

# Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor/953-2105



Thursday, May 16, 1991 O&amp;E

(F-98XO)7B

## Curtain up 39th season gets under way at Stratford Festival

By Ethel Simmons  
staff writer

**A**CTORS HAVE been in rehearsal and already are doing preview performances for some of the 14 productions to highlight the 39th season at the Stratford Festival in Ontario.

This week, during breaks in re-

hearsal, a few of the stars took time to talk by phone to the Observer & Eccentric about their roles in shows that range from tragedy to light-hearted fare by Shakespeare and other playwrights.

For ticket information, call the Stratford (Ont.) Festival box office free from metropolitan Detroit, 964-4668.

### A direct approach to playing Hamlet

**C**OLM FEORE has the plum role as Hamlet in the Bard's "Hamlet, Prince of Denmark," now in preview and opening the season Monday, May 27, at Stratford's Festival Theatre.

Feore takes his work seriously but he is not mesmerized by the character. He has played Richard III and Iago. "Now it's Hamlet," he said. "We're just doing the play — very simple — as honest and direct as we can be."

Asked what approach this production would take to Shakespeare's drama, Feore said, "We've let each of the elements be featured." He believes it's dangerous to assume you can put a single interpretation onto a role as great as Hamlet.

"Nothing gets in the way of the words," he stressed. "You see more of the play and less of the art."

ANOTHER ROLE Feore will play at Stratford is Benedick in Shakespeare's "Much Ado About Nothing," also in preview and opening May 29 at the Festival Theatre. Hero and Claudio are the young lovers and Benedick and Beatrice are the cynical, older couple. In addition, he is cast as Horatio, the boyfriend, in Moliere's classic comedy "The School for Wives," opening Aug. 2 at the Avon Theatre.

Feore, who is of Irish heritage, was born in Boston and raised in Ottawa and Windsor. He spent three years with the National Theatre School in Montreal and later worked at the National Arts Centre in Toronto.

Actors at Stratford usually progress from the young stage to the



Colm Feore

main stage. But when Feore arrived at Stratford 12 years ago, "I started playing all sorts of big things," for two years on the main stage. Then, "I played smaller parts." On the young stage, which gave him further opportunity to develop his craft.

In 1989, he took a year off to do film and television. "I was terrified to leave. I was terrified to come back," he said. "It's great to grow and develop," he said contrasting his year away with his years at Stratford, "but you can get seduced by the security of this place."

Feore praised the festival's artistic director, David William, saying, "He's interested in the qualities of clarity and honesty and serving up the plays so that they're understood. He said Richard Monette, director of "Much Ado About Nothing," also is interested in everything being clear.

### Actress can identify with sensitive Emily

**I**N CONTRAST to Colm Feore's longtime Stratford stardom is the theatrical career of Ann Baggeley, who is making her Stratford debut this season as Emily in Thornton Wilder's "Our Town."

Baggeley first played the role of Emily four years ago at George Brown College, where she attended theater school for three years. The actress, who was born and raised in Toronto, also has studied at the Banff School of Fine Arts. "I'm not in the Young Company show," she pointed out, "although I'm still a part of the Young Company." She considers herself very fortunate to have been chosen for the production of "Our Town," which is in preview and opens May 28 at Stratford's Avon Theatre.

She described the Young Company as a training ground for young actors, who have been working one or two years, and for apprentices. "Stratford likes to take young people and bring them up in the ranks," she said.

BAGGELEY SAID the character of Emily is "a bit precocious-but she's very smart and sensible and simple. She's a girl, who becomes a woman by the third act. She's an example of a very sensitive young woman. I identify with her."

The performer also plays Agnes, the young, convent-educated woman



Ann Baggeley

In "The School for Wives," She said that in many ways Agnes is similar to Emily. A totally different character is the part of Ginette in the world-premiere of a new English translation of Michel Tremblay's "Les Belles Sœurs," in preview and opening June 1 the Avon Theatre. "She's the kind of girl nobody wants to listen to. She's a real loser."

Baggeley said that for the role she wears little round eyeglasses, a red wig and freckles. "I don't usually get to play this type of character. She's the opposite of Emily." The Canadian play has a cast of 15 women. "It's a comedy but very black humor," she said.

### Character actor is a director as well

**T**HE YOUNG Company is directed by Bernard Hopkins, who came to Stratford in 1975 as "one of the senior actors" with the company. In 1981, it became the Young Company at Third Stage, now renamed the Tom Patterson Theatre.

"It's an absolute extension of the main company," said Hopkins of the

Young Company. "It attempts to give some of our younger talents the chance to play roles that are not in their immediate range."

Actors in the Young Company are between 18-30 years old. Hopkins is in his third year as company director. A character actor, he appears in several Stratford productions this season. He is Philip, a chef in "The

Rules of the Game" by Luigi Pirandello, opening July 5 at the Tom Patterson Theatre, and also appears in "An Enemy of the People" by Henrik Ibsen, opening Aug. 23 at the Avon Theatre.

For the later production, director Martha Henry wanted to use more mature actors for a scene at a town council meeting. Artistic director David William will be one of the people with him in the crowd scene, Hopkins said.

Hopkins is directing "Twelfth Night" with the main company, opening May 30 at the Avon Theatre, and "The Knight of the Burning Pestle," with the Young Company, opening Aug. 2 at the Tom Patterson Theatre.

Asked to comment on director Martha Henry (a former Bloomfield Hills resident, who is unavailable for an interview at this time because she is directing a production in London, England), Hopkins said, "She's an extraordinarily talented person. She played Violet in "Twelfth Night" in 1966 at this theater."

Hopkins continued, in reference to the production of "Twelfth Night" he is directing, "The play is so beautiful. It's a grave responsibility to do it."

### Billy Bigelow role keeps getting better

**A**NOTHER ACTOR at Stratford with a specialty is John Devorski, who has gotten some parts because of his singing, as well as his dramatic ability.

Devorski explained his strong musical-theater background. "Because I can sing, I got to go to those auditions as well."

In his second season at Stratford, he is thrilled to be playing the lead of Billy Bigelow in the musical "Carousel." He calls the role, "Quite a bonus for me."

This is the third time he has played Bigelow in productions of "Carousel." He described the character: "He's a no-no-dowell, he's pompous, he's egocentric, but at the base of all that, there's a sensitivity to him, which you don't get to see until he launches into 'Soliloquy.'"



Bernard Hopkins

ful. It's a grave responsibility to do it."

English-born, the actor came to Canada in 1970, to play in "The Comedy of Errors" in Winnipeg. One theater job led to another and, "I'm still here." He described himself as "very short, inclined to fat and with gray hair." His appearance helps him get roles that are different. "The public doesn't come to see who you are. They come to see the character," he said.



John Devorski

"IT'S A WONDERFUL, wonderful part," he said enthusiastically. "I

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