



Local academic institution
a worthy theatrical venue

Description

Dawson Theatre program a good bet for reasonably priced shows

By **Byron Toben**

Local theatregoers should not overlook some fine shows at our various academic institutions.

In addition to the bilingual National Theatre School, which draws students from all over the country, rewarding English language productions can be seen at both McGill and Concordia Universities as well as at the **Dawson** and Sir John Abbott Cegeps.

Two engaging Dawson productions that I managed to catch during its 2018 Fall/Winter season were works by local playwright **Colleen Curran** and some British guy named **William Shakespeare**.



The Taming of the Shrew – Image: Félix Deconinck

Shaming of the True

The Shakespeare, which closed out the 2018 season, was the ever-popular *Taming of the Shrew*. Expertly directed by **Carolyn Guillet**, who playfully sub-titled it as *The Shaming of the True*.

Changing the title has a history. Though the show was popular during Shakespeare's day, it fell off after his death and was not performed for over a hundred years. Even when revived, it was played under the names of its two main characters, *Katherine and Petruccio*.

Since the 19-strong student cast had 14 females and only 5 males many roles were performed by those of the opposite sex.

It only regained vast popularity under its original name around 1890 and retains that popularity even until this day, even with the rise of the Me Too movement, even though it centres around a husband's abuse of "uppity" wife.



The Taming of the Shrew – Image: Félix Deconinck

I also enjoy it because it was the basis of the hit Cole Porter musical *Kiss Me, Kate*.

Since the 19-strong student cast had 14 females and only 5 males many roles were performed by those of the opposite sex.

Thus, the highly animated suitor Petrucchio, was played by the shortish **Megan Jonker**, whereas the shrew Katherine (**Anthony Chiarelli**) was not only a head taller but double her wooer's girth. (This brought to me a flashback of an opposite match in the 2012 Repercussion Shakespeare in the Park which paired the 6'9" Alex McCooeye opposite shrew Kirsten Rasmussen, approximately 5'5".)

Katherine's sister Bianca, was also played by a male (**Adam Bonsham**) while their rich father, Baptista, anxious to marry them off, was played by a female (**Nicolle Palacio**).

All these plus the others in various roles as suitors, servants, even a horse, performed well.

The staging had lots of movement and use made of giant reflector mirrors. The student actors changed roles on alternate nights, so they each had a chance to develop different voices or actions.

This show with tickets ranging from 5\$ to 15\$ closed on November 24.

Earlier, in October was:



Picturesque: Voices From Beaver Hall – Image: Emma Rosa

Picturesque: Voices From Beaver Hall

I reviewed Collen Curran's dramatic reading of her assemblage ([Review: Picturesque](#)), celebrating the unheralded talented female painters of the Beaver Hall group of the 1930s at McGill's Redpath museum in 2015. That coincided with a long overdue exhibit at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

In October, director **Jude Beny** converted this concept into a full staging. No easy task as it consisted of 16 short plays by 13 Montreal writers celebrating those painters. Ms Curran herself wrote three of them and sister **Peggy**, two.



Picturesque: Voices From Beaver Hall
Image: Emma Rosa

Colleen's included *At the Theatre* celebrating painter **Prudence Howard**, *Wooing* wherein **Emily Carr** meets **A.Y. Jackson** of Group of Seven fame and *Italian Girl* as painted by **Emily Coonan**.

Peggy's were *Lunch with Miss Emily Carr* where she dined with **Anne Savage** and *That Night at Mrs. Chowne's*, involving artist **Mabel Lockerby**.

One male playwright joined the otherwise all female crew. That was **Charles Abramovici** who penned *A Whisper To Your Heart* positing a radio interview of A.Y. Jackson with CBC radio host legend **Peter Gzowski**.

A giant screen in the background showed some the paintings as they were discussed in the various mini plays.

Clever stage movements enabled each scene to smoothly segue into the next.

The whole, which ran from October 3 to 6, was played by second year students on a Pay-What-You-Can basis.

Dawson's next Professional Theatre Program public showing is ***Attempts On Her Life*** from **January 28 to February 9, 2019**.

514 931-5000

dawsoncollege.qc.ca/theatre-season



Feature image: *The Taming of the Shrew* – Félix Deconinck

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