

BY HUGH GALLAGHER
STAFF WRITER

The festivals range has expanded to include theatrical works from all eras and coun-

Variety has become the norm at the Stratford Festival and variety is also the norm in activities offered to Stratford visitors. Stratford is a great place to walk and bicycle. Its many parks, beautiful and distinctive homes and lively downtown make it an ideal vacation destination. The surrounding countryside and other interesting towns, such as St. Mary's, offer much to do and see.

The Queen's Inn has three restaurants, but they are just a small part of the dining possibilities. At the high end Rundles, the Old Prune and the Church have become favorites with theatergoers. This year we tried two relatively new establishments. We sampled new cuisine

Tourism Stratford, P.O. Box 818, 98 Wellington St., Stratford, Ont. n5a 6w1, will provide you with a hiking and biking map of the Stratford area and a pamphlet "Stratford Strolls" with walking tours of the city, including information on distinctive public buildings and private homes. The residential sections of town are interesting for their architecture which uses native Ontario stone. The house in Stratford that has become known as the Ontario cottage. But there are also fine examples of Tudor, Georgian, Federal and Victorian

Nearby St. Marys is another excellent place for architecture buffs. The fortress like Opera House is no longer used for its original purpose as a 1,000 seat auditorium, but the exterior has been beautifully restored in all its unique splendor. St. Marys' distinctive townhall was built of limestone and has a romanc-

In addition to plays with special appeal for children, "Alice Through the Looking Glass" and "The Music Man," the Stratford area also offers farm tours, trolley rides.

This is often strong theater and Bedford is mesmerizing. From the very first moment he is wheeled on stage, the audience is in his very capable hands. Continues through Nov. 1 in repertory at the Festival Theater.

For ticket information, call 1-800-567-1600 or write to Stratford Festival Box Office, P.O. Box 520, Stratford, Ontario Canada N5A 6V2.

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King Lear
Hutt, now in his 33rd season at Stratford, brings to "King Lear" a rigid dignity and a controlled cadence that disintegrates as Lear drifts into madness and shame.

"Lear" is Shakespeare's unflinching look at growing old and the conflicts it creates between generations. Often hailed as Shakespeare's greatest play, "Lear" has multiple layers of meaning and insight and a rich variety of flawed characters.

Hutt has played the role twice before at Stratford, but he is now of Lear's age and this gives special poignancy to his performance. Few actors speak Shakespeare's language with such a precise sense of meaning and flow as Hutt. He is a superb actor who performs Lear with such early strength and power. Hutt starts at a higher point to make his fall that much more spectacular.

Stratford artistic director Richard Monette's production is clear and straightforward and, despite the Edwardian costumes, it is put in the way as to not put emphasis on Lear and his



Masters: *Brian Bedford (left) and William Hutt deliver strong performances at Stratford.*

attempts to understand what is real and what isn't. This is not an emotionally raging production as is often the approach to Lear's mad scenes. This is a play about family relationships and a quieter madness.

In addition to Hutt, this pro

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diction gets strong performances from Colombe Demers as a sweet but too proud Cordelia, Lewis Gordon as the devoted and level-headed Kent (he also replaces Hutt as Lear in selected fall performances), Peter Donaldson as the misjudged Edgar who feigns madness and Jordan Pettie as Lear's fool and sadly ignored conscience. Continues through Nov. 2 in repertory at the Festival Theater.

Amadeus

Brian Bedford is an actor's actor, a man with a superb command of every acting trick. He is able to use them all as the troubled Antonio Salieri in Peter Shaffer's "Amadeus."

This is a welcome return of last year's Stratford production of this popular if overly glib historical drama. Salieri was a court composer to Emperor Joseph II of Austria. He may or may not have poisoned Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

Bedford is on stage for the entire production and must age and grow younger before our eyes. He must also suggest the complex personality of Salieri, a worldly man with the curse of being able to recognize great music but not the ability to write it. Bedford suggests the style, rancorous wit and rich regret that make Salieri a fascinating character.

His nemesis is Mozart, who in Shaffer's play is a genius with the manners and mentality of a rude little boy. Stephen Ouimette has neither Tom Hulse's babyface or the hysterical giggle that made Hulse seem like a naughty boy in the film version. Ouimette is more a foul-mouthed and arrogant teenager, which in some ways makes him a stronger adversary especially when he argues his positions or music.

The film has a scene not in the play that suggests something of

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Also this year at Festival are Meredith Willson's "The Music Man" and Lillian Hellman's "The Little Foxes." At the Avon, Feydeau's "A Fitting Confusion," Shakespeare's controversial "The Merchant of Venice," a staged adaptation of "Alice Through the Looking Glass" and Christopher Plummer in a one-man show, "Barrymore." At the Tom Patterson Theater the plays are Shakespeare's "As You Like It," Tennessee Williams' "Sweet Bird of Youth" and Samuel Beckett's "Waiting for Godot."

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