

Desparados: dramatics of anemia

By Alan Fox

Desparados is a play by Carol Bolt, and it is currently being performed by Toronto Free Theatre.

Because Martin Kinch chose to stray from the text when directing it, it lacks real flair; it has no dramatic drive.

While not exactly marred by the performances, the acting isn't outstanding.

All of this, however, doesn't

mean that TFT is an incompetent company. It's just that Kinch tried to avoid a possible trap in Bolt's play, and didn't realise that he swerved around the play's only real interest.

You see, it all *means* something. And that's great. But the critics are so hard on metaphor that Kinch wanted to de-emphasize it. So...

Wylie (John Jarvis) is a Canadian

filmmaker. That is, he would be a filmmaker if there were films to be made. Instead, he does commercials.

Ruby (Diana Knight) is a famous actress. Wylie finds her looking at a Warhol silk-screen of herself at a museum. So they drive from New York to Toronto.

Once there, she finds out that Wylie's writing a movie about his landlord, Theo (Abraham Guenther). Theo's a dealer. He's Wylie's hero, because they both believe in the same causes.

Surprise! Theo's really in it for the money. Ruby's really a neurotic hung-up dumb blonde. Wylie's really boring and normal. Wylie's a loser; the typical Canadian hero.

They stay together, even though they clash like hell.

Don't you get it? *the theme*. Wylie

wants the big American star to be in his movie, so that it will be a success. It's a metaphor. See, all Canadian movies need American stars, or else the CFDC (the money-folk) won't pay for the films.

Aha! And he needs the capitalist, Theo, to pay for it.

Here's another. Wylie's an idealist. He wants to change the world, and he spends all this time talking about Viet-nam. It's not even his country's war. The system he wants to change isn't even his own system. How *cultural-dominant-ish*.

All this is literary criticism. What's its relevance to the production? None. An therein lies its flaw (witty bursts from critics tear on the nerves, eh?).

Martin Kinch has chosen to downplay the significance of Bolt's themes, and concentrate on the

drama of the text. That's a lot like playing Aesop's fables for character development instead of the morals at the end.

Because Bolt's characters are archetypal (the Star, the Canadian Artist, the Capitalist). Their motivations come from their metaphoric significance rather than their personal psychology. Take away the metaphor, and you have a dull production.

It's got a few high spots, such as the huge whipped cream-catsup and mustard fight, but all-in-all it doesn't work. It takes a real whiz to make a yecch part like the silly blonde Ruby believable.

In Canada, semi-employed actresses don't get a chance to develop their abilities to the point where they can do it. Not while they're still young enough to, anyway.

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Ellen Toimie

Left to right - Diana Knight, Abraham Guenther and John Jarvis in one of *Desparados* high points: a huge whipped cream, mustard and ketchup fight. The Toronto Free Theatre production of Carol Bolt's play is directed by Martin Kinch.

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Eulogy of a fine book

A literary find can be had with Canadian author Dennis T. Patrick Sears' second novel, *Aunty High Over the Barley Mow*. Regrettably this is also Sears' last work, for he died shortly before it was published.

Because of this I am led to suspect that the book may be somewhat autobiographical, for there are a number of tie-ins with events in the novel and incidents in Sears' own life.

For instance, both Sears and his protagonist are of Irish descent. Sears writes about the period (the Depression) in which he grew up.

Lastly, there is Sears' dedication to his three aunts who all died in their 22nd year, to which there is a parallel reference in the body of the book.

All this, I suspect, has aided Sears in constructing a novel that is immediately vivid, unsentimental, profoundly melancholy, and powerfully readable.

Despite the obtuse title (a reference to a children's game that has little to do with any of the inherent themes), the book is written in clear lucid prose and complete sentences; a departure from the unfortunate 1970's trend of couching ideas in esoterics and heavy employment of sentence fragments.

Sears' style is economical and harsh, despite the fact that his descriptive passages, regardless of length, are excellent. Characters and events are delineated in swift sharp jots, and the dialogue (alternately flowered and gutter) is immensely realistic.

This has enabled Sears to construct his book in chaptered vignettes, 34 spread over a 300-page length, with most being only four or five pages long.

This chopping up appropriately distorts the book's time structure. Though the book spans only from 1933 to roughly the early 1940's, there are gaps in the continuity that reflect the unreliability of the alcoholic narrator, Patch Fallon.

The brooding tale weaves out his childhood and adolescence, and deals strikingly with incest, war, religion, comradeship, familial devotion, madness, poverty and social comment, set against the chilly backdrop of Ontario in the 1930's.

At the powerful conclusion there are more questions raised than there are answers provided, and one finishes reading feeling considerably unsettled and properly puzzled by this bleak, eclectic, and highly recommended book.



On Tuesday 25 October, Tournesol - a dance-theatre troupe composed of Ernst and Carole Eder of Edmonton, Alberta - will perform in McLaughlin Hall. At 7 p.m. they will present *Separation*, a sound and movement work created by John Juliani, former director of York's Graduate Program in Theatre. The performance will be followed at 8 p.m. by an informal workshop. Both events are open to the public and there will be no admission charge... There'll be a panel discussion on native art next Tuesday at 7:30 p.m. in Stong's Samuel J. Zacks Gallery... Sylvester's (201 Stong) will open the year Tuesday at 8:30 p.m. with the York Jazz Ensemble...