

Entertainment

Editor: Warren Clements

Whole superior to its parts

Dance of Death works on level of parable

By DANNY ZANBILOWICZ

The success of the St. Lawrence Centre's current production of Strindberg's *The Dance of Death* is attributable more to a happy merging of strong theatrical elements than to the excellence of any one element.

When inspected individually, the acting, direction and script all reveal certain flaws. The script especially is a dreary, lugubrious text written in a heat of misogynistic passion, is occasionally lacking in good judgment. There is an excess of mawkish lines, and we suffer through the odd utterly ridiculous scene.

Yet the play, and especially this excellent production of it, can be appreciated with pleasure and satisfaction as a study of intimate hate, with a stunning portrait of "Woman as the Devil."

Anthony Palmer plays the role of Edgar, captain of an artillery garrison on a remote island off the coast of Sweden. Edgar is a swaggering, stunted, and resentful man. His strength lies not in any inner reserves of éprit,

but in his credo: "Cancel out, Pass on."

He confronts all adversity by denying its importance. The man is an ass and a hypocrite, and sadly, he knows it.

Edgar's most awesome adversary is his wife, Alice, portrayed by Denise Pelletier. Their relationship is shown to be an eternal struggle of hostility, and while Edgar's anger is revealed to be mere posturing, we are shown that Alice's fearful hate is genuine.

The action revolves around the visit of Alice's pantywaist cousin, Kurt (James B. Douglas), who has arrived on the island as a quarantine officer, and visits their dismal gothic home for two nights.

He is also shown to be a fraud, but his posturing is directly opposed to Edgar's, for he attempts to be rational, impartial, and highly moralistic. In an interesting way, each man's façade is very close to the other's reality.

The only faultless element of this production is the set. Mark Negin's design creates a dreary, claustrophobic environment in which the predominant colour is black.

Two groups of long black wooden beams criss-crossed near the ceiling thrust into the audience menacingly. Vertical bars effectively create the impression of an ornate domestic jail, reinforced by a black bird cage hung from the ceiling.

The insular isolation and hopelessness of the characters are continuously strengthened by auditory devices, such as the cry of distant gulls, waves lapping at a shore, and the howling wind. But perhaps most effective



Kurt and Alice help Edgar after an "attack" in August Strindberg's turn-of-the-century play *Dance of Death*.

is a lone sentry slowly carrying out his rounds with fixed bayonet above and to the left of the main action, evoking complex images of jail-keepers and witnesses.

The events that occur on stage are preposterous if one expects them to mirror reality. The play works only on the level of parable, and in spite of awkwardness, it works very well indeed.

Tickets range from \$3 for Saturday matinees to \$6.50 for evenings, with \$2 student rush tickets half an hour before each performance.

Poet Yevtushenko to read at Burton

Soviet poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko will read his works at a special evening concert in Burton auditorium next Thursday night at 8:30 p.m., as part of his 25-day long tour of Canada. The trip is part of an official Russia-Canada literary exchange which includes a visit to Russia next year by Margaret Atwood. Yevtushenko's reading will be followed by a reception with the poet, and the whole affair costs \$1 for students, and \$2 for staff and faculty.

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