

Acting is not child's play for Kindergarten Players

Theatre group brings fringe-type material to the West Island

By HOLLIE WATSON

Garden variety theatre it is not. The Kindergarten Players is a recently-formed drama company whose penchant for the outlandish is adding a quirky new dimension to the West Island theatre scene. "What we'll be doing is Fringe Festival-type material — plays which are often bizarre and sometimes explicit, in which disturbing questions and issues are raised," explained group member Don King of Pointe Claire.

The company's raison d'être is to mount works that challenge audiences on both an emotional and intellectual level, he says.

"Kindergarten Players came about when playwright Ian Allen approached me about directing his play *Tiger Mouth*," said King, who is studying drama education at Concordia University. "We had originally intended to bring it to the fest (Montreal Fringe Festival), but the waiting list was too long."

Addition notices were promptly sent out and a moniker chosen. "We liked the name because it's ironic — we're dealing with such non-kindergarten issues," King said.

The alternative troupe is comprised of students from the John

Abbott College and Concordia theatre departments, a great many who are John Rennie High School alumni like himself, King says. Deciding on a locale didn't present much of a problem. Given that their target audience is young anglophones like themselves, the West Island seemed like an appropriate choice.

King contacted Louise Chalmers, his former drama teacher at John Renzie, which he says houses one of the best-kept secrets in local theatre — Gaping Mouth Studio.

"It's been refurbished with all new lighting. It's quite advanced," he said.

It was there that the Kindergarten Players presented two one-act pieces by Allen in their first on-stage production a couple of weeks ago. Theatre-goers accustomed to whodunits, off-Broadway musicals and the usual mainstream may well have suffered a bit of a shock, King muses.

Tiger Mouth is a complex and sobering 45-minute piece about a tormented man who questions himself and the validity of his life. It's a play without resolution, King says. A dozen actors assume about 18 roles.

The second work presented was *The Queen's Chef*.



Chronicle, Clifford Sturhead

Roman Fee and Sarah Schwartz of the Kindergarten Players act out a scene from *Tiger Mouth*, a play written by Ian Allen of Dollard.

has several plays to his credit, and at the rate he's going he will soon be a force to be reckoned with. The script from *The Queen's Chef* was recently used on a high school exchange to New York, and Chalmers has discussed other examples of his work in a course she teaches

at Concordia. "He's got a really warped sense of humor," she said. They will probably draw on more of the offbeat young playwright's efforts in future, King says, but for the time being

the Kindergarten Players are taking it one step at a time.

Their next offering is as yet undecided, but King and company are keeping fingers crossed that they can expand not only their own perimeters, but those of their audiences as well.