



NORTH PEACE drama students in Johnny Canuck.

# North Peace production of Johnny Canuck

1986?

During World War II, Canada had its own patriotic superhero, Johnny Canuck, created to save the world from the evil Huns and inspire countless Canadian boys to do the same. He was the hero of a series of Dell comic books at the time and later of a play called (what else?) Johnny Canuck. On December 12 and 13, North Peace Senior Secondary Acting 12 students performed this satirical spoof in true outrageous, frenetic comic book style.

The play is really a cartoon, and any hint of realism is unnecessary and in fact inappropriate. The characters are broadly drawn caricatures: the noble and patriotic hero, his loyal, brawny and slightly stupid sidekick, the beautiful and brave heroine, and assorted evil villains. The students performed several roles each, and managed admirably to create a different character, with different speech, mannerisms and style, for each role. All the actors brought a lot of energy and enthusiasm to the production, which added to the charm of the show. Stacey Surinak made a gutsy and efficient heroine, who hauled Johnny Canuck out of several tight spots. She also played a very funny Fraulein Fanny. Troy Nelson was the essence of a stern-jawed Corporal Dixon of the RCMP, and had a wonderful opening scene tracking criminals in the frozen Canadian north. He also played Brian, Joseph Goebbels and various others. One of the most original characters was an armless war hero, played by Dale Meshko, who became an evil maniac when given a pair of artificial arms.

One of the funniest scenes in the play was watching "The Arms" take over.

Mark Edelman, who played Derek Bras D'Or, the trusty sidekick, gave the play some of its best comic moments with his knee-jerk reactions to the "Huns" and his love of food. Len Harvey, as Johnny Canuck, carried off his superhero role with appropriate noble poses and brave actions. He also did absolutely hilarious small roles as Laddie the dog and the Queen of England. Deneen Babcock, as the narrator, and Shelly Hutchinson, as the piano player, added spirit and the necessary explanations to the performance.

One of the charms of the play was the infectious spirits and enthusiasm of the students. They genuinely seemed to be having a good time, and the audience responded to their energy. Even the few inevitable flubs and missed lines ended up causing laughter as the actors covered them up with very funny ad-libs and actions. Special mention must be made of the slow-motion fight scene, which was performed perfectly.

The set and props were simple and obviously meant to convey a cartoon drawing. Most of the time the setting was effective and sometimes quite humorous. The play was hampered by the lack of a proper theatre setting. A large, echoing school gym is a very difficult place to perform a small cast comedy such as this.

"Johnny Canuck" provided a humorous and enjoyable evening of theatre, and the audience present had a good time. Credit must go to the Acting 12 class, their teacher and director, Doug Xenis, and the backstage crew for their hard work. It's encouraging to see young talent in the community and these young

performers displayed commendable enthusiasm and skill in this performance.

Written by  
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