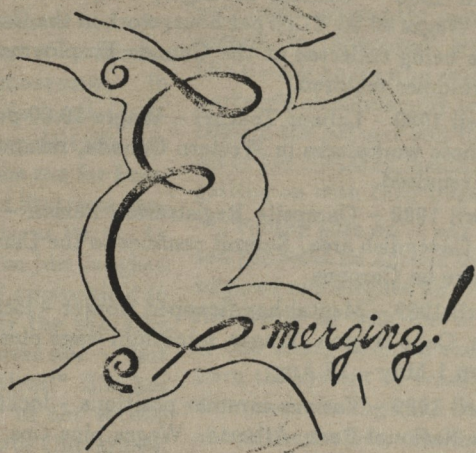


Sixth Women's Festival



The sixth annual PEI Women's Festival will open Friday evening April 28 with an informal talk and short readings by Newfoundland author Helen Porter. Now a grandmother, Helen has written all her life but did not begin to write professionally until 1963. "Helen is a mother figure in the Newfoundland writers' community around whom younger writers gather", according to Betsy Epperley, an English professor at Memorial University in St. John's.

Epperley describes Helen Porter as "an obviously kind, unassuming woman whose keen intelligence, perceptiveness, and sharp wit can take you by surprise." Of Porter's first novel, published last summer, Epperley says, "If you want to understand

poetry, criticism, humour and non-fiction. *Below the Bridges* (Breakwater Press, 1980) is a memoir-history about the south side of St. John's where Helen was born and grew up. She has also published stories and poetry in a number of anthologies, including *Stories from Atlantic Canada* (MacMillan, 1973), *Atlantic Prose* (Ragweed, 1985), and *Through the Open Window* (Oxford University Press, 1985). Helen's work has also appeared in *Saturday Night*, *Atlantic Insight*, *Chatelaine*, *Weekend*, *Star Weekly*, *Books in Canada*, *Quill and Quire*, *Journal of Fiction*, *Fiddlehead*, *Antigonish Review*, and many other publications. She has had ten plays produced on CBC radio and four on the stage.

Since

Sonia Johnson

working class St. John's life, from the smell of the hair spray to the name of the dish detergent to the dialogue, you just need to read any ten pages of *January, February, June or July*."

Helen Porter writes fiction,

1976 Helen has been teaching a creative writing class for Memorial University's Extension Arts. During the same period she has visited schools all over Newfoundland and Labrador, reading to students from her work and discussing it with them.

Helen is a founding member of St. John's Status of Women Council and is happy to call herself a feminist.

Festival registrants and the general public are in for a treat when Montreal singer-songwriter Lucie Bleu Tremblay performs Friday night, after author Helen Porter. Lucie Bleu had been performing in Montreal and Quebec for a long time when - all in one

year, 1986 - she won several prestigious Granby Awards, a previously unheard of feat. Not only did she receive both the performing and songwriting awards, but also the press award, the result of voting by the members of the Quebec press.

Suddenly there was lots of media attention on this talented musician and gifted performer. This time was right for her to put out an album. It was important to Lucie Bleu that the consciousness she puts in her songs be in her album, but it was hard to find a recording company willing to include "Voix d'Enfant", her song about incest. So she and her sister decided to produce her first album with the agreement of Oliver Records of California that Lucie Bleu would have artistic control.

Olivia Records is a completely woman-run company committed to the work of women singer-songwriters. Last November the recording company celebrated its 15th anniversary with a sold-out concert by its performers at New York's Carnegie Hall.

Lucie Bleu sings in both French and English on her album and in her concerts. Who she is as a Quebecoise is very important to her. Because her record has only been released in the U.S., she has been performing mainly there since 1986. Yet she never fails to get her predominately English-speaking audiences to join in with her in singing the traditional French-Canadian songs she sings in addition to her own songs.

The Boston Globe named her first album in the Top Ten of 1986, along with Paul Simon's *Graceland*. She is now recording a concert in Boston. Of this concert the Boston Globe reviewer stated, "Lucie Bleu is involved in a love affair with her audience, and the feeling is mutual". This was under a large picture of Lucie Bleu captioned "performer adored by both men and women". With her combination love songs, fun songs, and issue-oriented songs her performance has a transformational effect on her audience.

She will perform in New Orleans in January and Carnegie Hall in March. With the release of her first album in Canada this spring, she will perform again in her native Montreal just before she comes to PEI. She will then continue on a cross-Canada tour.

While the Friday evening opening of the Women's Festival highlights a Newfoundland author and a Quebecoise singer-songwriter, Saturday morning will feature an American freelance feminist, speaker and author.

Sonia Johnson is the woman who was excommunicated from the Mormon Church in 1979 for her support of the Equal Rights

Helen Porter

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