

Continuing CONNECTIONS

It's about talent

Talent. The campus is abuzz with the word these days, largely because the University of Waterloo has embarked upon an ambitious campaign to build what it calls a “Talent Trust.” The goal is to attract and nurture those gifted students, researchers, and professors who will anticipate and meet the challenges of tomorrow.

It's a worthy enterprise, though I confess myself puzzled by the use of the future tense. From my frequent encounters with our creative, successful, accomplished graduates, it is clear that

St. Jerome's has been incubating generations of talent for many years.

Take **Chris McHarge** and **Carrie Snyder**. One is a successful director associated with the most celebrated comic playwright in Canada. The other had her first book of stories published by the first publisher that read it: Penguin Canada. Talent aplenty. Since graduating from St. Jerome's, **Chris McHarge** (BA '84, English & Drama) has carved out a substantial reputation as a freelance director and the director of choice for new works by “Canada's Neil Simon,” playwright Norm Foster. Foster's comedies are staples in theatrical repertoires from coast to coast and Chris has directed



Chris McHarge

fifteen of them, including world premieres of *Race Day*, *Jasper Station*, *The Foursome*, *Maggie's Getting Married*, *Jupiter in July*, *Small Time*, and, this February, *Outlaw*.

Foster involves Chris in the development of new ideas, soliciting his judgement about what works. “Norm and I have a great deal of respect for each other's craft, strengthened by a real trust. There's a kind of shorthand when we're working on a show together.” Chris admires Foster's comic design and the serious themes—romance, male bonding, personal transformation—which underpin the laughter. “They aren't just collections of one-liners. These are characters and situations that we recognize, and the laughter comes from that recognition. My job, as director, is to tell the story and let the comedy spring from that.”

Chris recalls the influence of several SJU professors—in particular, Ted McGee—on his interest in theatre. After graduating from St. Jerome's, he received an MA in Drama from the University of Calgary before beginning doctoral studies at the University of Toronto. However, the lure of the footlights proved too powerful and, thirteen years ago, he left academe for the hurly burly of the theatre.

Since then, he has directed in Canada, the States, and Europe and has been Artistic Associate at Theatre Aquarius in Hamilton and Artistic Director of Theatre on the Grand in Fergus. He has been nominated for the Eleanor and Lou Siminovitch Prize in Theatre, the Canada Council John Hirsch Award, and the Pauline McGibbon Award for directing. However, Chris declares himself “most proud of his roles as partner to

Grad Notes

'78 “I've moved to the land of cold and ice,” writes **Fr. Edward “Ted” Hughes** (BA '78, French), formerly parish priest at Our Lady Immaculate Church in Guelph. He's referring to Saskatoon, where he has accepted a position with Correctional Services Canada as regional chaplain for the prairies. “The hand of God sometimes moves us more quickly than we planned,” Fr. Ted comments. “I had been a delegate of the Canadian bishops on the Interfaith Committee which advised the Chaplaincy Branch of Correctional Service. I began to see the need for Catholic representation at the administrative level and thought that I would throw my hat into the ring. The road was smooth and paved and much to my surprise I won the competition.” He adds, “It has been great so far.”
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'92 Since **Sheila Arnold** (BA '92, English, Queen's BEd '94) last sent news to *Update*, plenty has been happening in her life. “My husband Rob Schnurr and I had another boy on April 27, 2003,” she writes. “His name is Connor Braeden Schnurr, and his triplet brothers Jordan, Brett, and Caleb (they'll be 6 years old in May) are very proud of him and love him to pieces.” Sheila also began teaching with the Avon Maitland District School Board. She teaches Grade 4 at Turnberry Central Public School just outside of Wingham, Ontario.
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'99 **Rachel Caldwell** (BA '99, English Literature) and Adam Stanley (UW BMath

by Harry Froklage

wife Kathryn, and dad to eleven-year-old Caitlyn, six-year-old Erin, and three-year-old Quinlan.”

A corresponding commitment to family freed **Carrie Snyder** (BA '97, English and Peace & Conflict Studies) to write the stories in her recently-released book, *Hair Hat*. After graduate studies in English at the University of Toronto and a stint as the Assistant Books Editor for the *National Post*, Carrie made her infant son and daughter her full-time preoccupation. But her desire to write persisted. Her mother’s willingness to care for the children each afternoon allowed Carrie the luxury of a few hours to work on her stories. “I’ve become more disciplined since I had the kids,” she acknowledges with a laugh.

She was inspired by the momentary glimpse of a man in a Toronto coffee shop wearing an unusually large hat, an image that persisted in Carrie’s mind until she found him showing up in her stories. The idea arose of a story cycle throughout which a man with a “hair hat” would appear: “I wanted to tell the story of this mysterious figure who is randomly encountered by the other characters in the stories, each of whom sees him somewhat differently.

“I wasn’t sure what the hair hat meant,” she says, “but I discovered its meaning as I wrote the stories.” In a series of first-person accounts, each characterized by a sense of loss, the hair hat was, she discovered “an expression of the character’s own grief.”

The book was snapped up for publication by Penguin Canada, and the reviews have been glowing. The *Globe and Mail* described Carrie’s writing as prose that is “unadorned, yet rich with precision and compression,” in which “small

epiphanies grow naturally from her fluid blend of insight and expression.”

Now at work on a novel, Carrie sees the success of her book as somewhat removed from the maternal realities of her daily life. But her commitment to her creative gift is unflinching: “I like everything about writing,” she says simply, crediting St. Jerome’s professors Charlene Diehl-Jones and Carol Acton for their early encouragement of her creative efforts.

Theatrical success. Literary accomplishment. Could it be that nurturing such gifted people constitutes St. Jerome’s talent? 🍷



Carrie Snyder

'02, Computer Science) were married on August 11, 2002 at Hernder Estates Winery in St. Catharines, Ontario. Rachel is an English teacher with the Waterloo Catholic District School Board in St. Marys.
bellarachele@hotmail.com

'01 Crystal Price (BA '01, English) is happy to announce the birth of her first child, Jacob William Lamont Price, on November 1, 2003.
cryssielee@hotmail.com

'03 Michael Cheung (BA '03, Economics) is living in Toronto and working at the downtown Toronto head office of the Bank of Montreal as a futures analyst.
uw03@hotmail.com

“Oxford certainly is unique (well, except perhaps for Cambridge) and I like the college experience,” writes **Douglas Stebila (BMath '03, Combinatorics & Optimization/Computer Science)**. He is working on an MSc in Mathematics and Foundations of Computer Science at Pembroke College at Oxford. “It’s hard not to feel inspired when, cycling to class alongside medieval city walls, you pass 800-year-old colleges and the massive Bodleian Library. The uninterrupted dedication to learning that’s been a part of Oxford for hundreds of years is still alive here.”
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