

defused, and because hitting can be lied about.

*Not so dumb* tries to present the message that learning disabled children are not stupid; it does demonstrate that learning disabled children have different strengths, but Lazarus has chosen an unfortunate scenario by which to present this most important message.

Lazarus succeeds much better with *Night light*, his 1987 work dealing with schoolyard bullies and imaginary monsters. The cast reflects "Not so dumb": Victor is back, and Rocky, though not on stage, is referred to. Yet the predictability found in *Not so dumb* doesn't occur.

Victor is bothered by Farley, a school bully. Victor's younger sister, Tara, is bothered by a monster which lives in the dresser drawer; Tara's fears are exaggerated by the fact that her father is in hospital, a combination which allows Lazarus the construction of a delightful series of events.

Victor is positive that the monster in the dresser is in Tara's mind; Lazarus has created scenes where the only person in the theatre who cannot see the monster is Victor.

Young theatre audiences will ooh, aah, and giggle over the monster; Lazarus has first constructed interactions between Victor and the monster he cannot see, and then between Tara and the monster she can see.

There are some bothersome moments, again dependent upon what may be considered as unnecessarily violent messages. The first occurs with the attempt to destroy the monster by drawing a picture, which is then destroyed by slaps, punches, a poke in the eye, and ultimately, being torn into bits. The monster, seen by Tara and the audience, reacts to each with appropriate mimed actions. Lazarus, to his credit, soothes this violence later, when the monster returns and is befriended by Tara, perhaps suggesting the message that violence isn't the answer.

However, the success of Victor against Farley and the success of Tara against her fears comes through strongly, and even Farley, the school bully who changes his attitude, will win points from the audience as the play ends.

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## SCRIPTS FOR ADOLESCENTS

**Icetime** Carol Bolt. Copyscript. Distributed by Playwrights Union of Canada. 35 pp., \$5.00. [First produced: Theatre On The Move, Ontario, 1988]; **Twelfth inning** David Pody. Copyscript. Distributed by Playwrights Union of Canada. 41 pp., \$5.00. [First produced: Youtheatre, Quebec (n.d.)]; **Not as hard as it seems**. Robert Morgan. Copyscript. Distributed by Playwrights Union of

Canada. 58 pp., \$5.00. [First produced: Theatre On The Move, Ontario, 1987].

*Icetime* is a play that deals with the question of equal opportunity. Justine and David have grown up with the game of hockey, sharing their father's philosophy that "Hockey is life". They are hooked on the sport. Joined by their friend Jason, they try out for the Metro Toronto Hockey League (MTHL). David and Justine are accepted but Jason is turned down. "MTHL is a boy's league, isn't it? And Justine's a girl." Jason is convinced Justine will not be allowed to play and he's right.

The case goes to court and the press turns her story into a media circus. The girl who stepped away from the stereotype is now shaped into a new one. She wins her case, but the battle continues with everyone taking sides. Threatened disqualification by MTHL, The Human Right Commission, Supreme Court . . . as with many issues, it becomes a case fed upon by professionals. The victim becomes more victimized. For Justine, it seems there is a penalty for daring to stand apart.

*Icetime* challenges stereotypes. Justine is slotted into the category of playing "girl's" hockey. This doesn't challenge her and she wants to play at a higher level. "I just want to do the best I can," she argues, but in a world that readily accepts mediocrity, Justine hits a wrong chord.

Justine's friend Bitsy provides a strong contrast. Bitsy seems to accept things the way they are and, unlike Justine, backs away from challenging the accepted route. The character of Justine is well drawn and is the strong core of the play. She is determined and direct – a straight shooter. She gets knocked around a bit but learns some hard facts about hockey . . . and life. She's vulnerable and gets discouraged and confused from time to time. This makes her a real person, so we care.

Carol Bolt's use of hockey as a metaphor for life works extremely well. The play follows Justine along a course that is constantly changing, where reaction time is limited, and decisions determine if you win or lose. "I mean if life were like playing a game and somebody told you the rules, you would know just what to do." Heard at the end of the play, this leaves a lasting impression. Perhaps life is a game, but it is a game in which the rules keep changing. Still, we go on.

Pody's *Twelfth inning* is another play for adolescents which uses sports to examine stereotypes. The language is contemporary, the setting modern and the plot is pure fun. Vivian, a superb catcher, longs for challenge and dismisses the possibility of girl's softball. She devises a scheme to pass herself off as a boy and join the boy's High School team, enlisting her twin brother's help.

As the story unfolds the complications begin. Duke, the team's pitcher, is attracted to Vivian/Vince. Vivian falls for Duke while Olivia, a cheerleader, is smitten by Vince/Vivian. She asks Vivian's twin, Sebastian, for his help in attracting Vince/Vivian; Sebastian has fallen for Olivia. The situation

snowballs and the twins conspire to find a solution. At the annual Athletic Dinner Dance, all is revealed and everything is tied together neatly. Sound familiar? *Twelfth inning* is loosely based on *Twelfth Night*, Shakespeare's comedy about mistaken identity.

Placing the story in a modern day high school setting is a clever idea and the twists and turns of plot provide some delightful moments. At times the play begins to probe into some sensitive issues. The importance of roles and what is expected of you is a recurring theme in *Twelfth inning*.

In a quiet moment Duke feels very uncomfortable because of his feelings when he is close to Vivian/Vince. He starts to question his own sexuality and needs reassurance. "We're afraid to trust our emotions and rely on appearance," Vivian explains. These are sensitive moments that the play could examine more closely. However, *Twelfth inning*, a comedy, chooses to avoid delving into these themes and stays on safe ground.

"The future isn't really dead, the future is now," sing Rolf and his friends in a fantasy sequence at the beginning of Robert Morgan's play *Not as hard as it seems*. "If they'd open up their ears then they just might hear what we are all about." These are lines from a rock song called "The future is now." The words are hard hitting and express the frustrations of youth, yet underneath there is a strong suggestion of hope and survival.

Rolf, Tracy and Rebecca are members of a band that meet secretly, on a regular basis, to write songs, practice their music and dream of being rich and famous. This group is tight! The arrival of Wendell, Rolf's cousin, threatens the group and sparks the play into action.

There is something strange about Wendell and Tracy wants in on it. Rolf reluctantly reveals his fears about his cousin: "My cousin used to beat me to a pulp," he confesses, but still they are close, having been like blood brothers since childhood. When Wendell arrives he is distant, rejects any offer of friendship, and dismisses the band music as trash. His presence hovers over the proceedings and threatens to explode at any time. This constant threat creates a tension in which other characters reveal more about themselves. Tracy, brittle and flip, becomes timid and frightened; Rebecca, usually sensitive and protective, becomes the tormentor, and Rolf, the anchor, begins to flounder. They taunt, jeer, insult and tear into each other. Wendell's own problems, for which his explosive behaviour is an outlet, remain a mystery until the final confrontation.

It is encouraging to read a play that probes deeper than most and takes a hard and realistic look at youth and some of their problems. There is a dark side to each of us and this play looks under the masks; however, it would have been more realistic to have some of the problems persist and not be so easily resolved.

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## SHIFTS IN PERSPECTIVE

**Double vision.** Betty Jane Wylie. Copsycript. Distributed by Playwrights Union of Canada. 63 pp., \$5.00. [First produced: Theatre Direct, Ontario, 1985]; **Hedges.** David Carley. Copsycript. Distributed by Playwrights Union of Canada. 26 pp., \$5.00. [First produced: Smiths Falls, Ontario, 1985]; **Switching places.** Rex Deverell. Copsycript. Distributed by Playwrights Union of Canada. 33 pp., \$5.00. [First produced: Globe Theatre, Saskatchewan, 1986].

*Double vision* is a gentle and powerful play about three women at one of life's crossroads. It is realistic and moving but never maudlin as it delicately explores the relationship which exists between the three generations.

Lara is 72 years old, a widow living alone in house she cannot maintain either physically or financially. She is determined to maintain her independence although she is quite aware that she is close to the end of her life. Her daughter Eileen, 44, recently divorced and living in a tiny apartment with her 15-year-old daughter Corrie, is the "worrier" in this fractured family as she attempts to do what's best for everyone and still mold a new life for herself. Teenager Corrie makes it clear to the audience through "asides" that she feels unloved, unnoticed and unimportant. The asides are useful in that they allow the audience to see past surface attitudes to complex, individual personalities.

When the play opens, the elderly woman and her daughter are returning home from a visit to look at a senior citizens' retirement home. The old lady is resolutely unimpressed, and at times scathing in her comments: "It's a waste basket. For throw-away people. I don't want to be thrown away." As the play progresses we understand her strength and her point of view, as well as her daughter Eileen's fears for her.

When Eileen must go back to her office for awhile, it is an opportunity for Corrie and her grandmother to have a real heart-to-heart talk over Tarot cards and a pedicure. One sees how strong the relationship is as the secret Corrie has been keeping from her mother slowly comes out. Lara provides balance and perspective as well as the acceptance her grand-daughter craves. Corrie's only aside in this scene is answered by Lara as if she could read her mind, and indeed there is that depth of empathy.

The title *Double vision* might refer to the grandmother's perception of the two younger women, or to her ability to see her own life juxtaposed against