

The Gateway fine arts

something is rotten in norway

The Edmonton Light Opera production of Song of Norway last week at the Jubilee Auditorium was unique as an example of perfect form unmarred by art. The strange linkage of Light Opera's considerable dramatic and musical resources to a totally undistinguished script resulted in what can only be adequately described as three hours of pleasant vacuity.

The work was so totally undistinguished that it leaves one in the embarrassing position of not being able to remember a single song or sequence; all was blended into a smooth homogenate of Italian sets, Scandinavian folk dances, and Brooklynite French accents.

The most that could be said for the dialogue and lyrics is that they exhibit a sort of genius for mediocrity.

This should not be taken as a criticism of the production, though. The acting was superlative; the twinges of artificiality that are the hallmark of local amateur productions had been left backstage out of sight, and, though there was a general lack of passion and emotion, all the main characters acquitted themselves honorably.

A deus ex machina introduction of the Peer Gynt Suite into the second act provided artistic relief. The ballet sequences there and for the finale were the high points of the evening, as Grieg's music and the Edmonton Ballet Company combined to whisk away the veil of commonness obscuring the rest of the production.

Particularly exciting was the lighting of the finale: as the North Wind swept in to seize the Maid of Norway in his chill grasp a green phosphorescence washed the stage and seemed to flow about like a vagrant breeze.

Lighting and stage management were generally superior, except for some of the set changes. Carried out on a darkened stage, the changes were so efficient that several score of cast members were left standing awkwardly in the dim light until the orchestra had finished its interval piece.

All in all, it was a polished production. But, like other polished work, one could see clear through it.

—Bruce Ferrier

engel gives magnificent performance

If the opening production of The Citadel theatre, "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf" by Edward Albee, is an indication of the quality we may expect to see during the remainder of the season, then Edmonton is indeed very fortunate.

The Citadel's production is an entertaining and exciting per-

formance of a masterfully written play. But the highlight of an evening at this performance is to witness the local debut of one of the most brilliant actors ever to play in this city, Mr. Bernard Engel.

His interpretation of the role of George is as fine and fascinating a piece of acting as one could hope to see anywhere. The range, depth and intensity of Mr. Engel's portrayal coupled with his infallible sense of timing and an electrifying clarity result in a breathtaking performance.

His command of the actor's craft is astounding, his stage presence is overpowering and his domination of the evening is almost complete.

And herein lies the problem. For one actor to be so exceptionally good necessarily means that the others must match his skill or suffer in comparison. Unfortunately, the latter is the case at the Citadel.

"Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf" should be a bloodcurdling mental battle between George and Martha (Bette Oliver). These two people, married for twenty-three years, living in a weird world of fact and fantasy, are inexorably locked together in a relationship of sadistic love and tender hate.

They are fighting a never-ending war of terrifying parlor games and ruthless soul-searching, or rather soul-scorching, cross examination. It is a battle that represents the essential struggle for all men: to communicate, to understand and to be understood: to love, to hate, to exist.

And existence for Edward Albee seems to be a horrifying experience.

But for this to occur in the play requires George and Martha to be almost super-human in their intensity. Martha isn't. Miss Oliver does not have the strength to match Mr. Engel's performance and the play, therefore, lacks some of the explosive force that Albee intended it to have.

Martha should dominate the first half of the play, should be a tremendous force of destruction and castrating cruelty, against which George fights back and perhaps triumphs. But Miss Oliver starts where she should have ended. She portrays, right from the beginning, the soft Martha that should be seen only at the end when George has stripped away the façades and illusions to reveal her soul and maybe their love.

As George says "... when you get through the skin, all three layers, slash aside the organs ... and get down to the bone ... you know what you do then? When you get down to the bone, you haven't got all the way yet. There's something inside the bone ... the marrow ... and that's what you gotta get at." Miss Oliver shows mostly the marrow and not much bone or flesh, which leaves Mr. Engel at times looking like a psychological Don Quixote.

The other two characters, Nick played by David Bray and Honey played by Margot Gillies, are miscast, but do well in spite of it.

Mr. Bray is excellent in his quiet moments but falters a little in the more explosive scenes. However, the role of Nick is possibly the most difficult and thankless in the play and Mr. Bray is to be credited with a solid, although not wholly successful, performance.

Miss Gillies tends to caricature Honey but has some exceptionally well-done scenes. Her performance is a very enjoyable one.



—Credico photo

NORWEGIAN LEAP—The hearts of all good Scandinavians were wrung pretty well dry by Edmonton Light Opera's production of "Song of Norway" last week at the Jubilee Auditorium. Non-Scandinavians were reduced to pondering the reaction of Edvard Grieg, whose life formed the subject of the evening's entertainment, could he return to see it. Serves him right for not allowing Chopin to be played in his presence!

The play as a whole lacks direction in places and drags at times, but generally is very well presented.

The script is superb, portraying a frightening and clever examination of human nature. It could be one of the most terrifying and exciting theatre pieces ever seen in Edmonton, but as it is only occasionally terrifying, although often exciting.

This is an excellent beginning of what could be a first-rate season and of what will certainly be an exciting season whenever Mr. Engel is on the boards. I hope the rest of the company work to reach his level; even if they only halfway succeed, the results could be fantastic.

—Robert Mumford

shadowy burrowings underground

By now, if you are with it, you are aware of the existence of the UNDERGROUND.

You may, however, still be confused regarding the reasons for its

existence. We are glad to have been given this opportunity to clarify a few points for the benighted few who are not already in the know.

The UNDERGROUND's chief objective is to undermine the pop cult in music. We feel that young people are not being educated musically, and that, given the opportunity, they will grow to appreciate and prefer good music.

One of our main vehicles is The UNDERGROUND Hour, a radio program scripted and narrated by UNDERGROUND members, heard every Sunday evening at 8 p.m. on CHQT (1110).

Membership in the UNDERGROUND is not restricted; at present, there are students (both grade school and university), teachers, businessmen, musicians, and other professionals, all dedicated and enthusiastic.

The UNDERGROUND plans many activities for members only, including folk concerts and jam sessions in association with Bunkhouse 2.

Curious? Do you really know if your prof is an UNDERGROUND member? Or your roommate? Your grandmother? For more information, write Box 1110, Edmonton, or leave your name and phone number for The Shadow at The Gateway office.

—The Shadow

fine arts calendar

"Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf" (Albee)—to Nov. 27—Citadel Theatre—8:30 p.m. (Box office phone 424-2828)

"You Touched Me" (Tennessee Williams)—to Saturday—Walterdale Playhouse—8:30 p.m.

Chamber Music Society: Edmonton Chamber Music Players—Wednesday—Con Hall—8:30 p.m. (members)

"Art and Architecture": lecture (Culture 500)—tonight—Pybus Lounge—8 p.m.

Roger Wagner Chorale (Celebrity Series)—Thursday—Jubilee—8:30 p.m.

Women's Musical Club recital: Claude Kenneson, cello; Sandra Munn, piano—Friday—Con Hall—8:30 p.m.

Yardley-Jones Reads Dylan Thomas (postponed from last week)—Friday through Sunday—Yardbird Suite—9:30 p.m.

Gracie Fields—comedian—Monday—Jubilee—8:30 p.m.

Film Society (Classic): "The Magnificent Ambersons"—Monday—mp 126—8:15 p.m. (members)

Bela Boszormenyi-Nagy, pianist—Tuesday—Con Hall—8:30 p.m.

"Cat on a Hot Tin Roof" (Tennessee Williams)—Monday through Saturday—Studio Theatre—8:20 p.m. sharp.

The Nude Figure (facsimile drawings); Sculpture (Group Show)—to Friday—Fine Arts Gallery—7-9 p.m.

Bruce Boyd: paintings, drawings, prints—to Saturday—Jacox Galleries.

Indian masks—through November—Edmonton Art Gallery.