

Masterful performance by Swiss Mime

by Cate Young

The Rebecca Cohn Auditorium was the scene of two performances given last Friday and Saturday night by the Swiss Mime -Masque Theatre. The three youthful performers gave their audiences a show that can only be called masterful.

Although the performance was named mime -masque theater, it lacked several elements of classical mime theatre, as performed by such artists as Marcel Marceau. Such easily-recognizable elements as highly stylized mime makeup were missing; however, the presentation was as reliant on physical prowess and meaningful gestures as is the mime. In this aspect it more resembled a masque which is defined as "an elaborate dramatic

presentation". Using only the most basic of props (one large wooden box and two inclined planes) the performers, managed to transmit emotional impact with their supple bodies and understated gestures.

The first half was primarily devoted to sketches portraying familiar animals such as frogs, camels, cats and eagles. The theatre company delighted the audience (composed mainly of children) by showing a hapless shapeless creature finally succeeding at rolling up the inclined plane after many discouraging setbacks.

The second half of the show was devoted to the group's highly imaginative treatment of humans and their interrelations. For instance, a man's face was transform-

ed into a rapidly - depleting hourglass in one sketch. In another two people with putty faces molded each others' faces to fit their proper moods. And in yet another, paper and marking pencils were used to mark the shifting expressions on the characters' "faces". While defying true description, these techniques worked exceptionally well on the stage. One was especially impressed by the sheer physical effort put into the performance. (Another nice touch in the show was the "street theatre"; during the intermission, two of the three members of the troupe circulated through the foyer and through the theatre, itself, entertaining the people around them.)

The sole drawback to the show

was that it was, sadly, poorly attended (on the Friday performance at least). For the children attending the show was a magical event - and they responded enthusiastically to it. Adults enjoyed the show for its ingenuity and for its highly imaginative treatment of our strange dealings with other people. Without the benefit of words (at best a tenuous method of communication anyway) the Swiss Mime-Masque Theatre made use of the delicate nuances of graceful dancing and movement to convey feelings and ideas to the audience with precision. It is indeed a shame that more of Halifax's supposedly discerning audience was not there to witness this fine theatrical work.

Son of lunch bucket

Entertainment is perhaps one of the most visible benefits that most students see as arising from the Student Union Building. Every weekend hordes of students crowd the SUB only to leave a few hours later, either happy, angry, disappointed, gladdened, foolish, wisened or whatever. Any way you look at it, there are all sorts of opinions and perceptions about the entertainment at Dalhousie. This column hopes to provide an opportunity for anyone of these "hordes" to write in and articulate his or her viewpoint about the entertainment programming provided by the Student Union. Should any of you eager readers have any notions, fanciful or otherwise, then just drop a line, letter or story to: Sam Good Times Bad, c/o Gazette. The following are a few items that I have received from some of the more enthusiastic complainers among the readership:

Dear Sam:

Would you please enlighten myself and other Dalhousie students on the reason for hiring some of the crappy bands that are found so often in the S.U.B. Please, no more. Respectfully yours, "The Dork Twins"

Dear Dork Twins:

There are a number of factors that account for the difference in the quality of bands that play in the S.U.B. Oftentimes, in the case of out-of-town bands, the Programming Department has to take the word of an agent or other schools on the quality of a particular group. Money is also a factor which no one, not even the almighty administra-

tion as regards the maintenance workers can get out of. Unfortunately, the high old days of the freaky sixties are over, so that now the variety of groups is more limited than even a few years ago. And naturally the question of what is a "good" vs "bad" band comes down to a personal opinion so that what is a lousy or "crappy" group to some may be a great group to others.

Dear Sam:

Why are the coffee houses only being held every 2 weeks now. I attended almost every one in the first term and although the crowds weren't large, everyone present enjoyed themselves. I think it is time entertainment started paying more attention to students like me who don't just like to dance and get drunk all the time.

Yours truly,
Anonymous

Dear Anonymous:

Well, its a drag, but the figures on the Retreat were pretty lousy throughout the first term. Attendance took a steady dive from September on. During the summer, the coffee house drew anywhere from 150 to 300 people, and it was definitely appreciated. However, during the fall term it wasn't rare to find more than 50 to 75 people in a night. While there are a number of factors that could account for this lack of interest, it was felt that one reason was the oversell of the Retreat. There it was every week and so what. Obviously, Entertainment doesn't want to keep plugging a function that isn't attracting any

numbers of students. Attendance figures tell the tale about a continuing function and the declining attendance at Retreat was saying that as a weekly event, the coffee house wasn't working as it should. Programming is looking into ideas such as having music interspersed with quick drama sketches, poetry readings, etc., but as yet nothing is definite (free tomatoes at the door maybe ??!). Anyway, while Retreat has retreated a little, it has by no means given up the war. As long as students show an interest, the coffee houses will be continuing on a bi-weekly basis. By-the-way, the Dalhousie Womens' Movement will be hosting next week's Retreat, (Jan. 21), which will be a showcase for some of the best female talent in this area.

Dear Sam:

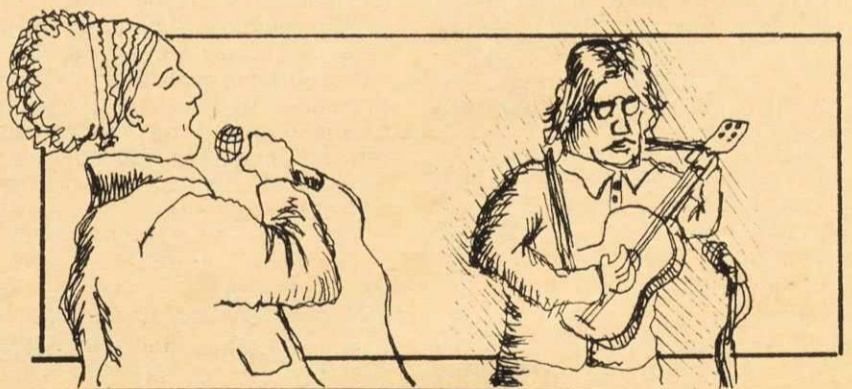
What's the story on recent prices at S.U.B. events? It seems in some cases dances which last year cost \$1.00 or \$1.50 are now always \$2.00 or \$3.00. I don't mind paying \$3.00 for a dance but in my opinion the bands aren't any better. Please give me a break-down on the average band prices and just how much

money the Entertainment Department makes?

- A Ripped off Student

Dear Ripped off:

Yes sir, that's right. Even in our ivory tower, we too have to face that insidious enemy - "inflation". The bands may not be reaching the peak of musical excellence but damn if their prices are. Grab your cup of acorn coffee and get ready for this one - The Entertainment Department isn't making any money at all. (Gasp, sputter, choke.) Although there are some events that turn profit, these monies go to cover those which don't - and there be a few of those. The high price of bands can also be seen in the emergence of the "disco" which is fast becoming the commercial clubs' answer to the price of bands today. In fact, discos are not necessarily bad things and Entertainment is considering having regular discos with an admission charge of \$1.00 instead of the \$2.00 or \$3.00 that one waves good-bye to at the majority of S.U.B. events. Sam Good Times Bad would be tickled to get the ideas of the readership on the disco scene for Dal. Just write to me care of the Gazette.



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