

Zany sylphs and stumbling swans

Trockadero points a pink toe at dance pretension

W. HURST

Lifting her arms into a graceful arc, the 'ballerina' exposes a healthy growth of armpit and there's definitely chest hair above the satin bodice of her tutu. The all-male Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo is back in Toronto. At the Ryerson Theatre until Jan. 29, the Trocks will perform their own uproarious version of classical ballets.

However, appearances are just a part of the joke. The Trocks also take aim at the dance world's penchant for exotic names, nonsensical plots and dramatic posturing.

The Dying Swan is a solo, supposedly full of pathos and delicacy. Danced by the redoubtable Zamerina Zamarkova, this swan not only dies, she moults and stumbles.

Les Sylphides is a *ballet blanc* which means it has no plot or characterisations. Although the choreography is authentic, this version has white-gowned ballerinas smashing into one another or locking into awkward positions.

Ballet is an international art and the Russian athletic style of ballet was the focus of *Spring Waters*. With a vivacity similar to a Las Vegas floor show, a couple spun and leapt through choreography for which 'showstopper' is too mild a term. In fact, the dancers were so gregarious that the difficult lifts and dives seemed like child's play. The National Ballet of Canada might consider this version for a gala.

Modern dance has become as ripe a target as ballet for the Trocks. *I Wanted to Dance with you at the cafe of experience* is drawn from the exploits of the heart of darkness and abstract emotions that pre-occupy modern dancers.

Pharaoh's Daughter is the newest and longest piece of the programme. A young, dashing Englishman is transported to ancient Egypt where he meets and falls in love with Aspica, feisty daughter of the late pharaoh. Aspica's mother has planned a political marriage and condemns the Englishman to death. Tragically, Aspica throws herself in to the Nile, represented by blue chiffon scarves held by rather muscular hand-maidens. She is resurrected by the Englishman's magnifying glass.

Pharaoh's Daughter succeeds for many reasons. The dance technique is excellent, with Aspica throwing off a dozen *fouettes* and *pique* turns.

The characters are clearly defined and the action is quickly-paced.

This piece was funny not just because men were dancing as women. The idea of Egyptians in pink point shoes and white tutus is ludicrous but regular ballet companies use the same idea when doing an Italian peasant ballet.

The music, a collage of theatrical symphonics, reached a peak by including *Dance of the Hours*. The dashing Englishman committed a series of *danseur noble* steps and tasteful partnering for the diminutive Aspica. This music also provided for Aspica's variation, one that called for her to leap over the prone bodies of her hand-maidens.

The Trocks, on previous visits were sloppy technically and depended on grimaces and pratfalls for laughs. However, on this tour, the company is dancing very well. Therefore, the 'stage business' is added humour not the only humour.

An evening with Trocks is an evening with zany professionals who earned the prolonged applause and continuous laughter they received.



Photo: Jerry Yulsman

Les artistes bizarres des ballets Trockadero

NEXT WEEK

Frances Farmer

Gertrude Stein

...ENTS...

Mea culpa, mea culpa

Fireweed is a feminist quarterly, reviewed last week. *Fireweed* is burned by scouts to get a badge. Our apologies to B. Taylor and *Fireweed*. Also, artist Robert Youds has not dropped the 's' from his last name, despite appearances in our review of his Glendon show.

Chamber music at Glendon

The York University Chamber Orchestra can be heard in concert this Monday night at 8 p.m. at Glendon College. Beethoven's "Pastoral Symphony" and Brahms' "Double Concerto" will be performed. Featured soloists are violinist Moshe Hammer and cellist Nina Alexandor. Theatre Glendon: tickets are \$3, available at the door.

Aliens at York

If you are interested in any and all aspects of science fiction, fantasy and/or horror, you should know about the group recently formed at York. Two second-year Arts students have started the group because they see a real need at York. The meetings are an opportunity to exchange ideas and information.

Meetings have a very casual format. Members suggest various topics such as the films, poetry and related art, as well as the literature. Meetings will be held twice a month at 3:00 p.m. in Founders College, Room 215.

Making it famous for fun

Making It Rich and Famous should be an hour of pure, unadulterated entertainment, completely lacking a 'message' or 'social comment'. This York cabaret concerns the struggles of making it in showbusiness. *Making It* is a series of sketches and songs held together by this showbusiness motif. In times like this, who needs 'meaningful' all the time? For an hour of frivolity for a dollar, check out Mac Hall January 26, 27 and 29 at 8:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m., with a special midnight show on Jan. 29.

Spotlight on survival

"As the bomb fell over Hiroshima and exploded, we saw an entire city disappear. I wrote in my log the words, 'Oh my God, what have we done'."

On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, January 31 through February 4 at 8:00 p.m. in Atkinson Studio Theatre, a group of 13 actors will present a chilling account of the annihilation of a city. It is called *The Original Child Bomb*. Using an acting collective, the story is performed using poetry, mime, art, song and dance, with minimal props on a bare stage.

Oh no, someone cries, not another propaganda piece. But *Child Bomb* is more than that. It is an attempt to show the irony of war, the lack of information and misplaced fears that can affect any situation, and the nature of human behaviour. There are no black and whites, and no conclusion. Only a presentation of facts in an unusual way. The interpretation is left up to the audience. The end of the play leaves you with many questions unanswered. But somehow, you don't care. It is enough just to have watched.

The Original Child Bomb, produced by Spotlight Theatre, runs Mon. Jan. 31, Wed. Feb. 2 and Fri. Feb. 4 at 8:00 p.m. in Atkinson Studio Theatre. Admission is one dollar. Seating is limited.

Paradise a pathetic social parody

PAULA TODD

There's something wrong with a play about the tropics that makes you long for the boot-sopping, salty, slush-filled streets of Toronto. That's exactly what happens ten minutes into *O.D. on Paradise* currently at Theatre Passe Muraille.

Set designers and publicists did their best to save this tacky travelogue co-written by Linda Griffiths (of *Maggie and Pierre* fame) and Patrick Brymer: patrons were issued Air Jamaica airline tickets, native types in Coppertone drifted by, tons of sand replaced the stage floor, water lapped from a small hose behind the bleacher-like seats and paper leaves and palm trees framed the whole.

My gawd, don't you just feel like you're in Jamaica? Don't you just hate the Canadian climate? Doesn't this play just grasp the essential meaning of the Canadian vacation?

No. No. No. Yet the consistent fawning over this play by Toronto theatre critics suggests that our provincialism is damaging more than the reputation of the Toronto dailies: their praise keeps poor theatre alive and wallowing.

And it occurs to you that Griffiths and Brymer are either incredibly

shallow or they're brilliant. Genius enough to deliver the social tripe comfortable, career-confident critics can lap up and dole out to an undemanding public, and stoic enough to handle the nausea they must have felt when they wrote this drivel.

O.D. on Paradise attempts a modern rendition of Jane Austen's novel of manners--a study of psyches and social conduct. In Austen, innocent charades become arenas for revelation when the characters are tricked into removing their masks: a few marriages are arranged suddenly; an engagement broken; a past liason uncovered.

The innocent package tour to Jamaica doesn't work nearly as well in *O.D.*: drunken, obese tourists become accomplices to a ludicrous death, a 'frigid' woman experiences 'real sex' in the hands of spliff-sporting Rastaman, and a bride is shocked to discover that her new husband is an ex-con.

It's supposed to be a study of the way we present ourselves to others, the things we hide and the various mechanisms that reveal us to the world and to ourselves. The problem is that there aren't any people in this play: how can you explore the psychology of characters who are

nothing more than false fronts for a non-existent plot?

There are two newlyweds united in their alcoholism, obesity and psychotic insecurity; an uptight career woman (what else could she be?) who lives alone and uses her substantial income to hire a gigolo (she doesn't get her money's worth in Brymer who is a double wipe-out as co-writer and man-about-the-island); and there's Nancy Beatty as the repressed, newly remarried bride in her kitchy housedress and ever-present curlers.

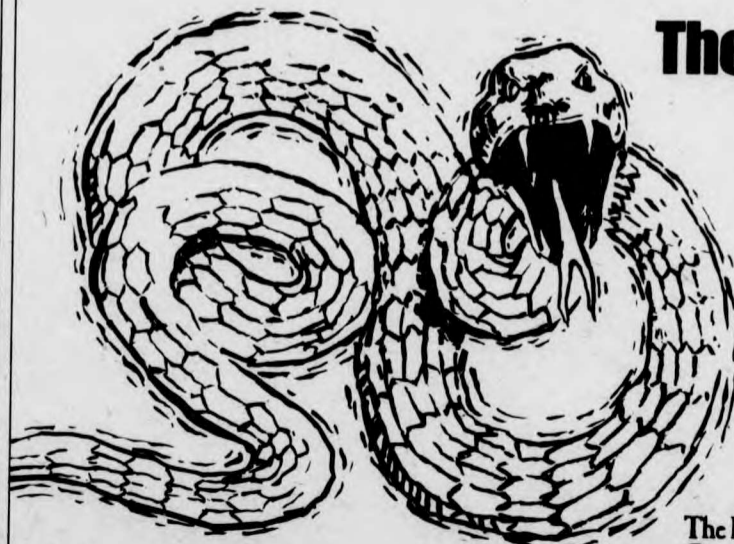
The typecasting continues and words are only wasted in its description. It is apparent that the lack of overlap in character, the denial of what is common in all of us--namely our humanness--undermines this play from the start.

The script simulates real life as closely as *Kraft Dinner* does *Fettucini Alfredo*: it's cheap, tasteless, artificially flavoured and it inevitably makes you sick.

O.D. on Paradise is a second rate parlour game: some sleaze, some token nudity, a little marijuana to titilate the middle class and a bunch of fakes pretending they're having an 'essential experience'. But Toronto's theatre critics loved it: hey Linda, you've got their number.

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