

Willing to to pay the Price for theatre

Prince George enters 'big' time with a professional troupe based here

Canada's newest professional theatre company is raising the curtain in Prince George.

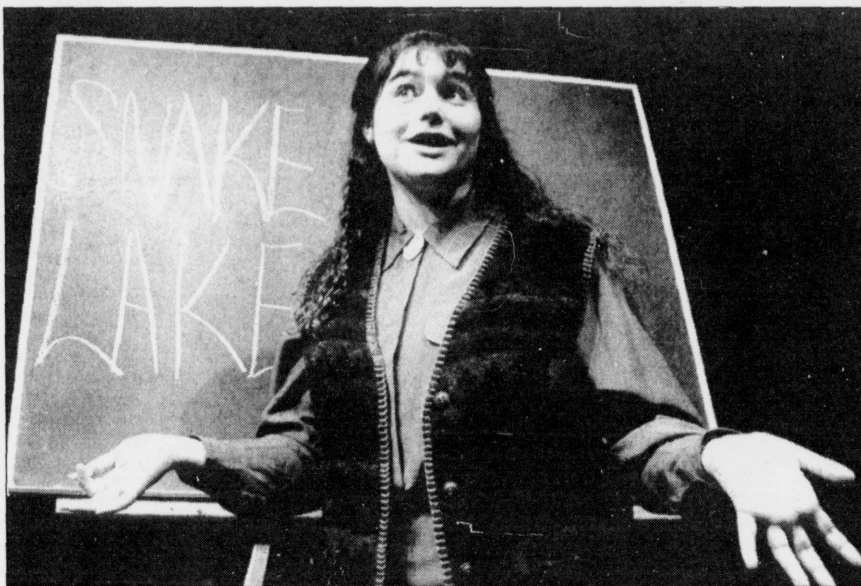
Theatre NorthWest has one show up and running and another in rehearsal for the spring. And that's just the beginning.

"There is a real concern in Canada that professional arts are too centralized. There's a greater need for all the arts in Canada," says Ted Price, the company's founder and artistic director.

There may only be nine professional theatres across Canada, but Mr. Price and his partner, Anne Laughlin, decided to set up in Prince George. The pair first visited Prince George as guest artists on contract with the Theatre Workshop. Once in town, they began to feel a real momentum in the community for professional theatre, but very few opportunities for professional actors. "Some people think that just because it says professional it's like a business or entrepreneurial and it's not at all," explains Mr. Price.

As an actor and an artistic director, Mr. Price has experienced theatre production from all aspects. He stresses that theatre is always produced at a loss and that the title of professional does not necessarily mean better money. "It's just like the symphony, which is a non-profit society, but they hire professional musicians who have their training and have all the skills," he emphasizes.

"Our mandate is to contract and engage people with professional training to provide and produce theatre for the region,"



First show: Jennifer Cundy-Ma plays the lead role in the Occupation of Heather Rose PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

says Mr. Price. Theatre NorthWest is attracting actors from all over Canada bringing the best that there is to Prince George.

Part of NorthWest's mandate is to make theatre more accessible to Northerners. The Theatre is going to be presenting to a number of communities throughout the North.

The productions will also be presented to groups or organizations who are interested in the material.

The Theatre's first production, The Occupation of Heather Rose, is being performed in Prince George and surrounding communities throughout October and November. The next productions are in Quesnel on November 4 and Hixon on November 2.

The Occupation of Heather

Rose is the story of a young nurse who begins her career by working on a remote Native community. She soon realizes that her naive expectations lead to endless misadventures, both funny and sad.

"After the show people always want to talk to us about the play," says Ms. Laughlin.

Mr. Price adds the topic of Heather Rose is very relevant in the North. "People at the end of the show want to hang around and talk to us and relate their experience."

"It could be anything from people who worked in the health field in the North, bush pilot, teachers or even just pure travellers," he says.

Amadeus, the award-winning

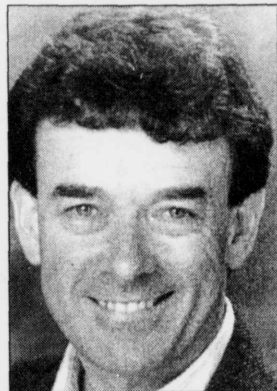
play about Mozart, will be featuring February 9 to 19. The play is a co-production with the Prince George Theatre Workshop.

The final play NorthWest is featuring this season is Shirley Valentine.

The play evolves around a middle-aged woman who is unhappy in her marriage and decides to take control by going to Greece to find herself. The show will be presented from April 4 to 23.

The pair guiding Theatre NorthWest consistently point out that "all theatres in Canada are non-profit, except for the mega productions like Miss Saigon."

"Always produce theatre as a



Price: Making theatre more accessible is the goal



Laughlin: All theatre in Canada is non-profit

loss and then you have to do fundraising," explains Ms. Laughlin.

The end result, however, is a flourishing art scene in the North.

Prince George is a fast growing community with people like Ted and Anne coming here offering more and more to the community.

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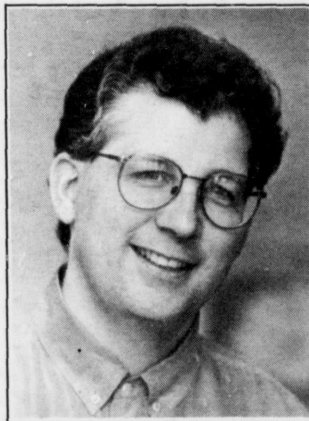
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