

## Canadian Children's Drama and Theatre

Since our inception *CCL* has published a number of special issues: on the Canadian animal story, on the works of L.M. Montgomery, on the Loughborough Conference papers. Together with our general issues, these have provided a good insight into print materials for children. However, some forms of children's literature are communicated primarily in non-print rather than print form—drama is the outstanding example. In such instance it is not only the written play that is important but also the dramatic presentation and concomitant audience response. It thus seemed especially appropriate to devote a double issue to the question of Canadian children's drama and theatre: that is, the plays themselves plus the practical and theoretical considerations their genre involves.

Accordingly, the critical articles are focussed on the concerns common to all plays: the theory and practice of children's theatre. As the biographies indicate, the twelve contributors include academics, playwrights, directors, and other theatre professionals. The review section, by contrast, focusses on the actual plays—over thirty of them—and includes careful analyses of the merits of specific works and authors. In both sections, however, the diverse perspectives and assumptions of the writers sometimes lead to real controversy: Are plays for children inherently different from those for adults in either quality or genre? Is participatory theatre a child development tool, a writer's cop-out, the essence of theatrical experience, or something else? To what extent should the values in children's plays reflect the societal status quo? And so on.

In addressing these questions, the articles and reviews reflect and define the lively debates currently engaging Canadian children's theatre. Further, the debates themselves describe the state of the genre: though it may not be entirely healthy, it's still alive—and kicking!

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