

Joni Mitchell: beauty's song

by Richard Perlmutter
Spectrum Theater Reviewer

Life is an enigma. It may be pain, taking the form of death and suffering. Or it may be a more symbolic pain as in the lottery of last week. But fortunately the enigma has another aspect, beauty.

Roberta Jean Anderson is a poetess of both sides. (Eliminating that bit of journalistic illusion; Roberta Joan Anderson is better known as Joni Mitchell.)

Joni Mitchell takes the pain of life and uses it to evoke that mysterious form of beauty called art.

Canadian-born Joni Mitchell has been in the folk music business now for about six years. She was originally an art student at the Alberta College of Art but painting with words and images soon overrode the canvas and Joni turned to song writing.

Unique folk form

She was soon known as a creative and accomplished composer of a unique form of folk music. For several years such songs as "Both Sides Now (Clouds)" were noticeable hits recorded by other artists like Judy Collins and Frank Sinatra.

Joni Mitchell had sung some of her works in cafes and coffeehouses but it was after she appeared at the Mariposa Folk Festival and Miami Pop Festival that she had proven her captivating artistic talent extended not only from the pen but also to the guitar and voice. She is now 26 and lives in California in a simple house which seems to shun her new-found wealth.

Love's lost man

Joni's poetry is at times intensely personal. In "I Had a King" she sings, "You know my thoughts don't fit the man." The man is Chuck Mitchell, a folk singer whom Joni met in Detroit, later married and still later divorced. The reason is alluded to when she sings "He's swept with the broom of contempt And the rooms have an empty ring."

At times Joni Mitchell describes loves that are lost and loves never found. Sometimes she will describe a humane gentleness and simplistic innocence. Other times her songs emanate waves of coldness and inhumanity.

In Joni Mitchell's poetry our world and our thoughts have many dimensions and many sides. Perhaps they all combine to yield only illusion.

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Busy being free

The wide open spaces of her native Canada imbue her songs with a poetic concern with freedom. And the classic symbol of freedom is the sea, the recurrent theme of her first album.

Yet even freedom has its limits and the freedom to dream and the freedom of nature cannot always answer all the questions of our existence and our world. So she sings: Out of the city/ And down to the seaside/ To sun my shoulders/ And wind in my hair/ But sandcastles crumble/ And hunger is human/ And humans are hungry/ For worlds they can't share/ My dreams with the seagulls fly/ Out of reach of cry

Joni Mitchell is retiring from the concert circuit bag and returning home to some serious songwriting. Hence, her concert at Kleinhans Music Hall on Saturday at 8:30 p.m. will be her second to last performance with her last scheduled appearance to be in Royal Festival Hall in London, Feb. 7.

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BY HENRY GIBSON

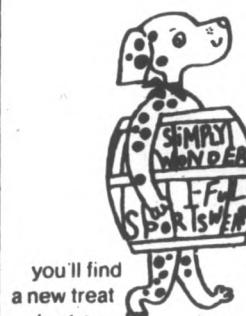


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MAIN PLACE
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Repertory aimed at theater improvement

The Buffalo Theater Workshop is a theater group composed of about 25 people ranging in age from 12 to 28. The company includes schoolchildren and college students.

The group was founded three years ago with an initial grant from the New York State Council of Arts. It started off by doing improvisational theater, and street theater — performing pieces at the M&T Plaza and LaSalle Park.

At the M&T Plaza they performed Witches, Drums, and Drama, showing what happens to basically good people when they become caught up in the money game. Needless to say, most of the walking around people at the Plaza, like most of the walking around people anywhere, didn't know what was coming off, blaming it on crazy hippies.

Aside from freaking the local populace, The Buffalo Theater Workshop has other, more conventional aims. One is to develop new theater techniques, utilizing and giving equal attention to both scriptwork and improvisation.

Another aim is to develop new teaching techniques for both the theater and academic situations —

like perhaps improvisation in respect to exam situations.

A third goal, and perhaps most important, is to develop a sense of community among both the schoolchildren and those everyday, walking-around people.

In achieving this last aim, The Buffalo Theater Workshop hopes to offer theater to labor groups, hospitals and other places where theater doesn't usually penetrate.

This Thursday through Sunday, the theater group is presenting three works. One is a straight play, Harold Pinter's *Dumbwaiter*, directed by Richard Blau. *Through the Eyes of a Child*, a dance-drama depicting various stages in the life of a young person will also be presented, choreographed by Snyder Hainesworth. *Mime* rounds out the bill and is directed by Frank Elmer.

Shows start at 8 p.m. in the Domus building, 1685 Elmwood Ave. with admission at \$.75 for students and \$1.50 for those so unfortunate to be non-scholars.

The group's last presentation, *Unicorns*, proved to be a very popular success, and this week's presentation promises to be no less enjoyable and entertaining.

'Saint Joan' presented

Did Saint Joan make it through the last saintly purge?

Joan of Arc, a village girl from Vosges, was born about 1412; burnt for heresy, witchcraft, and sorcery in 1431; rehabilitated after a fashion in 1456; designated venerable in 1904; declared blessed in 1908; and finally canonized in 1920.

She is the most notable Warrior Saint in the Christian calendar and the queerest fish among the eccentric worthies of the Middle Ages.

Saint Joan will be in St. John's Church (Lafayette at Richmond Ave.) this Thursday, Friday and Saturday at 8 p.m. The Student Theater Guild and The Literature and Drama Committee of the U.U.A.B. are sponsoring this production of George Bernard Shaw's classic.

Lewis Pshena who directed last year's production of *Alice Through the Looking Glass*, is the director. Tickets at \$.50 for students and \$1.00 for general public are available at the Norton Ticket Office.

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