

“Bring the Child in You out to Play!”: Canadian Children’s Culture and the 1997 Calgary International Children’s Festival”

• Anne Hiebert Alton •

Résumé: Le Festival international du théâtre pour enfants de 1997, qui célébrait son onzième anniversaire, a présenté des spectacles qui ont instruit et divertit des publics très variés. L’auteur examine la nature du divertissement destiné aux enfants en se basant sur une distinction entre quatre types de spectacles présentés lors du Festival: pièces de théâtre, présentations de conteurs, spectacles de musique et de danse, récitals de chansons. Il explore l’incorporation des éléments didactiques au jeu, thème central du Festival. Il examine comment l’idéal de plaire et d’instruire à la fois s’intègre à l’univers du divertissement contemporain destiné à l’enfance.

Summary: Celebrating its eleventh year, the 1997 Calgary International Children’s Festival provided entertainment and education for audiences of all ages, cultures, and tastes. In this article, Alton examines the nature of children’s entertainment within the context of four types of performances — theatre, storytelling, music & dance, and song — from the festival’s enormous range. In addition to exploring the extent to which many of the entertainers meshed didactic elements with the festival’s overall theme of play, this article considers how concepts of instruction and delight relate to contemporary children’s entertainment and culture.

CICF Mission Statement: To change the world by surrounding children with excellence, so that they can recognize their own power and demand excellence from the rest of their lives.

In her introduction to the 1997 *Calgary International Children’s Festival Programme*, producer and writer JoAnne James invites everyone to “Bring the child in you out to play!”¹ For six days in May, that’s just what children, teachers, parents, and other adults in Calgary did, and were entertained, surprised, delighted, and at times even instructed as the shows went on. Entertainment from a myriad of cultures and countries, ranging from traditional and non-traditional theatre, puppetry, marionettes, and storytelling to dance, music, comedy, and mixed-media entertainment, formed the core of the performances, and the festival’s theme — “For the child in all of us” — was evident in the appeal that these shows had for their audiences. Equally obvious

was the belief that, regardless of age or cultural heritage, we all have children inside us eager to explore and to have fun, and that when the stage is set correctly boundaries can vanish. The festival's *raison d'être* is rooted in the culture of children and childhood: at its heart is the notion that by revealing the arts of many different cultures to children of all ages, they will learn to recognize and appreciate excellence, and thus enhance their lives. The entertainment at the 1997 festival achieved that goal splendidly.

Since its inception in 1987, the festival has featured performances from thirty-six countries and ten Canadian provinces. This year's festival's 42,000 seats were divided amongst ninety-one performances, spread over eighteen shows from seven countries. In addition to ticketed shows, such free events as a storytelling tent and an arts and crafts corral were available. The most popular of these, however, were the make-up clowns who circulated throughout the festival offering free face-painting — an offer nearly all of the children attending the festival accepted, suggesting their delight in becoming, however temporarily, someone or something else. In keeping with today's marketing trends, the festival souvenir shop sold festival T-shirts and posters, CDs and tapes from many of the performers, and — a particular favourite — toy foam dogs on leashes. Despite this focus on fun, both formal and informal educational elements were a part of much of the festival: in addition to various study guides for teachers, workshops were offered on gumboot dancing and on acting. The latter, run by Imagination in Motion's Paul Rajeckas and Neil Intraub and entitled "The Art of Collaboration," focused on developing communication skills, trust, and cooperation in relation to the performing arts. Finally, "Le Colloque / The Exchange" provided a forum for discussion with several guest companies about their works.

While the festival is particularly aimed at children aged three through twelve, it tries to be accessible for everybody. Indeed, this year's *Programme* recommended various shows for groups including the hearing challenged (five shows), the visually challenged (eight shows), and those with special needs (six shows). For parents with babies, a baby room was available with change tables, a rocking chair for nursing, a sink, playpen, and toys. In terms of location, the entire festival was held in a compact, two-block-square area in downtown Calgary, which could be reached easily by public transport, school bus, or car. The only potential drawback was the price of tickets: although the same for children and adults (children under two were admitted free), prices ranged from \$4.99 to \$7 per show, depending on whether tickets were purchased in advance and whether they were for day or evening performances. A minimum sample of the festival's performances ideally would be three shows, though five or six performances spread over a few days would provide a more complete experience. This would lead to costs of from \$15-\$40, which could be too high for many parents, despite the value of obtaining such high quality entertainment at a relatively low price.² Sadly, the effects of these costs can be seen in recent attendance trends: while in the past school groups tended to attend one performance in the morning and another in the afternoon, filling in the time between performances with free activities, the inclination now appears to

attend only one performance and then participate in free activities. This problem could be solved by emulating the annual Children's Festival in Poland, which is held on June 1, the International Day of the Child: funded by Civic and Federal grants, that festival is free for all children, so that everyone can attend. Unfortunately, for that to happen in Canada a much higher value would have to be placed on the importance of children's entertainment and, indeed, on the entire culture of childhood than our current government seems willing to grant.

I attended the festival knowing very little about the various genres of children's entertainment, but anticipating with pleasure the theatrical performances. My horizons rapidly expanded as I discovered the enormous range of entertainment available. This made me wonder about how to define children's entertainment. As a starting point, I contemplated some of the definitions of children's literature we discuss in my classes, starting with the most general: works which are regarded by a consensus of adults and children to be children's works. Certainly this applies equally well to children's entertainment, and could be extended into the notion that children's entertainment is simply entertainment for or which has been appropriated by children. In contrast, C.S. Lewis's comment that he wrote for children "because a children's story is the best art-form for something you have to say" (208) could also apply to children's entertainment, and raises the question whether children's entertainment is the best art form for what children's entertainers might have to say. This seems naturally to lead to John Newbery and the phrase "Instruction with Delight." A London bookseller and the first major British publisher of children's books, Newbery was also the author of *A Little Pretty Pocket Book* (1744), which had as its motto the phrase "*Delectando momemus: Instruction with Delight.*"³ From 1750 onwards, "instruction with delight" became a maxim for children's literature. Whether this holds true for children's entertainment, and more specifically for the entertainment at the Calgary International Children's Festival, will be the focus of this article: it considers what, if any, message or lesson these entertainers were attempting to convey, whether this didactic element meshes with the overall theme of play at the festival, and how concepts of instruction and delight relate to contemporary children's entertainment and culture.

Four types of entertainment at the festival seemed to address these questions particularly well: theatre, storytelling, music and dance, and song. Within these areas, I chose seven performances on which to focus. Traditional theatre appeared with British Columbia's Tears of Laughter Productions' *The Purim Story*, Welsh Arad Goch Theatre's *Taliesin*, and Québec's Le Théâtre du Gros Mécano's *The Stupendous Adventures of Don Quixote*. Somewhat less traditional was Peru's Teatro Hugo e Innes, who performed incredibly innovative storytelling in the form of mime "puppetry" with their *Short Stories*. Russia's Limpopo and Zimbabwe's Black Umfolosi were wonderfully entertaining with their musical and dance performances, while Canada's Paul Hann provided the highlight of the festival with his *Paul Hann in Concert*. While didactic elements were a part of many shows, the overwhelming focus appeared to be on delight—and, not surprisingly, the louder, noisier, and sillier the delight the better.

Theatre: *The Purim Story*, *Taliesin*, and *The Stupendous Adventures of Don Quixote*

Theatre is perhaps one of the best-known forms of live entertainment, and it was well-represented at the festival, with six of the eighteen shows being plays. Most theatre has certain conventions, including costumes, sets, story, and generally little audience participation, and the three plays I focus on are no exception. *The Purim Story*, performed by Stuart Nemtin and David Kaetz, considers the inception of the Jewish festival of Purim and is based on the Biblical tale of Queen Esther, who saves her kingdom's Jewish subjects when the Prime Minister of Persia wants to destroy them. The play's colourful sets and costumes appealed to the audience, who also appreciated Nemtin's flexibility in playing several different characters with the aid of vibrant masks. At times, however, the story dragged, and Nemtin and Kaetz seemed to ignore the balcony occupants, directing most of their performance to the main floor audience. In addition, though the show was billed as suitable for ages seven and up, the performers appeared a bit unused to younger audiences: although occasionally they invited participation by asking questions or encouraging clapping in time to the lively music, they often neglected to wait for responses. Moreover, the younger members of the audience did not appear to understand many of the jokes or clever witticisms. For example, Nemtin's efforts to make the King of Persia sound like a parody of Elvis Presley were lost on many of the audience's younger members — clearly this was an unfamiliar reference for many of them. Most disappointing, however, was the play's failure to mesh instruction with delight. The story's main lesson was a moral one: we should never be anti-Semitic or, indeed, prejudiced against anyone. Despite the value of this message, the didacticism seemed too blatant: the lessons were delivered in the form of long speeches and occasionally condescending addresses, during which much of the audience stopped paying attention. This reaction not only demonstrated a resistance to overt instruction, but also emphasized children's reactions when they lose interest. It also suggested one of the cardinal rules of children's entertainment: above all, be entertaining!

Arad Goch, one of Wales's leading theatre companies for young audiences, was more successful. Their production of *Taliesin*, adapted by Gwyn Thomas and Jeremy Turner, won the award for Best Children's Production in the Dublin International Theatre Festival in 1996. With its mix of traditional Welsh music and dancing with theatre, it focused on delight rather than on any particular moral lesson. The story is based on one of Wales' oldest legends, and features the witch Ceridwen and her servant Gwion. When Ceridwen makes a magic spell so that her ugly son will become learned, the spell falls by mistake on Gwion, the village idiot, who becomes first the magical infant Taliesin, and then the wisest wizard and best poet in the land. Along with an entertaining story, the play featured plenty of action, including a marvellous chase scene. However, the real strength of the performance appeared in the quality of the acting, along with the beauty of the dancing and music. The only flaws in the performance were that its sixty minutes seemed interminable, and the audience did not seem strongly captivated by the story. One reason for this was the seating, much of which was on floor mats rather than on chairs, which led to some fidgeting — for both children

and adults — about halfway through the performance. More significant, though, is that while *Taliesin* is clearly a well-known tale in Welsh culture, several of its aspects seemed inaccessible to a Canadian audience unfamiliar with either the legend or Welsh mythology in general. The belief in the strength of old magic and curses, for example, tends not to be something many Canadian children grow up with, and so the significance of these elements is less than it would be for a Welsh audience. Here, however, lies the didacticism of the play: to learn something about another culture through experiencing something different. In this, *Taliesin* was relatively successful, and its didacticism did not interfere at all with its entertaining elements.

The final play, Québec's Le Théâtre du Gros Mécano's *The Stupendous Adventures of Don Quixote*, was produced originally in 1993. Since then, this stage adaptation of Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, written by André Lachance and translated by Maurice Roy, has been performed approximately 150 times to over 40,000 Canadian students. Its performance at the festival was superb, and contained all the elements of traditional theatre, beginning with an entertaining and inventive story. Structured as a play within a play, the action began with a company of actors arriving to portray the adventures of Don Quixote as knight-errant who insists on tilting at windmills and following his dreams. The play's sixty-five minutes seemed to speed by, with non-stop action performed by an energetic cast who not only became their characters but also drew the audience into the story. The only slow point was a small vignette around the forty-minute mark when a shepherd sang a short operatic aria; for a few moments, many of the children in the audience became a bit restless. Ironically, one critic selects this scene as one of the play's highlights, which demonstrates not only the contrast in audience expectations, but also the play's versatility in delighting people of different ages (St-Hilaire). This scene does fit nicely with the theme of extravagance which pervades the play, from the use of the word "stupendous" in the title to the performance's innovative double stage sets and its colourful costumes and masks. Best of all were the wonderfully spirited mounts — Don Quixote's horse Rozinante and Sancho Panza's donkey — created with dollies on suspenders.

Don Quixote was suggested as being especially suitable for audiences ages six and up, though the performance I attended appeared to be made up primarily of eight- to twelve-year-olds. They seemed to be exceptionally receptive to both the play's themes and lessons, which included the power of imagination and its ability to help one follow one's dreams and discover the world. The implicit lessons were never to relinquish one's dreams or imagination, no matter how eccentric this may make one appear, and that being eccentric or unique is not necessarily bad: sometimes this gives one the power to change the world for the better. The didactic nature of these lessons was communicated through the story, rather than through overt moralizing, which appears to be a much more effective way of instruction, as well as being closer to Newbery's original design of combining instruction with delight. Clearly the intentions of this play were to entertain the children, making them laugh and feel a sense of wonder, while communicating certain values to them, and it succeeded on all counts. Certainly the audience enjoyed the play, and had no difficulty paying attention throughout the performance. While

theatre tends not to have the same degree of participation that other sorts of entertainment have, when plays are this entertaining, children — and adults — have little trouble enjoying them.

Mime Storytelling

A rather less traditional form of entertainment appeared with Peru's Teatro Hugo e Innes's unconventional and utterly fascinating *Short Stories*. This combined performance of mime, puppetry, and storytelling was one of the most ingenious performances I have ever seen. Performers Hugo Suarez Flores, a native of Peru, and Inex Pasic, of Bosnia-Herzegovina, presented a series of short sketches performed by "puppets" created with their hands, elbows, knees, stomachs, fingers, and toes. As Richard Christiansen observed, their performances have roots in children's games such as linking fingers together for "here's the church, here's the steeple, open the door, and see all the people," or in making shadow figures on the wall. However, Flores's and Pasic's techniques make other hand-games look completely uninspired. Their first sketch featured a miniature soccer player, created by Pasic's hand, who ran, kicked, and headed a miniature soccer ball, looking so realistic that at any moment he could have walked out into the audience. Even more delightful was the fat woman, whose face and head were made by Pasic's stomach. The basis of the sketch was the comedy of watching the character try on a variety of ill-fitting clothes, but the audience found the story far less absorbing than the wonderful absurdity of a person being created by someone's tummy. Giggles filled the theatre every time the character moved, made a face (demonstrating Pasic's admirable control over her stomach muscles), sighed, or tried on yet another unflattering garment. Other sketches included Pasic and Flores working in tandem to create an opera singer, a clown, a person split into two parts (top and bottom halves) which unite at the end, and a baby who metamorphoses into a butterfly. The most popular sketch was of a street musician with a miniature guitar, created by Flores's knee and hands. Like the "Fat Woman" sketch, this story about a day in the life of a street musician was clearly less enthralling to the audience than seeing how he was put together: as part of the story, the musician came apart into his "pieces" and reformed himself.

The performance as a whole was incredibly innovative and engaging. Its style of mime with a musical backdrop made this a more accessible performance than most theatre, which in some cases could suffer from either language or complexity barriers. The set, too, was understated: there were few props, the performers wore black clothing so as not to distract the audience's attention from their creations, and the lighting was dark with spotlights highlighting the stage. One weakness was that the forty-five minute performance was a bit too long: thirty minutes would have been optimum, which was the point at which the audience's attention started to wander. Another minor weakness was that the repetitive nature of this art form seemed not to work as well as it did with other arts at the festival: after six or seven "short stories" everything seemed to blend together. While the performance contained no particular moral lessons, it certainly was enjoyable, and the audience relished the opportunity to giggle, laugh, and have fun while encountering a unique cultural experience.

Music, Dance and Song

In this era of animated films, videos, and MTV, one might expect that theatre and mime storytelling would be among the most popular and accessible events for audiences accustomed to passively watching rather than actively participating in entertainment. Nevertheless, most of the children attending the festival delighted in the interactive arts of music, dance, and song with Russia's Limpopo, Zimbabwe's Black Umfolosi, and Canada's Paul Hann. *850 Years of Moscow* was the title for Limpopo's performance, and their show consisted of six exuberant Russians dancing, singing, and loudly playing a variety of instruments. Their music, an inventive assortment of traditional balalaika music, jazz, and the Russian version of heavy metal rock music, was utterly delightful. Moreover, their traditional Russian medleys included Ukrainian and Gypsy music, with Russian dancing punctuated by *kazatskas*, the athletic dance flourish with squat-kicks often associated with Russian and Ukrainian dancing. Though not a show particularly intended for children, neither was it directed specifically at adults: instead, it epitomized the theme of the festival by being open to everyone.

Throughout their performance, the members of Limpopo demonstrated their contagious enthusiasm for music, dancing, and frolic. Indeed, having fun was the theme for the entire show. From the moment they stepped on stage, band members encouraged the audience to participate by clapping hands, stamping feet, answering questions, cheering, and generally making noise. The audience joyfully complied: the smallest children danced to the music and shrieked with delight — one two-year-old spent the entire forty-five minutes of the show vibrating to the music. The older children cheered, clapped, commented on the instruments, and fantasized about being either the drummer or the guitar player. Everyone else gave in to the music's irresistible rhythm and tapped toes, clapped, and whistled in approbation. Heavy in delight, the performance contained little overt instruction. However, at one point Dmitri, the lead balalaika player, identified the instruments, which included a balalaika, a trumpet, drums, a trombone, a Russian accordion with buttons rather than keys, an electric guitar, and the bass balalaika. This last instrument looked like a cross between an overgrown guitar and a very large cello, but was triangular in shape; a rather large individual, Dmitri tossed it around as though it were a fiddle. By the end of the performance, audience members had learned to identify each of the instruments, and could sing the choruses to many of the songs even though, as one of the band members kept commenting, they were unable to understand a word since everything was sung in Russian. Nevertheless, this lack of language did not interfere with the enjoyment of the performance: cultural and age boundaries were crossed with ease as the audience and the performers delighted in and shared the music.

Rather than being crossed, boundaries were discarded during Black Umfolosi's performance. Based in Zimbabwe, Black Umfolosi's troupe of eight dancers, singers, and drum players performed a mix of traditional Zulu dances and "imbube" songs from Southern Africa. Their first act, entitled "Ambhiza Dance,"

was a traditional thanksgiving rain dance from the Kalanga people in Western Zimbabwe. Here, the troupe wore traditional costumes and made music by whistling, beating on drums, and playing other percussive instruments. *Gumboot*, their second show, incorporated a dance founded in the mines of South Africa entitled "ingquzu," which combines sung slogans and complaints about the poor working conditions and low wages with percussive sounds from the slapping and stomping of gumbooted feet. Both dances displayed the music's driving beat and the performers' incredible rhythm and energy.

Instruction and delight blended easily throughout this performance, which was extremely participation oriented. Sounds of clapping and cheering abounded from the audience, demonstrating the enthusiasm many children have when given an excuse to clap, shout, and make noise. After teaching the audience to say a few words in Debeleh and Zulu, one of the troupe members asked for some volunteer dance students, and nearly all the children in the audience clamoured to participate. A crowd converged on stage as many children who had not been chosen as participants joined their friends — illustrating not only the apparently universal fear of being left out, but also the level of enthusiasm created by Black Umfolosi. One fascinating element of children's culture appeared near the end of the show, when troupe members invited the younger members of the audience to bring their parents and teachers up on stage with them, and then return to their seats and watch the adults learn a dance. The kids thoroughly enjoyed seeing their parents and especially their teachers do something unconventional, and they enthusiastically cheered for their teachers and contrasted the techniques of the various performers with comments such as "Look at Mr. Smith, he's really cool!" and "Wow, watch Mrs. Sanderson jump!" They relished seeing adults doing things that usually might be thought silly, which illustrates the particular success of this show: by encouraging participation from both adults and children, Black Umfolosi's wonderful performance broke down the barriers not only between cultures, but between adults and children. Their show demonstrated once again the fine line between children's and adult's entertainment and, by implication, the fine line between childhood and adulthood.

The festival's theme of "For the child in all of us" was seen most strongly with the performance of Canada's Paul Hann, children's entertainer *extraordinaire*. Originally from England and now living in British Columbia, Hann has recorded seven albums for children, including *The Brand New Boogaloo Zoo*, *Snyder the Spider*, *Bernie the Bow-Legged Bloodhound*, and *Marmalade on Toast*. A country folk singer for many years, Hann started in children's entertainment just after his first child was born; his children's television program, *Paul Hann and Friends*, ran for six years on CTV and then YTV. Since then, he has toured in all regions of Canada "from Port Alberni to St. John's to Inuvik" ("Press Kit"). *Paul Hann in Concert* was by far the best performance I saw, and his musical participation concert provided the crown of the festival. On the surface this appeared to be a simple show, with few props or costume changes. Hann mixed traditional favourites such as "This Old Man" and "Turkey in the Straw" with some of his own works, such as "Sing Song Sing Along"; the show started and finished with

the latter, giving the performance a sense of circularity along with a feeling of recognition for younger audience members. Hann's easy-going and entertaining personality appealed to the crowd, and he always seemed to be enjoying himself immensely.

Though he admits that song is a great way of getting kids to learn, Hann's main aim is to entertain through participation; indeed, he believes that kids get enough instruction elsewhere (Interview). His audience responds to his steady stream of patter and jokes throughout his performance — such as when he teases the children that they look like a “bunch of little sausages” — with giggling and wiggling pleasure. Almost all of his songs have a humorous nature, emphasizing that music is fun. Certainly his audiences have fun, as they participate in singing along, completing rhymes, mimicking actions, and clapping in rhythm. For example, the kids really enjoyed singing the chorus to Hann's “Singing in the Kitchen,” which finishes with the gleefully shouted phrase, “banging on the pots and pans.” He also performs fill-in-the-blanks songs, where he sings the first couple of lines and the children complete the verse with a rhyme: “My friend Paul, he's really ... [tall].” At one point the kids were so in sync with him that they anticipated the tune for his song “Eye-nose-cheeky-cheeky-chin,” sung to the melody of “Skip to my Lou.” His main aim is to get both children and adults participating, because then kids see other people having fun with music. As Hann explains, “It's really important that they [the children] realize that music, singing, dancing is fun and okay to do!” (Interview). Nevertheless, instructive elements appear in the “Study Guide” provided for elementary performances. This guide suggests how to prepare for the concert, highlighting what sorts of things the students might learn, such as clapping in rhythm or completing rhymes. Suggested follow-up projects include writing to Hann after the performance and including drawings about what the children remember about the concert or drawing what Snyder the Spider — who “likes biscuits and cider / Hot cakes and cold cakes, Snyder likes either / He never grows taller, he only grows wider and wider and wider and wider” — looks like. However, the main lesson he hopes teachers will stress is that music is fun for everyone.

Hann is great with kids, and his references to such popular figures as Mr. Dress-Up and Michael Jackson demonstrate his knowledge of their culture. When performing, he tends to aim for groups in the range of ages three to ten, and at times will spontaneously throw in another verse or rhyme to play along with the audience's mood. Moreover, he varies the rhythm, style, and volume of his songs, sometimes talking in whispers or changing his voice to a silly-sounding pitch. When recording, however, he says he considers the story-telling aspect of songs more carefully, because “children listen to records over and over,” and he likes the thought of them discovering more layers to the songs as they grow older (Interview). While he does not believe that children are necessarily a more demanding audience than adults, he does believe the two are different: “with adults, they might not be so enthusiastic to start with but if they like you they'll keep listening; with kids, you have their attention and enthusiasm at the beginning, and the challenge is to keep it” (Interview). Certainly Paul

Hann has no problem there: without exception, his audience was reluctant to leave at the close of his forty-five minute show, and undoubtedly will return for more.

Clearly one of most important aspects of the Calgary International Children's Festival is that everyone can delight in experiencing the arts of other cultures. In most cases, the didactic elements inherent within the performances meshed pleasantly with the festival's overall theme of play. Despite the prevalence of television and other "canned" forms of entertainment such as video games, the kids at the festival were really excited to experience something out of their normal routine, particularly since it was designed specifically for them. Certainly they appeared to be enjoying themselves: high noise levels, giggling, and plenty of talking characterized the mood of the crowds in the corridors between performances. While waiting for shows to begin, audience members chattered, looked around, braided each others' hair, and played games such as "I Spy" or "Stone-Paper-Scissors." After good productions, many kids practised dance steps they had learned, hummed songs they had sung, and enjoyed the exhilaration of the day. In contrast, after one especially ponderous (and didactic) show, the audience was extremely critical, yawning and muttering "boring!" with the intonation only a twelve-year-old can provide. Overall, they seemed to prefer entertainment they could participate in, such as Paul Hann's show or Black Umfolosi's performance, over more passive entertainment such as theatre. This highlights not only their intrinsic creativity, but also their delight in learning something new — as long as they have fun while they're learning.

In this sense, children do appear to be a demanding audience. Children's entertainers must work not only at keeping their audience's attention throughout a performance, but also at being ready to cater for the unexpected, such as a child providing a completely unique response to a question — a not uncommon occurrence. Moreover, children seem to respond more quickly and often more honestly than adults, being swift to appreciate and equally swift to criticize. Maurice Sendak's comments about children and reading are equally applicable to children's entertainment: "If a kid doesn't like a book, throw it away. Children don't give a damn about awards. Why should they? We should let children choose their own books. What they don't like they will toss aside" (Lanes 106). In terms of entertainment, what children dislike, they will ignore or dismiss, since they have not yet learned the more adult-like polite — and at times insincere — way of responding. Perhaps this is the lesson that we as adults should be learning from children: to respond honestly and whole-heartedly to the world, and to demand excellence from all who surround us.

JoAnne James states, "It is the children in our lives who are often the real teachers. They are champions of wisdom and laughter and curiosity" ("Introduction"). While there was much to learn at the festival, both in terms of some performances' overt lessons and others' gentle exposure of different cultures,

the real focus appeared to be on delight and participation for everyone — performers and audiences, children and adults alike. In the end, this blurring of boundaries between cultures, including the cultures of childhood and adulthood, leads to a more comprehensive definition of children's entertainment as any entertainment that has been, is, or might be enjoyed by a child. The enjoyment of the diverse performances at the 1997 Calgary International Children's Festival revealed the child inherent within us all.

Notes

- 1 JoAnne James is the founding producer of the Calgary International Children's Festival, which is now in its eleventh year; cf. my interview with her in "Changing the World: A Profile of Writer JoAnne James" (CCL 85 [1997]: 31-40).
- 2 The festival is sponsored by various federal, provincial, and local government grants, corporate and small businesses, community partners and agencies, and Friends of the Festival, and is run by 1300 annual volunteers. Although in the past some schools had field trip funds which might have covered the costs, parents are now responsible for paying for their children's tickets. If parents cannot afford to pay for tickets, teachers can apply for a grant from the festival's outreach fund, which is financed by sponsors and donors and is set aside to cover ticket prices for underprivileged children.
- 3 This quotation alludes to Horace's phrase: "He who combines the useful and the pleasing wins out by both instructing and delighting the reader" (*The Art of Poetry* 54).

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