

Lustful tangos & nuclear bombs

Keepp on dancing even though it's a smaller room" is a simple line from the 1940's song, "Mr. Sandman." It's also one that may or may not have passed gently over the heads of the opening night audience for *Doctor Dapertutto*, playing at the Poor Alex Theatre until June 11.

It's 1949 and the atomic bomb has made the world a much smaller room to dance and to die in. How post-war America deals with this fact is the premise of Martha Ross' new comedy.

Using a plot device as old as sin—mysterious host Dapertutto invites unsuspecting, but willing, guests to secluded villa—the play brings together all the needed diverse characters.

From Texas, we have the Whites, Ed and Mary (Oliver Dennis and Kelley Nadal). Hot-blooded and fun-loving, they take just enough time off from their marital spats to make up and then start all over.

Bill Owen (obnoxiously played by Diego Matamoros) is an adman from New York whose every line is a sales pitch. With his wife, April (Martha Ross), one can't help being reminded of the Lomans from *Death of a Salesman*. The only happy couple are the Leeks from Ottawa who are probably happy because neither one is too aware of the other.

These six, plus nuclear scientist Dr. Dick ("Dr. Dick Frank!" he constantly corrects to Dapertutto who pretends not to notice. So much for being a frank dick), the neurotic Seymour Bradley and Dapertutto's house staff are gathered at the Doctor's New Mexico villa for a New Year's Bash.

Never one to be called boring, Dapertutto—the devil in yet an-

other guise—foregoes the traditional kisses and toasts but keeps the countdown. At 12 midnight, in full view of his guests, an atomic bomb will explode.

While Ross' writing is witty and revealing, the scene where June Leek (Maggie Huculak) puts on her nightgown over her day clothes is so typically Canadian that I felt guilty laughing. It is also too predictable and the ending is anything but innovative. You just know that Dapertutto's guest are going to run away before the bomb explodes. The only mystery is how long it's going to take to happen.

Before they do run away the audience is served all the cliched fears and fallacies that accompany the nuclear age and Cold War.

The enthusiastic acting (most of the actors play two parts), the dances and background music carry the play. The play's originality is its lustful tangos and the parallels between these dances and the events of the nuclear age. The arms race has been called "a mad dance" and that's exactly what the characters do. They dance, oblivious to the upcoming explosion, until it's right in their faces.

Doctor Dapertutto is about the feelings of inferiority and irreverence in the wake of something that is so much bigger and more powerful than yourself. Even the title character cannot prove to his old counterpart, Pearl, that he hasn't been overshadowed by the nuclear bomb and has to accept death for his failure.

However, while *Doctor Dapertutto* is too entertaining and too well produced to be called a failure, it does attempt to deal with too much and subsequently loses its focal point.



The obnoxious adman (Diego Matamoros) and his lovely wife April (Martha Ross).

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