Frederic Wood Theatre

ANTIGONE

University of British Columbia

Frederic Wood Theatre
presents

ANTIGONE

By
Jean Anouilh

Directed By
Brenda Leadlay

October 11-15
1988

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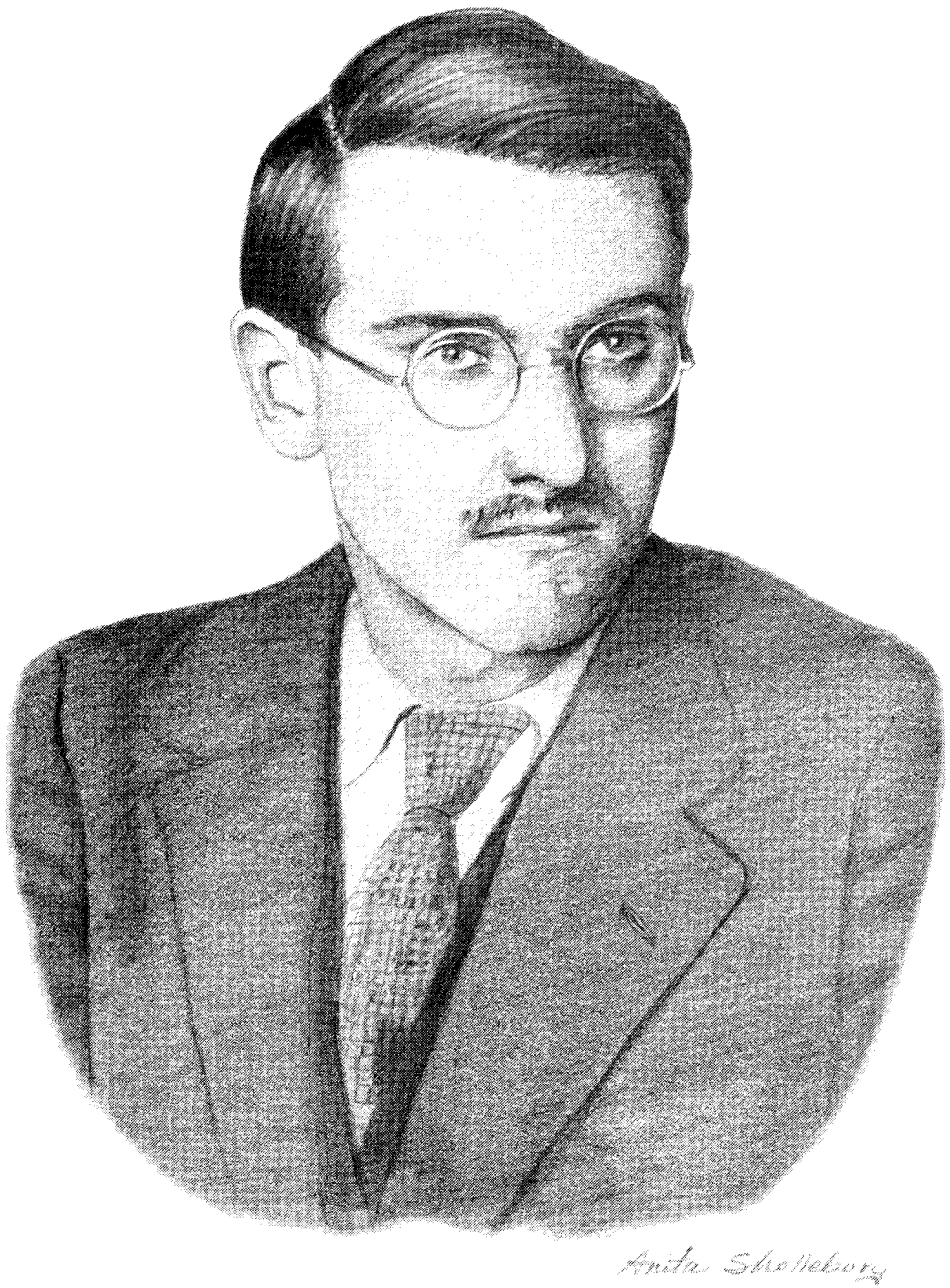


Anouilh on Anouilh

I have now occupied myself for some time with the theatre and with such success that I appear to have attracted an uncomfortable amount of attention. Some have explained this by saying that I am a skillful technician of the well-made play. I take this as a compliment, for my father was a tailor's cutter, a simple and honorable man who was an expert at his work and took great pride in it. I have always wished that I would be as good a handicraftsman as my father if the practice of literature should escape me.

* * *

We are in the process of eliminating the concept of the "well-made play" now that it has reigned supreme in the theatre until it has become mummified. Pirandello decided one day to eliminate it with a stroke of genius: *Six Characters in Search of an Author*. But despite this summary execution, despite everything that we can do, each in accordance with his ability, despite all this acuteness and patience -- where are we? We look like the eternal pupils who have to take their exams once again.

* * *

A play must be written and played better than real life. Life can be very nice, but it has no form. Art does nothing but give it this form and make it by all means at its disposal truer than reality.

* * *

Drama does not offer solutions. Drama cannot offer solutions. But it should train us to see the complexities of this world, the immeasurable shading of every argument, the wholeness of conflicting issues, and thus the truth.

* * *

Conflict - the clash of wills, the clash of temperaments, the clash of people - has always been an integral part of world drama. Conflict - either subtly disguised or openly visible - is at the very centre of all of my plays.

Jean Anouilh:
A Brief Chronology

1910
Jean Anouilh is born on June 23, near Bordeaux.

1918-29
Anouilh's primary and secondary education is in Paris; he studies law briefly at the Université de Paris.

1929-31
Anouilh works as a copy writer for an advertising agency, and also as a "gag" writer for the movies.

1931-32
Works as secretary to Louis Jouvet at the Comédie des Champs Élysées.

1932
Anouilh writes *Jézabel*, which is not performed. *L'hermine* is staged at the Théâtre de l'Œuvre. Decides to devote himself exclusively to the theatre.

1935
Y avait un prisonnier is staged at the Théâtre des Ambassadeurs, March 21; film rights are sold to Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

1942
Eurydice is staged at the Théâtre de l'Atelier, December 18, directed by André Barsacq.

1944
Antigone is staged at the Théâtre de l'Atelier, February 4, directed by André Barsacq.

1951
Colombe is staged at the Théâtre de l'Atelier, February 11, directed by André Barsacq.

1952
Publishes *Trois comédies de Shakespeare* (adaptations of *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, and The Winter's Tale).

1953
Anouilh adapts, with Paule de Beaumont, Eugene O'Neill's *Desire under the Elms*, which is staged at the Comédie des Champs Élysées, November 5.

1954
Adapts, with Claude Vincent, Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, which is staged at the Comédie des Champs Élysées, October 29.

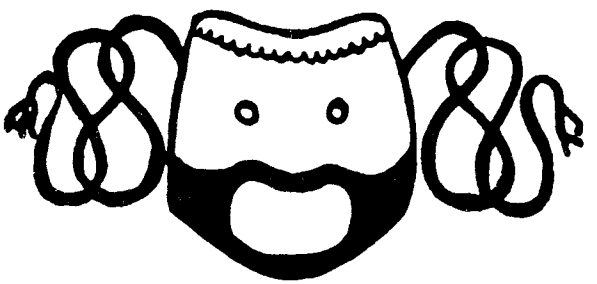
1959
Becket: ou, L'honneur de Dieu is staged at the Théâtre Montparnasse, October 8, directed by Jean Anouilh.

1962
Anouilh adapts, with Nicole Anouilh, Graham Greene's *The Complacent Lover*.

1964
Adapts William Shakespeare's *Richard III*, which is staged at the Théâtre Montparnasse.

1971
Becket enters the repertory of the Comédie Française.

1987
Dies in Paris.



Interpreting Antigone

Paris under Nazi occupation - February, 1944: a bitter winter, power failures, freezing theatres, and air-raid sirens. But the Parisians flocked to the *Atelier*, drawn by the figure of Anouilh's Antigone and her example of strenuous resistance against the cruel authority of the Occupation. In her cry of "No!" they heard the voice of their own refusal to capitulate to inhuman subjection; and in her determination to die rather than submit they saw an image of the Resistance fighter's morality of refusal.

How could the Nazi censor have licensed such subversion? His interpretation of Anouilh's play, we can only infer, must have located its primary significance in the bleak political experience of Creon, the King. Predisposed to grant Creon the force of his arguments, the censor would have heard a voice lamenting the hardships of government, persuading the audience of the need to do one's work in a conscientious way, to say "Yes!" to the difficult demands of life. The man is no tyrant, no villain in a melodrama. He leaves the tragedy a softened and almost sympathetic figure, holding the hand of a small child and facing up to his responsibilities.

It seemed, after the liberation, that these radically different interpretations of *Antigone* had been shaped by the political pressure of the time. Instead of a call to resistance the Parisian theatre-goers now heard a rejection not of Nazi oppression but of existence itself - a cry of "No!" against all happiness, and a vehement dismissal of life's many satisfactions as cowardly forms of compromise. In the United States (where the right to the pursuit of happiness is a self-evident truth) Anouilh's play suddenly becomes unsuitable for performance and Katherine Cornell, the actress who had purchased the rights, found herself having to play a heroine whose death was simply incomprehensible. Lewis Galantiere was commissioned to "adapt" his translation, and the result is a peculiarly American interpretation of *Antigone*: an heroic assertion of freedom against tyranny, of the primacy of moral law and the sanctity of human dignity. Sophocles would have been delighted. But this is not Anouilh's play.

Interpreting *Antigone* would seem to depend upon a range of factors: the political climate of the time, one's personal tendency to favor one or other side of the argument, the infinite possibilities of the Antigone myth itself. Few plays have been so compulsively mined as a source for later dramatists, and each new version of the myth in itself constitutes a new interpretation of Sophocles' original play. Brecht's version sees her as a failed political anarchist who strikes before the iron is hot. The Living Theatre turned *Antigone* into an anti-Vietnam War protest. In Athol Fugard's South African restatement of the tale, two black political prisoners enact a self-defeating myth of love in the confines of Robben Island. Broadway has just seen Gurney's *Another Antigone*... The list is endless. George Steiner has written a book on the hundreds of *Antigones* which have reinterpreted the story of the girl who buries her brother in defiance of the state.

But there are two traditional interpretations of Sophocles' play which have shaped the way in which we read the myth, and which have permeated the modern consciousness as decisively as Freud's reading of the *Oedipus*. Both derive from the early Nineteenth Century, and exist in extraordinary contradiction of each other. The first of these is Hegel's. The play, for him, is a model of dialectical progression - an image of the mind's evolving processes and the forward movement of human history. We advance through creative conflict, through the collision of equally balanced forces of moral right: the human Right of Antigone to bury her brother against the right of the State to overrule individual motive in the interests of the community. Both Antigone and Creon are ethically impelled, and both are equally convincing - even though their arguments cancel each other out and end in destruction and self-defeat. This, surely, is how the Nazi censor must have read the play: through Hegelian spectacles which viewed Creon's position without prejudice and which foresaw a long-range optimism in the denouement - a vision of an ethically sensitive ruler who finally acknowledges the validity of his antagonist's values and can incorporate them in a marvellous political synthesis of contraries. This interpretation is perfectly consistent with Anouilh's play. The text will support the reading at a number of levels. But it is utterly at odds with the other great interpretative tradition of the period.

For the Danish philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard, there are no ethical imperatives to motivate Antigone, no hope of some ultimate good deriving from her suffering. His *Antigone* is a myth of the impenetrable mystery of human identity - a play about a girl who is both sister and daughter to the same man, utterly alone and indefinable. Her status is among the elect, and her destiny is to find her *self* among the dead, in the company of Oedipus. Kierkegaard's heroine is driven by the dark psychological motive to self-fulfillment through self-destruction; and, as Anouilh puts it, we may never understand the fever that consumes her. This is the Antigone who co-exists in Anouilh's text with the Hegelian Antigone: the kinswoman of Oedipus, impatient with life, and fanatically dedicated to a lonely isolation in her absurd selfhood. The Kierkegaardian interpretation of Antigone is explicit in every explanation that Creon offers of her extraordinary mode of suicidal conduct.

How, finally, do we interpret Antigone? Perhaps, as George Steiner claims, we must leave the theatre *undecided* and willing to ask the insistent questions that admit of no simple solution. At what point does a conflict of ethical opposites modulate into a conflict of extreme and obsessive follies? When does the life-affirming "Yes" of Creon tip over into the shame of collaboration? When does the passionate resistance of Antigone's "No" disintegrate into an uncompromising rejection of life itself? Anouilh's *Antigone* permits our indecision, but not our indifference to the issues he raises.

Errol Durbach

Professor Errol Durbach is Head of the Department of Theatre at U.B.C.

ANTIGONE

By
Jean Anouilh

Directed By
Brenda Leadlay

Set Design By
Robert Gardiner

Costume Design By
Mara Gottler

Lighting Design By
Bill Rasmussen

CAST

Chorus . . . . . Errol Durbach

Antigone . . . . . Allison Sanders

Ismene. . . . . .Kathleen Duborg

Haemon . . . . . James Binkley

Eurydice . . . . . Michelle Stoppa

Nurse . . . . . Laura K. Burke

Page . . . . . Ira Winrob

Messenger. . . . . Peter Wilds

First Guard (Jonas) . . . . . Timothy Hyland

Second Guard . . . . . Glen Thompson

Third Guard . . . . . Kurt Eby

Time: Present

Antigone
is produced by special arrangement with
Samuel French (Canada) Inc.

PRODUCTION

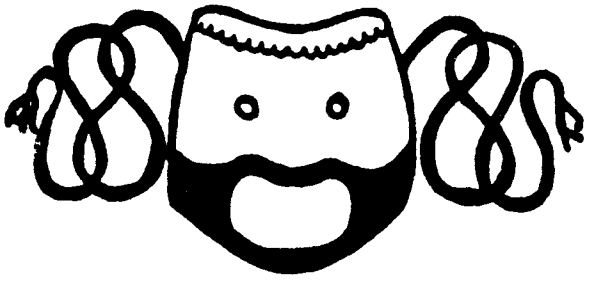
Technical Director. . . . . .Alan Brodie
Stage Manager . . . . . Nik von Schulmann
Assistant Stage Manager. . . . . Nick Davis
Properties. . . . . Randall Plitt
Rehearsal Assistant Stage Manager. . . . . Erin Jarvis
Wardrobe Mistress. . . . . Catherine King
Costume Assistant. . . . . .Jill Buckham
Scenic Artists . . . . . .Kairiin Bright, Paula Pryce, Siobhan Ryan
Properties Assistant. . . . . Colin Lim
Sound Designer. . . . . Darryll Patterson
Sound Operator. . . . . John Henrickson
Lighting Operator. . . . . .Corin Gutteridge
Follow Spot Operator. . . . . Randall Plitt
Make Up. . . . . Nick Davis
Sculptors. . . . . Heike Anderson, Alan Brodie,
Nancy Canning, John Henrickson
Lighting Crew. . . . . Bruce Cobanli, Carol Evans, Glen Winter

Costume Supervisor. . . . . Chelsea Moore
Set Construction. . . Don Griffiths, John Henrickson, Robert Moser
Costume Cutter. . . . . .Jean Driscoll-Bell

Box Office . . . . . .Carol Fisher, Linda McRae, Jason Smith
House Manager . . . . . .Tracy Holmes
Business Manager . . . . . Marjorie Fordham
Production . . . . . Robert Eberle

Acknowledgements

CBC
Island Paper Mills Ltd.
Alan Salloway
UBC Gates Hair Fashion
Sarah Marshall



Antigone

A Presentation of the Play

"ANTIGONE": Jean Anouilh projects his "tragedy", in contemporary clothing, on the very steps of that Greek temple which we all carry within ourselves, in the very aura of the Greek legend. Sophocles' prestige and an atmosphere of Greek wisdom still suffuse these ancient tragic figures: Antigone Ismene, Creon, themselves imbued with the blind light of Oedipus' drama.

What differences, however! Whilst he revives the subject of Antigone's devotion up to self-sacrifice, the theme (that conflict between divine and human laws) and even the dramatic mould of the play, Anouilh suffuses it with quite a different spirit. "Never was Sophocles betrayed so well," under the guise of following the Greek tragedy's pattern and rhythm.

A series of scenes first build upon each other, like steps to support the central scene, the expected confrontation between Creon and Antigone. At the beginning are the ascending degrees of a pathos loaded with tragic anguish because of the Chorus's warnings and Antigone's alarming secrets: - the good nurse scolding a girl who gets out of hand - the first revealing conflict, between the two sisters, the too careful and dutiful Ismene and the foolish Antigone, who refuses to understand the adults' reasons, precisely because she wants to live - and the bitter farewell scene between Antigone and her fiancé Haemon, in which the burning call to tenderness turns into a blunt breaking off. But the guard arrives, bearer of bad news: someone has infringed the King's orders, someone has covered the corpse of Polyneices with earth. Then the Chorus comes on and, with a sigh of relief, stresses the heroes' accession, beyond the vulgarity of drama, to the superior kingdom of tragedy.

For the spectator, Antigone will henceforth embody the romanticism of childhood, or rather of an image of childhood, prolonged, preserved, supposed to be a marvelous place of fullness and purity; this does not prevent her from showing quite a surprising firmness of character. The confrontation with Creon will reveal to her more of herself, bringing her to cry aloud what she was not yet aware of. Antigone's arrest, of course, follows; a symbolical scene, opposing the delicate girl to the materialistic vulgarity of the guards, coarse people reeking of garlic, leather and red wine.

This is also a prelude to the face to face encounter between uncle and niece, in which the frail girl will appear a singularly tough and argumentative person (as opposed to the gentle and pious Greek heroine who does not rebel against Creon). Concerning this long discussion - about one third of the play; and one of the strongest, most striking scenes of contemporary French theatre - it has not been stressed enough that it is structured, punctuated by silences (accompanied by stage movements; Creon taking off his jacket, etc.). The long scene is thus divided into five or six successive parts. At first, the uncle resorts to protective intimidation, to frighten and soften this urchin of a niece, while she is still invoking her religious and human duty. - Soon, after a silence, the debate reaches a new level, the awareness of the absurd: religious rites, as the antagonists confess to each other, are but a derisory comedy. What, then, is left to Antigone except the pride of her self-determination, with its existentialist overtones; I did it "for no one else. For myself." - The third part, confronting the absolute "yes" and "no", Creon's political realism and Antigone's uncompromising idealism, seems to resound with the heroine's moral victory; she does her utmost to stress the baseness of a King's job, while raising herself by her very refusals to a Queen's nobleness ("Tragedy is for Kings," as the Chorus had announced). - Silence - . As a last attempt the exhausted Creon discloses that Eteocles and Polyneices, those revered brothers, were actually despicable hoodlums, low brutes. Then, at this climactic moment of the play, Antigone, wounded, suddenly hesitates: "I am going back up to my room." Is this Creon's victory at last? - A long silence - . Fifth part: Creon, alas, starts again, in a humble voice, offering the prospect of a mediocre, resigned, bourgeois happiness. A fatal mistake, since Antigone pulls herself together and explodes with exasperation in a final revolt: "I am fed up with your happiness!" Hadn't she refused it from the beginning? This provocative attitude gets the desired result: "Guards, take her away!"

Now the game is over. And the tragic cascade of a stormy denouement links together the various catastrophes: Haemon's revolt, in a harrowing confrontation between father and son, between the adult's disillusioned lucidity and the nostalgia of confident childhood: - Antigone's ultimate attempt to communicate with human beings, orally with the guard, in writing with Haemon: "I no longer know why I am going to death": - the report of Haemon's suicide at the feet of Antigone hanged in her cave; - the report of Eurydice's, Creon's wife, suicide; - the final solitude of Creon, still on his way to his 5 p.m. Cabinet meeting; like a robot, crushed and emptied? or as a stoic philosopher resisting the absurd? One does not know.

From all these debates, or rather commitments, a question inevitably arises: whose attitude is the right one? Who is right, Creon or Antigone?

Creon, after all, is something other than a despicable anti-hero. Should one summarily tax him with mediocrity, moral weakness, political cynicism? Actually, Anouilh's Creon, more dignified and human than the Greek one, has accepted the unenviable part of leader out of "honesty". When he said "yes", it was not without courage. He is like the Orestes of Sartre's Play *The Flies* (1943), who would have agreed to govern Argos. He even assumes a certain greatness in his abnegation, his sorrowful solitude. He is, henceforth, condemned to political realism, which is not the best role, he knows, but rather an absurd and futile job, like many. But "you still need someone to steer the boat," as Creon stresses in one of his tirades, so wonderful in their energetic expressiveness. The trouble is that, by obeying the reason of State, one ends up firing into the crowd, at men who no longer have names; or killing a niece without really intending to, after many efforts to save her. Can the lucid awareness of his choice, and his endurance through his ordeal (whether stoic or stupefied) save Creon, morally? He remains a prisoner of his role as chief of State. But isn't he right at least to protest: "It's all too easy to say 'no'," to existence; it is harder to say yes.

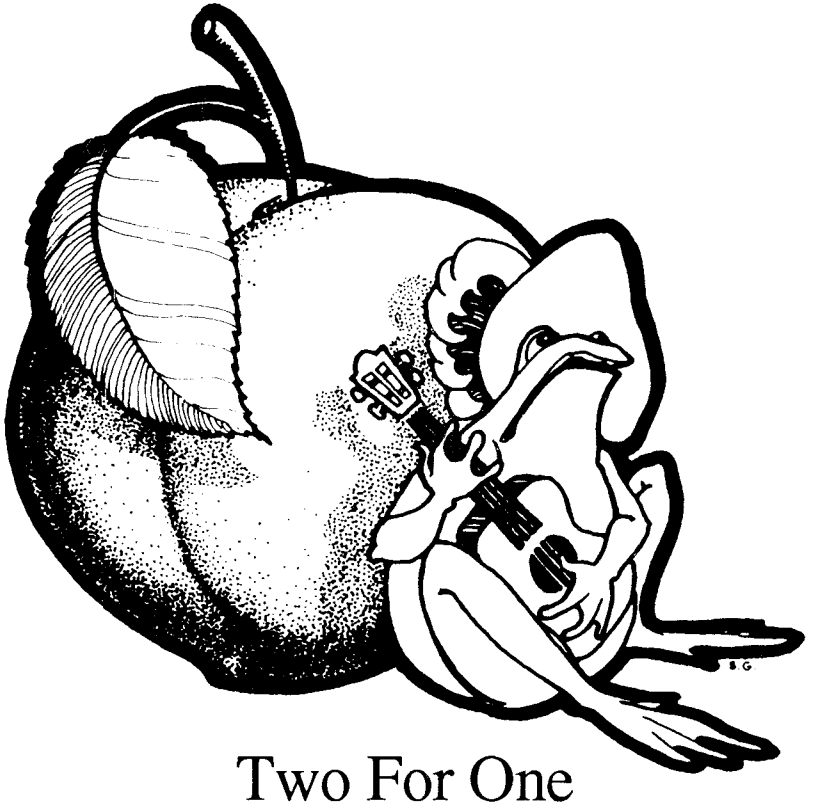
Witness here Antigone, the small, dark, ugly and nasty-tempered girl, taking pleasure in avenging herself on those adults who didn't take her seriously. Don't her constant refusals to understand, her categorical imperative of the "all or nothing" make her, in a sense responsible for what may be called her suicide? In the end, is her heroism, tainted with arrogance and nihilistic anarchism, not complacent selfishness, lack of courage before real life?

No doubt, however, that Anouilh's Antigone is a very likeable character to many. Why so? Because she inherits a long tradition of French heroism, such as a Joan of Arc of today, elated by a need for the sublime, far above ordinary life's contingencies. Also, her cry for freedom in her weakness and her opposition to the reason of State symbolize, in 1944, the spirit of the French resistance to German oppression. More profoundly, after rejecting vague religious beliefs and familial attachments, she finds within herself enough strength to assert the only value of individual freedom by a responsible choice, which soon becomes a total commitment of herself, a commitment clearly resounding, in the 40's, with existentialist echoes. Last, but not least, Antigone embodies a conflict of generations, an eternal revolt of the young, who find themselves obliged to take part, unwillingly, in an imperfect and absurd society.

Whose position is the right one? A troubling question. Anouilh has a bitter, ardent dialogue with himself, hesitating between the honor (or dishonor?) of living and the honor of dying. But he refrains from making a choice for us. The stamp of artistic creators is recognizable precisely by that confrontation of irreconcilable existential attitudes. It is up to each person to make the choice.

Dominique Baudouin

Professor Dominique Baudouin teaches in the Department of French at U.B.C.



Two For One
with a twist

For many years, about nine actually, The Frog and Peach has been a little civilized niche in Point Grey providing interesting, quality fare to its large circle of loyal customers.

James Barber said recently:

Character is more important than theme, and developing it takes time, patience and a special ability to out-bluff the bank manager. Good, comfortable, character restaurants, which offer honest eccentricities instead of waiters in sailor suits, are hard to find, and known generally only to a few similarly eccentric, demanding clients. They don't get much publicity because they can't afford it, and there are too many new theme restaurants churning out press releases.

Jack Moore observes:

If you have never been there, The Frog and Peach is a Tenth Avenue treasure of a place where for years an eccentric man named Diederik Wolsak has been allowing his more talented customers to do drawings of frogs (and peaches) on napkins, which are then framed and become a large part of the decor.

In James Barber's *Best Eating In Vancouver*, two restaurants were rated the best Continental Restaurants in Vancouver: The Frog and Peach and The Restaurant at Pacific 819. A few weeks ago Baz Lee of '819' sold his establishment and joined forces with The Frog and Peach.

Jack Moore writes:

He is like Diederik, one of the very best red-hot restaurant guys in the city. To say these two will likely do something interesting at The Frog and Peach is to underestimate the situation completely. Neither of these guys is capable of letting any restaurant become stale or humdrum, and both of them in the same place constitutes a sort of creative hive. So there is more to come out of this.

At the centre and perhaps most important is a wonderfully talented chef. Mary MacKay has infused Menu and presentation with a gently creative flair which is unmatched in the city. Chef MacKay is complemented during lunch by a formidable French talent named Marie José Henry, who shares Mary's unwavering commitment and love for culinary artistry.

Jack Moore Concludes:

The Frog and Peach has been entirely worthy of consideration these past nine years or so, and continues to be so. And as for the future, well stay tuned!

The Frog and Peach

a rather unique restaurant

4473 West 10th Avenue, Vancouver, B.C. 228-8815

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MINI SERIES

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BOX OFFICE 228-2678

The part of Creon is played by

John Murphy