the source material. The challenging script by accomplished playwright, Kevin Kerr closely emulates Falkenstein's own theatrical preferences. From what I've seen of his previous work, he excels with productions that push the boundaries of traditional theatre. Before I found out that the script was actually written by Kerr, I was sure Falkenstein was responsible. It contains all of his trademarks: a relatively small core cast, sharp monologues that march along the story, thoughtful handling of weighty material, etc. Suffice to say the script and direction are great.

The plot follows local mother-hen, Bea (played by Amanda Spear), and her account of how the flu ravages Unity, Saskatchewan. This isolated farming community has only recently been connected to the rest of the world by telephone. The inhabitants treasure the rustic community. It's as much a part of them as they are of it. As they pine for their loved ones to come home from the war, the flu takes hold. Unity despairs. Preventative measures are installed to lessen the chance of infection, but prove pointless. In the end, no-one gets away without losing someone they love. The story is all at once engaging, illuminating, funny, and heartbreaking.

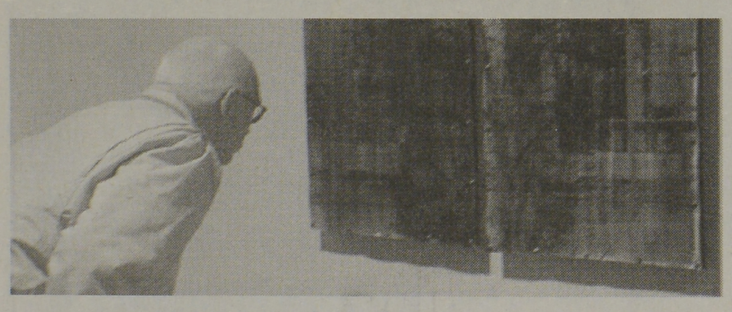
Unity itself is represented by a static set that spans a uniquely laid out stage. In addition to the standard area, the crew has added a raised L that extends through the normal audience space. At the far end of the stage is the exchange station where the town's two operators work. Stage left is a funeral parlour, home to outcasts Hart and his hostess, Sunna the mortician (a dour Shannon Mann performs). Stage right is a train station. The body of the L is a wheat field garnished by telephone poles. Bea's house stands at the bottom of the L. Also towards the bottom, but hung off the balcony is a projection screen used for the unobtrusive display of slide shows and scene names. This novel design provides the actors with a vibrant environment to explore.

Everyone in the cast does a great job bringing their characters to life. Forgive me if I pick out a few of my favourites; there's something to love in every role. Bea maintains a stoic front as her town falls apart. Even though Spear was suffering from a real-life cold, she still had excellent presence through the whole performance. Somewhat of a foil to Bea is her younger sister, Sissy (played by Emily Carter). She's impetuous and charming in her portrayal. I'm also a big fan of Christopher Campbell's character, Hart. In his hands, the blinded war vet had me chuckling non-stop. It was the laugh-with kind of laughter though, I'm sure. In the end, it's Hart who delivers the most touching moment on stage as he helps Bea see herself for who she really is.

Binding everything together is the quaint, yet haunting score performed live by Salty Hen. The fiddle, acoustic guitar and banjo trio provides the perfect accompaniment to the action on stage. I've been told by band member Pat Hanley that everyone in attendance should bring an extra $5 to purchase their very own copy of Salty Hen's Greatest Hits. (Mention this article and Pat will recite a poem in Old English just for you!)

Congratulations to all involved for bringing this difficult play to life. They've worked hard, and it shows in the high quality of the entire production. Catch "Unity (1918)" from January 31st to February 3rd at Memorial Hall. Curtain time is 8:00PM. Tickets cost $10 for general admittance, or $6 for students, and are available at the door. Phone 447-3078 or email lfalken@unb.ca for more information.

Emerge submissions



Internet

by Mark Cameron

The Emerge Artists Collective is now accepting applications for new members. We are a group of emerging artists that encourages member development through the sharing of skills and experience related to the exhibition process. We have had nine exhibitions to date and have several more in the works. We are currently participating in a show called Equilibrium at Memorial Hall on the UNB campus, so drop in there if you would like to see an example of our work up close. You can also see some of our work on our website,

www.emergeartists.ca.

If you are interested in joining us, please email 10 high-resolution photos of your work to emergejurying@gmail.com, along with a short bio and artist statement (roughly 200 words each) and a paragraph about why you want to join Emerge.

The application deadline is February 1st, 2007. We will render our decision by March 1st.

Coffee house at Neill

by Josh O'Kane

This Friday Night at 7 pm comes Neill House's annual coffee house and silent auction in support of the Canadian Cancer Society. Part of the house's year-long efforts to raise money for the cause, it sits near the end of Neill Week, an eight-day celebration for students who live in the co-ed residence.

Michelle Graves is Don of Neill House, whose efforts to raise money for the Canadian Cancer Society is a year-long endeavor. "We have a goal this year of raising $20,000," she says. "The annual coffee house is one of our biggest fundraisers."

At the moment, the house has raised about $6,000 for the cause. With the coffee house coming up, combined with several other events throughout the week, this number is bound to grow well beyond its current size.

"The students have been fundraising since they arrived in September," says Graves, and "they have been working on organizing this since before Christmas. Students have done a lot of work into making this bigger and better than ever."

Ed Cullinan is President of Neill House, and, thanks to months of work, is ready for the coffee house. He, as well as Charity Rep Jenna Rix and the rest of the house team, have been working hard for the event.

"We started talks back in October," he says, "Originally it was supposed to be in March. We decided to move it so that it would not put so much pressure on the incoming house committee."

The House Committee traditionally is elected by March and come into effect after the break, which left them little time to organize such a large event. "That made it so we had to start lobbying for donations in early November, and all the way up until the show."

Such donations take the form of items to be bid on for the accompanying silent auction.

Michelle Graves describes some of the prizes to be auctioned off. "We have lots of gift certificates, dinners for restaurants in the community, merchandise from Subtowne and the bookstore and on campus resources. We have some merchandise, UNB backpacks, clothing from some of the stores in town, jewelry, and even bus passes, like Acadian Lines bus passes to Halifax."

Regardless of what they already have, donations for the auction are still welcome and can be submitted for donation right up until the evening before the show on Thursday.

The auction will be open all day in the SUB lobby by the Paper Trail from 11 am to 4 pm, and then from 7 pm until the end of the intermission of the coffee house.

Graves says that, with the daytime auctioning as well, "we're hoping that faculty and staff will come over and bid on the prizes as well."

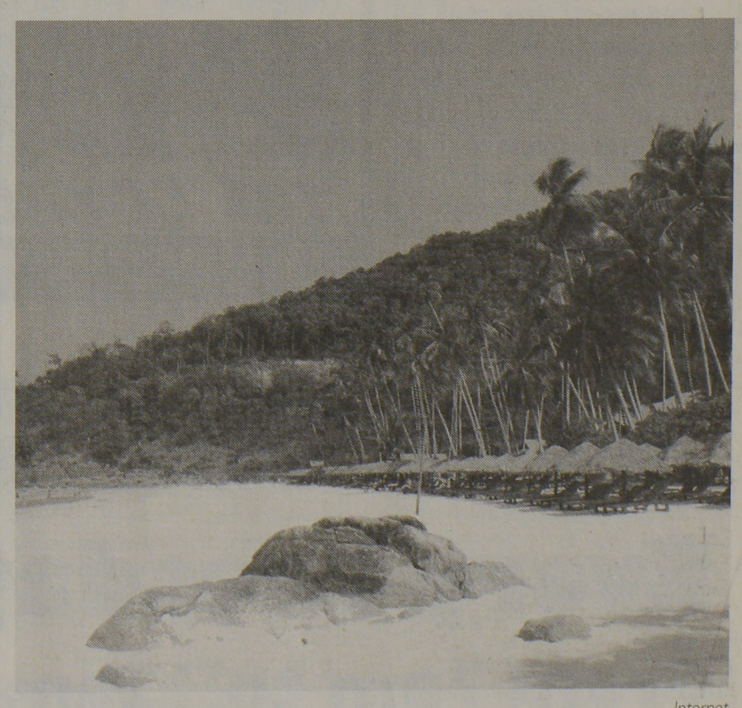
The coffee house itself, emceed by Neill House Alumni Alex Hendry, will take place in the SUB ballroom at 7pm Friday night, and costs $5 in support of the charity.

Ed Cullinan is excited for how the event will go, and, at the coffee house, will actually be playing a song with Cory Roberts, both of whom are in the band Tommy Guns.

He's also excited for how much it will raise for the Canadian Cancer Society, and encourages people as always to donate to the cause, even if they aren't bidding at the silent auction or going to the coffee house

For the event, he says, "with our goal of $20,000, we look to raise a good chunk of that change."

Malaysian Cultural Night



Internet

by Adeline Ang

The Malaysian Students' Society is hosting their annual Malaysian Cultural Night on February 3rd (Saturday) at 6:30 p.m. in the UNB Student Union Building Cafeteria. This year's theme, "Pulau Idaman, Paradise Island," highlights the beautiful islands in Malaysia. The swaying palm trees, white sandy beaches, crystal clear seawaters, and kaleidoscopic sight of coral reefs are an island enthusiasts' paradise.

Almost three-fifths of Malaysia's 330,000 square kilometre land mass is covered with tropical rainforests. They act as home to a diverse range of exotic, rare and protected flora and natural wildlife. The warm tropical climate is attributed to a fortuitous location in the heart of Southeast Asia. Malaysia's natural treasures promote fascinating outdoor activities and introduce this place as a premier eco-tourism destination.

Malaysia possesses a population of about 25 million. Malays, Chinese, and Indians are the three major races. This cultural mosaic is woven by many different peoples, creating a uniquely diverse heritage. There are cultural performances and demonstrations on Malaysian Cultural Night. Multicultural dances, Wushu (Chinese martial arts), and "Teh Tarik" (pulled tea) are a few from the program list.

Malaysia presents an array of gastronomic delights due to its myriad cultural influences. Malay, Chinese, and Indian cuisines will be offered in buffet-style at the event. Food and desserts such as Satay, Sambal Eggs, Fried Wanton, Veggie Curry, Red Bean Soup and more will be served, catering to various tastes.

There will also be exhibitions, souvenirs, and decorations, providing the Fredericton community with better insight into Malaysian culture. Tickets are available at the lobbies of Head Hall, Tilley Hall, the SUB and Friendship Convenience Store. Those dressing according to theme will be eligible to win prizes. For more information, please contact msscomm@unb.ca. Looking forward to meeting you there!

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