

perspective of some men, while *Sexgoddess* represents strong women who are sexy and intelligent. Scott, a young and apparently thoughtless stud-in-training, pursues Sal (Sally) in order to "have" her. For him the conquest is all, and it isn't until he changes that attitude that there is any hope of a real relationship developing.

Just when the reader has relaxed into thinking that this play is a straightforward examination of issues surrounding teenage sexuality, *Sexgoddess* intervenes with a lesson in the form of a surprise pregnancy. The real surprise is that it is Scott who gets pregnant!

Scott experiences the nausea, the restrictions on his social life, and the responses of his parents, which are reassuringly stereotypical as is Sal wondering if it is really hers. After all, Scott has been so promiscuous. The idea of male pregnancy is not developed here; Deverell simply uses it as a vehicle through which Scott must cope with what a teenage girl might face as the result of his conquest mentality.

Machogod and *Sexgoddess* play a wide variety of other characters irrespective of which "side" of this issue that person seems to be on. This creates a strong forward momentum in the action of the play, and should provide interesting acting and directing challenges. *Switching places* would certainly be suitable for production by or for a high school audience, providing entertaining and amusing consciousness-raising.

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HEAR OUR CRY: REAL ISSUES FOR REAL YOUTH

Skin & Liars. Dennis Foon. Playwrights Canada, 1988. 112 pp., \$11.95. ISBN 0-88754-468-1; **One thousand cranes.** Colin Thomas. Photos (from original production) David Cooper. Simon & Pierre, 1989. 83 pp., \$9.95. ISBN 0-88924-189-9.

Skin & Liars and *One thousand cranes* are plays dealing with issues that reflect the concerns and reality of many young people. Although uniquely Canadian, these plays have a universal appeal and truth about them. They are plays of significance, plays that encourage a response and involve the viewer.

In the foreword to *Skin & Liars*, Dennis Foon, a well known writer and director of Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA) in Canada writes: "It became clear to me that theatre could be a way to communicate ideas, a way to work toward change. . . . These plays are a vote for the future." *Skin* tells the sto-

ries of three teens living in Canada: Tuan from Vietnam, Phiroza from India, and Jennifer/Karen, from Canada (Jennifer in Toronto is a black Canadian, but Karen in Vancouver is of the Leelwat people).

Skin is about racism and the many forms of discrimination that take place in our society: at work, where Tuan is fired even though his work is good, and with police, where Karen is suspected of shoplifting just by being in a store. In peer groups individuals are blatantly ignored, heckled or find graffiti on their lockers. These situations come from real life and Foon explains that "during my research I found that one of the most prevalent forms of institutionalized discrimination takes place in the education system by the underestimation of a young person's potential." In *Skin*, each situation builds upon the next, continually deepening our realization of the effects of racism.

Various theatrical conventions enhance the play. In some scenes neutral masks give a sense of faceless crowds, while in other instances over-sized masks of glossy magazine teens emphasize the public image of the ideal that young people are constantly exposed to. In *Skin*, a powerful piece written in episodic style, Foon structures each episode to take us beyond the "now" and gives a feeling of "before" and "after." The chorus at the start and end of the play is a reminder of what is beneath skin. It is a play that impels discussion and holds a mirror to our own thoughts and actions.

Liars is a play about teens whose parents are alcoholics. Lenny is a middle class teen-age girl with an alcoholic mother. Jace, a boy in high school, comes from a working class single parent family where his alcoholic father is physically and verbally abusive. Each teen has a form of escape. For Lenny it is a penpal and dreams of travel; Jace seeks refuge in drugs. We see the impact the parents' behaviour has on the teens and the slow forming of a supportive friendship.

A good playwright is able to select specific moments through which an audience might gain a broader understanding of an issue or idea. Foon's combination of such moments allows us to see alcoholism from many perspectives. Jace's dad pressures him to have a beer with him and is unable to remember conversations from one time to the next. Lenny tries to talk to her parents about the "problem" and is met by instant denial. In a truth or dare game Jace and Lenny exchange horror stories of growing up with alcoholism in the family.

The use of life size cloth dummies as an appendage to both alcoholics lets us literally "see" what drunkenness does. It helps us understand the public and private sides of these lives, the tensions and traps, and the ways these people cope and give up.

Liars is hard hitting. It doesn't have quite the flow of *Skin*, but it is certainly a worthwhile play which provides new perspectives and much food for thought.

There is a legend that says that even when you are very ill, if you fold one thousand paper cranes, the gods will make you well. *One thousand cranes* is a play that is not afraid to deal with the questions and fears of nuclear war. "My purpose in writing *One thousand cranes*," Thomas says, "was to empower kids, to encourage them to take action to counter their fears of nuclear annihilation."

Since its first production in 1983, *One thousand cranes* has been produced in many places in Canada and internationally, has won awards and has been translated into other languages. Included with the script is an introduction about nuclear war and youth, a history of the play, instructions on how to make paper cranes and where to send them to in Hiroshima. This helps us see the connectedness of the play and topic, and its relationship to our own lives.

One thousand cranes juxtaposes the true story of Sasaki Sadako of Hiroshima (she was two when the bomb was dropped) who died of leukemia, with the created story of Buddy, a 12-year-old Canadian boy living now. He has grave fears of nuclear war. As the play traces the stories of these two children from different times and cultures, what stands out is the parallels inherent in their lives.

The version published by Simon & Pierre has changes from earlier versions. Added are two songs by Michael Silversher. Here we see songs really working for a play as they give a sense of time and emotion adding a depth and poignancy to these moments. The other major change is the treatment of the Canadian story and the character of the mother. In an otherwise very fine script, this stands out as a weaker spot lacking the believability of earlier versions.

Enhanced by styles of Japanese Theatre, the play is visually strong. *One thousand cranes* is a powerful and sensitively written play that ends with a plea and a sense of hope:

This is our cry. This is our prayer:
Peace in the world.

It is indeed encouraging to see Canadian publishers involving themselves with quality, worthwhile scripts. All three plays deal honestly with relevant issues and do so in a skillful manner. Here is theatre that matters – theatre that can help us understand and make meaning in a sometimes troubled world.

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