

Humble Port Credit beginnings helped Seana's star to rise

By KATHRYN KATES
Special

Port Credit's Seana McKenna, star of Shaw Festival's production of *Candida*, credits Bridget Harrison, her former drama teacher at Port Credit Secondary School for instilling her with love for the theatre.

"Bridget treated us like adults. She had us performing *A Mid-*

summer Night's Dream, The Crucible, Trojan Women and *Cyrano de Bergerac*, while other schools presented musicals like *Annie Get Your Gun*," said the veteran actress of both Shaw and Stratford Festivals.

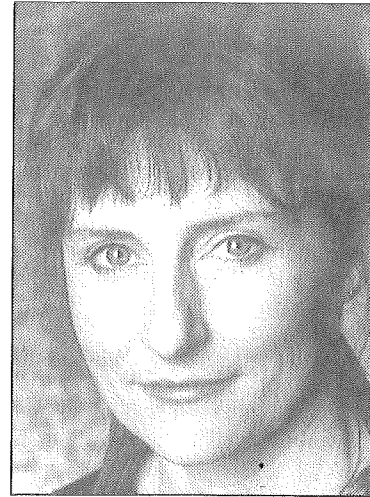
McKenna is excited about playing the title role in George Bernard Shaw's *Candida* at the Court House theatre, June 23-Sept. 26.

Directed by Christopher Newton, McKenna describes *Candida* as a

romantic domestic triangle with a twist. The audience finds themselves in the 1886 middle class London home of Reverend James Mavor Morell and his wife Candida. The plot thickens when a visitor, Eugene Marchbanks, an 18-year-old poet falls in love with Mrs. Morell. She must choose between her young suitor and her complacent husband.

"It's basically a pleasant play with provocative questions raised. The production examines marriage and the doubts that often threaten it. Candida, herself, is a conventional wife and mother without being a conventional Victorian," added McKenna.

A Dora Award winner (Toronto Theatre Award) for her work in the Theatre Plus production of *St. Joan*, McKenna has a long list of acting credits. Television audiences



SEANA MCKENNA

will recognize her from appearances on CTV's *ENG*, CBC's *Street Legal* and *Grand Larceny*. Her the-

atrical accomplishments include the role of Portia in *The Merchant Of Venice*, performed during her five-year tenure at the Stratford Festival. Last year she played Eliza in Shaw's *Pygmalion*, a smash hit at the Niagara-On-The-Lake venue.

McKenna counts herself as fortunate to be able to work in Canada and not have to leave the country to be valued as an actress. The hard working thespian is solidly booked until late next year, a showbiz rarity.

She recently returned from Victoria B.C.'s Belfry Theatre where she performed in the one woman show, *The Search For Signs Of Intelligent Life In The Universe*, a play written especially for Lily Tomlin by Jane Wagner. She thought it was wonderful yet scary to be the first actress in North America to tackle the Tomlin vehicle.

"I was lucky to be directed by

Miles Potter, my significant other. We've had offers to take the show on the road," she said.

McKenna splits her time between Niagara-on-the-lake and a small town outside Stratford. When her schedule permits, she comes home to Port Credit to see her parents and friends.

Recently the Peel Board of Education chose a select group of successful Peel graduates that included McKenna, as role models for an advertising campaign to promote the importance of staying in school.

When planning to catch a play at the Shaw Festival, McKenna suggests taking a stroll through the gardens surrounding the main festival theatre.

"Even if you don't enjoy the play you can't help but love the gardens," she laughed.