

Red Emma: A Theatre Glendon Presentation

by Michelle Firman

Red Emma, a play written by Carol Bolt, opened on the evening of November 29th to a full house at Theatre Glendon. It is a show of impressive discipline to say the least. *Red Emma* is directed by Sharolyn Lee, and showcases a cast of eight enthusiastic actors and

actresses. It is a tight, well-paced and *solid* piece of theatre. The stage craft, courtesy of Steve Devine, is uplifting and dramatically all-encompassing. Lighting, music, costuming and set design all combine to create a cohesive atmosphere, an intimate setting for viewers.

As I watched a dress rehearsal, I was aware of the cast enjoying a tremendous personal rapport together. These people, cast and crew take care of each other on stage as well as off. This is evident in the expression on the face of director Sharolyn Lee.

This production of *Red Emma* is especially successful in communication of the passage of time. Emma, played by Peta Coffeng, comes to the realization that maturity is a journey, a balance of our youthful idealism with the reality of the times in which we live. All the personalities in this story sense they too are on the battleground for social justice and personal integrity, but somehow we get the feeling that this is Emma's story, and we are anxious to befriend her comrades.

This production of *Red Emma* I have learned, is primarily not a political statement on the parts of those involved, but rather a cry of exultation for humankind. And at that, it is an eloquent statement spoken with clarity and passion, about a theme which carries over all social and language barriers. It is interesting that this play should be brought to the stage at a time when there is so much intense concern about the future of this planet. My only regret is that *Red Emma* is not reaching a wider audience outside of the Glendon community.

In Act 1, a powerful and frightening conflict begins to come alive between Berkman and Most, as they battle not only for the romantic attentions of Emma, but for the escalation of recognitions for their own di-

verse concerns. And again between Emma and Helen as they fight passionately for the love and security of the men in their circle, but more so it seems, for their mutual friendship they cannot part with as women. These are momentous moments to mention only two.

Finally, this production of *Red Emma* may very well be a delicate assault on our romantic notions about the present human condition, but nevertheless it is portrayed with kindness, honesty and a sense of relevancy and hope for all. For these reasons it is good theatre. Secondly, it is a tribute to the social, artistic and political awareness of the company as a whole. *Red Emma* speaks very loudly and renews our hope for 'beautiful radiant things'.



photo: Christian Martel

Pro Tem December 1983
Vol. 23 No. 11