

Dal Theatre's bedroom farce: But is it art?

by Bea Renton and Anya Waite

Students of the Dal Theatre Department should be pleased with the successful run of *72 Under the O*, an exhaustingly spirited bedroom farce by Canadian playwright Allan Stratton. Staged at Studio 1 of the Dal Arts Centre, the play ran from January 13-16.

As a press release stated, *72 Under the O* is about the insanity that David Pearce, a university English professor, must face when he invites Linda McLeod over to

his apartment for the evening. The madness begins when Margaret Bip, his boss's wife, shows up, announcing that she is moving in, followed by George (her husband) coming to look for her. This is topped off when Weldon Plum arrives to sell David a most unique insurance policy.

Bedlam in the bedroom and the living room breaks loose when this group tries to sort things out, for they succeed in only confusing matters more.

The production illuminated the undeniable talent of five strong performers who tackled the intrinsically difficult script. Its difficulty lay in the fact that Stratton failed to develop believable characters, leaving them incomplete and triflingly superficial. They were used as tools to inject humour into a largely unimaginative situation comedy. Each character remained constrained within the limitations of their particular stereotype, revealing his or her insecurities with

no resolution forthcoming.

The play avoids coming to grips with the characters' personal problems and, because of this, the audience becomes frustrated with its cyclical antics. Yet these very antics provide for (albeit, often predictable) belly-laughs, accentuated by the skillful, comic elocution of the actors. Sara E. Hole, as the trying Margaret Bip, and David Healy, as Weldon Plum, turned out especially good performances, demonstrating the importance of timing for the proper execution of such a high-paced farce. Partly because of the nature of the script itself several of the performers' characterizations came off as somewhat heavy-handed, lacking subtlety and finesse - a bombardment of humour rather than an artful display. A lesson could be learned from George Feydeau's sophisticated, brilliantly written farce, *A Flea in Her Ear*, which achieves a finer wit and sense of

comic subtlety found lacking in *72 Under the O*.

The set was attractive and managed to convey the impression of a young professor's apartment that served as a haven for his troubled friends and acquaintances. Care was not taken with the staining of stage doors, though, as they were of a much lighter tone on the inside than out. The seats of the audience were also cramped tightly together which proved uncomfortable almost immediately, especially since the play was so well attended. These however were small technicalities that should be taken note of but did not mar the play's overall effect.

The students' production of *72 Under the O* provided for an enjoyable and often very funny evening of theatre. However, another more carefully selected play might have better reflected the depth of talent that these students obviously possess.

Nova Dance shows innovations at Dunn

by Edd Hansen

Nova Dance Theatre offered its Winter Home Season performance at the Sir James Dunn Theatre on January 14 and 15. A large part of this performance consisted of new material, and two repertory pieces (*Kinergy III*, *Pontoon*) were substantially reworked for the occasion.

The show included two three-piece acts, and a company of five polished, expert dancers: F.

Boncher, L. Loyt, D. Moore, G. Noah, and J. Robinson (artistic director).

The first act opened with *Kinergy III* (chor: D. Moore; Music: J. Klemmer), an exciting swirl of dance, with a rhythmic music giving impetus to body rhythms superimposed on well-defined phrases. *Cocktails* (chor: J. Robinson; music: K. Haughn) was presented next, an eerie parody of the Jekyll/Hyde alcoholic; this one

has "that fatal last drink" and became what the drunks always saw they will: "A Star" . . . at least, for a while. The first act ended with *Pontoon* (chor: D. Holt; music: the dancers), expanded for four dancers from a previous presentation. This piece used the rhythm of running feet in its many variations to create complex crescendos and geometrics — a smash finish to the first act.

Commencing the second act was *No Frills* (chor: F. Boucher, music: N. Rota) "an exuberantly silly piece set in the "No Frills" section of a surreal, Felliniesque supermarket" (programme). In this triple pas de deux (woman & shopping cart), characters changed from sophisticated to cheap to heavily romantic. "Stormy Weather" set a muzakal tone for a price wars, and huge bananas were used as castanets in "La Cucaracha."

A complete turnaround was accomplished next in a martial arts piece, *Body Blocks* (chor: D. Moore, J. Robinson; music: K. Haughn). Dancers' energy was intensely directed on a stark red and black set, accompanied by elegantly synthesized music performed live by K. Haughn. This interesting piece ended with a fascinating solo by Haughn. The show was brought to a close by an examination of mosaics of movement in micro-and macro-environments. "Particles and people dance in very similar ways, endlessly changing parts . . ." (programme).

Dance for changing parts (chor: J. Robinson; music K. Haughn) opened with a liquid light show, followed by a dance involving a complex intertwining of simple motifs. Entrancing to watch, the choreography and music of the piece seemed to ripple and cascade as one.

Nova's Winter Home Season was well put together and beautifully executed. Also, this show, when I was there, looked like a sell-out. The Halifax dance audience is growing very rapidly in its support of 'home' performers, and with good reason. Collaboration amongst the various types of performing artists in the area is giving us multi-media events that have been long in the asking.

Lion Dance carries on tradition

New year is the most widely celebrated of all Chinese festivals, involving a great variety of colorful and traditional observances, many dating from the Sung Dynasty (960-1219 A.D.) And Dalhousie-Tech Chinese students are keeping up this tradition in Halifax.

The chief attraction of the event is the lion dance. The lion dance is one of the traditional pantomimes performed by groups of six to eight. A cloth and paper made monster with a wicker skeleton, the lion is motivated into fanciful dances by a team of men. This year there will be two lions chasing a fiery pearl as well as frolicking with one another. All are performed to the rhythm of drums and gongs and the crack of exploding firecrackers.

You may be familiar with the term "fortune cookies". But have you ever heard of "lucky" red pockets and "Lucky" red posters? This year at the Banquet you will be offered these "Lucky" red attractive souvenirs. The "Lucky" red pockets contain money, whereas the "Lucky" red posters are sheets containing traditional greetings such as "Safety for old and young," "Prosperity," or "Fortune flows from heaven."

Last year, there was a large attendance (over 500) at the Banquet. This year, the Chinese New Year Banquet will be held on Feb. 5, 1983 (Sat.) at the SUB, McInnes Room. (7:15pm-1:00am).

Tickets are now available at the Dal Arts Centre and the Dal SUB lobby after Jan 23, 1983.

