

Facets of women examined

Festival offers theatrical gems

By ELIZABETH AIRD

Just a Little Fever, with its harsh yet lovely script by Caitlin Hicks, resonated Friday with the sound of a woman in the audience stifling her tears.

Karen Snyder (Lorena Gale) and Dorothy Livingston (Caitlin Hicks) have "the same disease." It's Sam, a rich and ruthless money trader who is Dorothy's husband and Karen's lover.

Dorothy's last name might well be an allusion to a wifely life whose

WOMEN IN VIEW FESTIVAL
Performances continue through Sunday Feb. 4. Tickets at Firehall Arts Centre. Call 689-0926 for details.

limits are engraved in stone. Hicks, who looks as though she has upper-middle class bred in her fine bones, is brilliant as Dorothy. She's like one of John Updike's elegant suburban matrons, a pencil drawing of slim grace, small gestures and gentle sorrow.

Karen fell from grace as the little princess she once was and re-made herself into a tough-as-nails survivor who makes big macho money in the same Chicago pigpen as Sam.

Just a Little Fever talks about women's gift to give life and their sentence to survive in the shadow of loss. Hicks probes as surely and painfully as with a plumb-line. (*Just a Little Fever*, at Firehall Theatre, Feb. 3 at 5:30; Feb. 4 at 4:30)

Forbidden Fruitcake is a big-hearted hoot.

You have to love a woman who packs an accordion under her coat, and warbles a tuneless ode to love called I Vass Leavink My Umbrella on a 41 Bus.



IAN SMITH

PAINFUL PROBING: Lorena Gale (left) and Caitlin Hicks give life to *Just A Little Fever*

Ladies and gentlemen, introducing Trudy Fruitcake, siren of the Steppes, "the woman that is taking menopause and puttink it into the clubs."

Txi Whizz, "the trustee of the Fruitcake legacy," is an eyeful, boy — wait 'til you get a load of her supergirl-goes-Romanian look. She's a 49-year-old Slavic hot tamale, with Vegas stars in her eyes and hot flushes coursing through her abundant flesh.

(*Forbidden Fruitcake*, at Pitt Theatre, Feb. 3 at noon; Feb. 4 at 7:40)

In *Jojoka*, as in ancient Greece, Sandra Lockwood performs her poetry to music (lyric poetry is named for the lyre). Like the moderns — Rainer Maria Rilke, Baudelaire — her words give voice

to half-understood yearnings and states of being.

Jojoka's episodes of poetry slither in and around the often-beautiful music written and performed by Mark Critchley. They're matched and counterpointed by projected images of earth and water, and punctuated by Katrina Dunn's movement.

Lockwood's uneven voice triumphed when she sang in Japanese, sounding like a girlish she-devil. The final poem, River, performed with a salmon lashed to her breasts, went straight into the black ooze of mysterious life.

(*Jojoka*, at Firehall Theatre, Feb. 3 at 3:15; Feb. 4 at 7:45)

"Well, I'd like to see someone review that," said a woman leaving the performance of *elemental*

secrets.

She was trying to figure out what she'd just seen. What's the hurry? Colleen Fee's performance piece talks, sings and dances about creation — it even begs questions of self-creation for the audience.

Fee pokes fun at performance, at art, at convention. Painters scale mountains, their "brushes rappelling across the canvas"; the "performance creature" seduces, but can't see past the theatre's fourth wall.

It's joyously puzzling, and full of juice. Players Sheri-D Wilson, Marilyn Norry and choreographer/dancer Lorna Dunn, faces made-up to give them looks of eternal surprise, mete out their secrets with high spirits and ace timing.

(*elemental secrets*, at Firehall Theatre, Feb. 3 at 7:15; Feb. 4 at 6:00)