

# Young actor excited about role

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By LORRAINE LE PAGE  
Standard Staff

There will be plenty of familiar faces on stage when Press Theatre's *Butterflies Are Free* opens next Friday in the playhouse, Brock Centre for the Arts.

The star of the production is Robert Stein, a lanky six-footer who spent eight years at Ridley College where he appeared in such student productions as *Marat/Sade*, *Oliver Twist*, and *The Pawn Shop*.

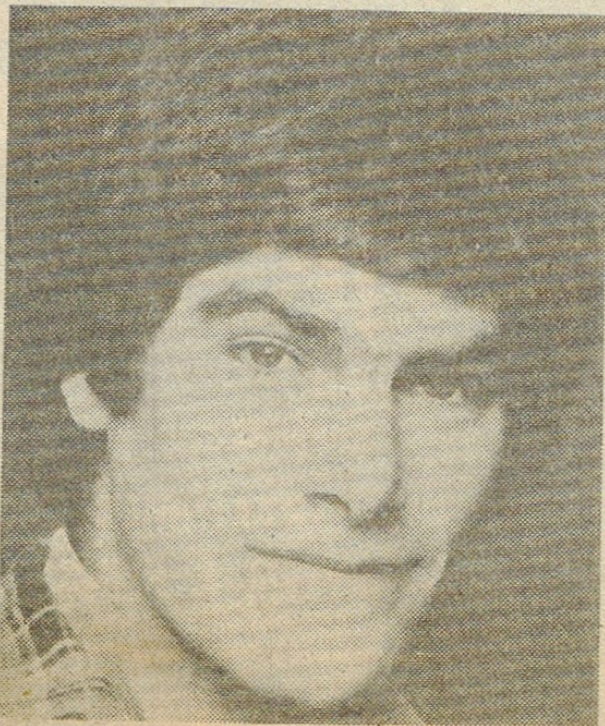
Appearing with him in *Butterflies Are Free* are Bonnie Campbell (a Niagara College graduate) as Jill, Diane Nyland Proctor (Press Theatre's incoming artistic director) as Mrs. Baker and local actor Robert Klein as Ralph Austin.

Stein, 22, who graduated from Ridley in 1977, has already a varied professional background in film and television. The role of Don Baker in *Butterflies* will be his first professional appearance on stage.

Understandably, he is excited about the prospect and hopes it will lead to many more stage roles. Right now he is not sure whether his almost steady employment as an actor in films and television is because of talent.

"Some of it has to be luck, that is part of the business. Right now, I don't know enough of the business yet to say whether it is luck or talent. I have been fortunate . . . I have been able to knock on doors."

Stein tries to be realistic about his career which, in a way, started through luck. Although he was



ROBERT STEIN

always interested in theatre — he produced his own plays in the cafeteria of his father's ski resort in St. Sauveur de Monts, Que. from age 14 — he had hoped for an athletic career as a hockey or cricket player.

He was part of the Canadian National Cricket team and toured England after graduating from Ridley. He also began to play hockey seriously, but had to give it up when he developed an allergic reaction to his own equipment.

He entered Bishop's University in Lennoxville for one and a half years but then decided university life wasn't for him. So, he joined his father and helped him run the ski resort by night and taught skiing by day (he is a certified ski-instructor).

One day, over the radio he heard that a film company in Montreal wanted extras. He decided to try out, was hired first as an extra and later got a speaking part in the film *Yesterday*.

From there he went on to summer school at McGill university to study children's literature, wrote a play and got it produced, encouraged by his professor.

The next film role was in *Pinball Summer* where he played the lead, John Leland. This led to three more film roles and a desire to get more acting knowledge, especially for stage.

Stein enrolled in the Dome Theatre School in Montreal, appeared in two student productions and ended up getting another film part, in the just released *My Bloody Valentine* which was shot in Cape Breton last September to November.

After finishing the film, he decided that for an English-speaking actor, Toronto was the place to be and he moved there this January, got parts in several television commercials and auditioned for *Butterflies*.

"It's good to get back to St. Catharines," he said with a fond smile. He recalled that when he first came to Ridley in 1969, the students there were quite isolated from the city. But this changed once the school became co-educational.

"I think it is a wonderful idea what they have done. Now that the girls are there it has instilled a social life," he explained.

He is amazed how much the city has changed since he left in 1977. "I used to think that St. Catharines was in the middle of the banana belt, a small town that would never change. I can't believe all the new building going on downtown. It certainly has changed."

He is enthusiastic about his appearance in *Butterflies* and about the cast of the play. "There is such a good feeling with the cast, we get along well in and out of rehearsal."

*Butterflies Are Free* is directed by Simon Johnston, set and costume design is by Warren Hartman, lighting by Daniel Fraser and stage management is by Wilson M. Becket, assisted by Brian Speagle.