

Peel County Bivy  
City pair writes  
Oct. 26-77 MT  
acclaimed opera

The international award-winning TV opera, *Aberfan*, written by a Mississauga husband-and-wife team, will be broadcast on the CBC Television Network tonight (Oct. 26).

Last Aug. 21, Raymond and Beverly Pannell saw their creation win the coveted TV Opera Prize of the City of Salzburg, Austria. Based on the *Aberfan* disaster in Wales 11 years ago, the surrealistic opera was filmed at a Stouffville, Ont. gravel pit.

On Oct. 21, 1966, a century-old mountain of coal mine trailings collapsed and buried a nearby school in two million tons of rain-soaked slurry. The death toll in the end was 131 children and 16 adults.

Three years ago, the CBC commissioned the Pannells to compose an opera based on that tragedy. The Salzburg TV Opera Prize is awarded once every three years and *Aberfan* was in the running, with operas submitted by 11 countries.

According to Pannell, the prize was first awarded in 1959 and since then more than 90 operas have been submitted to the competition.

Of the six which have won the award previously, none was from North America. Now that *Aberfan* has won, it will be shown on national television in each of the 11 participating countries, giving it a larger audience in one night than it could ever have achieved on stage.

Writing in the *Toronto Star's* entertainment section, Pannell said that he hoped his accomplishment would encourage the writing and performance of new Canadian operas.

"I hope it will make it easier for people to greet new operas with anticipation rather than suspicion," he stated.