

## "How the other half loves"

by Richard Collins

"How the Other Half Loves", a comedy written by Alan Ayckbourn, recently underwent presentation by the Theatre Arts Guild, with all performances held at the Pond Playhouse in Jollimore.

Directed and produced by Peter Smith and Cliff Tyner, the two-act play satirizes the middle-class mediocrity of British middle-class home life. Ayckbourn expands on this stereotypical setting, however, by utilizing the comic device of a two-way triangle which eventually balloons out of all proportions, ushering in one ludicrous scenario after another. The audience takes it all into stride, knowingly awaiting the predictable and hilarious chain of events to follow.

the scheme secured ready acceptance almost immediately.

Scene I unfolded, revealing the extent of the flirtation between the couples. The cuckolded hubby, Frank Foster, was suspiciously inquiring as to his wife's whereabouts on the previous evening, while simultaneously, the much-abused Terry Phillips was trying to wheedle similar information out of her unfaithful spouse Bob. As both the offenders give the same excuse of being out patching up marital difficulties with the Featherstone family, the audience is left with the firm conviction that Bob Phillips was making overtures to Fiona Foster on the sly.

The situation becomes further entangled in Scene II, when Frank

conclusion, throws up a subtle cover, and William Featherstone is sent out to the Phillips home in search of righteous vengeance. The second and final scene dawns on the vindication of Bob and Mary, with Terry taking Bob home to confront him with her knowledge of the true state of affairs. Repenting, Bob's chauvinism and dominance is shattered as effectively as William's had been by his indignant Mary. Frank Foster, also close to the truth, elicits an apology and an avowal of future faith from the scheming Fiona, and so all is rectified. The comedy ends on ironic note of justice when Frank and Terry unwittingly proposition each other over the phone, within earshot of Fiona and Bob, leaving the audience with the amused satisfaction of seeing the shoe distinctly on the other foot.

Of the cast, one could generally attribute a good performance to each of them; however, both Spurway and Brown, in their role as the Featherstones, lacked the elan and final polish of the others. At times their lines were a little strained, without the ring of conviction that might have otherwise been carried during their key appearances throughout the play. John Sharples was superb in his portrayal of the priggish, slightly eccentric Frank Foster, as he furnished the audience with a ready supply of laughs by his numerous spastic mannerisms. Heike MacDonald's role as Terry Phillips smacked of authenticity; one had no trouble in believing her to be the over-wrought, care-worn housewife she

portrayed. More than that, the frustration she displayed could be felt by the most insensitive on-looker, and her solid performance backed up the weaker points in the overall production. Both Lynn Gale and Jack Wenaus fulfilled their partnership as clandestine lovers quite adequately, as they depicted that emotion of amorous chauvinism very well. One had the feeling that they really weren't playing the cheating game merely for the physical pleasure, but were more interested in gaining ascendancy over their tedious mates.

By and large, the comedy was a modest success. For an amateur theatrical group, they worked well with the available material; of greater importance still was the ability of the audience to associate with the predicaments the play presented. The fact that it's of British origin is irrelevant; the affairs of marital and social havoc that took place were distinctly universal in their appeal. North Americans, especially, have been exposed to similar themes via the media of television and cinema, and their understanding of the situation was complete. A natural empathy was established between players and multitude, almost guaranteeing favorable results.

The Theatre Arts Guild have been off to a good start this year, and if some of their recent weekend turnouts could be considered an indication, then they can anticipate few problems in establishing themselves as ranking performers in the Eastern Canadian theatrical world.



The Fosters, Frank (John Sharples) and Fiona (Lynn Gale), share the stage in the first scene of Act I with Bob Phillips (Jack Wenaus) and his wife Terry (Heike MacDonald). Both couples are pictured as fussing around their respective living rooms early one Thursday morning, with the petty arguments and abuse of wedded bliss flying fast and furious, setting the mood at a lively, humorous pace almost from the onset of the opening curtain.

It's interesting to note that the artifice of double-staging was used quite successfully throughout the entire play, with the actors cleverly deluding the audience into accepting the proposition that two different couples were living in different domiciles, although the stage visually interpreted one complete set housing all four players. With a little imagination from the crowd, together with good acting,

invites William Featherstone (Jim R. Spurway) and his wife Mary (Marlene Brown) over for dinner Thursday evening in hopes of settling their supposed marital disputes, and to secretly seek confirmation of Fiona's activities. Of course, Terry Phillips is busy entertaining the Featherstones on Friday evening, but is in reality sharing the stage and scene with the Fosters. Again, the clever use of the double-staging technique has to be appreciated.

With the confused Featherstones acting as buffers between the suspicions of the other four, the first scene of Act II opens with Terry Phillips leaving husband Bob after a drunken quarrel the evening before. En route to her mother's, she drops in at the Foster residence, whereupon the dull-witted Frank gets the notion that Bob is having an affair with Mary Featherstone. Fiona, surprised at Frank's obtuse con-

## See Dick-see Jane

by donalee moulton

In elementary readers we read of Dick and Jane and Spot. Translated into entertainment this reads "Fun with Dick and Jane," one of this year's better films.

Dick and Jane (George Segal and Jane Fonda) are suburbia. Both are college grads, live in a modern home with all the latest luxuries, two cars, one child, and no savings. All this makes for a great way of life until Dick loses his job. There is only one course left after Jane fails at working and Dick is cut off unemployment and that is -naturally- robbery.

From riches to rags to robbery, the plot revolves around the greedy refusal of an upper class family to succumb to middle class. To a large extent, Dick and Jane are stereotypes. Jane, the attractive, vibrant mother, in time of crisis shows herself to be an intelligent, asser-

tive female; while Dick, dropping his business facade, fights determinedly for what he believes he is entitled to. However it is performers who portray these stereotypes and have the ability to dissolve them. Jane Fonda and George Segal are superb. What they portray is natural, likeable, and laughable.

The plot is absurd, characters unbelievable but the intent of the film is not a satirical representation of upper class life, or a social comment on class inequality. The intent is humor, the film, a comedy. Rather than involving yourself with the action, the action involves you. The idea is to relax and laugh - the outcome is a humorous, well acted, highly appreciated film.

Perhaps it is the absurdity which makes laughter or the realization of the audience that fantasy can be fun and in this case it's "Fun with Dick and Jane."

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