

the ARTS

Opera

The Edmonton Opera is not alone with its problems of an artist becoming ill during a production, having to cancel and be replaced by a "cover" (Traviata, Anna Moffo, Joan Patenaude).

It happened last fall to the Chicago Lyric Maria Stuarda when Montserrat Caballe (cab-eye-ay) became ill and had to be replaced on 18 hours notice.

The replacement was Yasuko Hayashi. Edmonton Opera Patrons will have the chance to hear this young Japanese soprano when she portrays the role of "Liu" in their forthcoming production of *Turandot* on March 21, 23 and 25th at the Jubilee Auditorium.

Miss Hayashi will be making her first Canadian operatic appearance ever with the Edmonton Opera Association.

Yasuko Hayashi has been at the La Scala Opera in Milan this past season and made a further auspicious debut at Covent Garden during the winter season in Manon Lescaut.

Appearing also in the three very important "comprimario" roles of Ping, Pang and Pong are three Canadians who have appeared with the Edmonton Opera Association many times. They are Alexander Gray, Andre Lortie and Alan Crofoot. All are professional scene stealers and these roles give them the ideal opportunity to put their talent to good use.

Watching the scene stealers very carefully will be Pauline Tinsley in the title role of *Turandot*.

Turandot is the opera Association's most challenging production since *Aida* (it employs a chorus of 78 and 25 extras) will be under the musical direction of Pierre Hetu, the direction will be by the Edmonton Opera Association's permanent director Irving Guttman.

Tickets for *Turandot* are now on sale at the Opera Box Office 3rd floor the Bay, 422-7200 with student tickets at half price from March 7th.

House at Sly Corner

There's a new theatre in town. Unfortunately not enough people know about it yet. This is truly a pity since Phase II is doing the kind of entertaining material that audiences so frequently cry they are looking for and cannot find. Phase II's most recent production at the Theatre Beside in Victoria Composite's intimate theatre was Edward Percy's suspense drama, *The Shop at Sly Corner*.

Percy's play is hardly high drama or complex theatre. It is more like an intriguing television thriller rendered plausible by the touch of live actors and the immediacy of the impact of a theatrical performance. The plot seems simple enough and it is. The main character Heiss is an ex-con who 'escaped' from Devil's Island and set himself up in England as an antique dealer and a family man.

Heiss, however, has not gone entirely straight and has taken to dabbling in stolen goods as a first-rate fence. As chance would have it his penchant for gold melting is discovered by an unscrupulous shop assistant who then blackmails Heiss out of a sizeable fortune.

Blackmailer Archie miscalculates: when he tries to pressure Heiss into dissolving his daughter Margaret's engagement to Robert, a friend of the family, so Archie can press his own lusty suit. Heiss revolts at this and murders Archie. At first Heiss succeeds in covering up his deed but Robert soon finds out and it seems that Scotland Yard is not far behind. The plot takes a quick double twist when it seems that the detective has been foiled and another twist makes it seem that the detective has not been foiled. In desperation, Heiss politely impales himself with a curare

dipped dart from his antique collection just before the detective reveals he has returned to purchase an antique sword and not to persecute Heiss as a murderer.

The play is a totally unpretentious piece of drama and therein lies its charm. So it is with the company. There is no first rate acting and there is some rather poor acting at times but the whole thing holds together reasonably well and makes for a pleasant venture.

Director Ray Hunt has done some judicious trimming in the script and keeps the story moving at a fair pace. If he failed to elicit first-class performances from his cast he still managed to keep the mood tangible and the suspense plausible without being heavy-handed about the whole affair.

Although the cast reflected the immaturity and the inexperience of their years they carried the play well enough. Danny Lineham bore the brunt of the affair with a fair dash of aplomb and was a stolid presence in an otherwise shabby and improbably situation.

Lynda Hiller provided the comic relief as the cockney charwoman, Mrs. Catt. A little less haste and a firmer rein on her speech would have created an indulgent gem. If Lynda Hiller overplayed, Donna Neuman underplayed as Mathilda but then all the women's parts were pasteboard figures which would have strained any actress' abilities. Suffice to say Robin Pimm (Margaret), and Shawna de Beaudrap (Joan) didn't quite come up to the mark but they were there to serve the plot and little else anyway.

As the villain Archie, Don McPherson was heavy handed in

a manner reminiscent of old gangster movies. A little more conflict and awareness of the subtleties of playing the villain would have set this straight enough. The same difficulty haunted David Wensel as the well meaning thief Morris. His desperation to make his part work led him away from the script and into the hands of generalizations which distracted from his character and his place in the plot.

Tom Mencil as the hero Robert placed too much faith in his make up kit and the power of his presence. He had his moments but left to react; he fell out of the script and was constantly trying to get back in.

Best bit of the evening Geoff Weston as the inevitable Scotland Yard Detective Eliot. He found the precise manner with which to understate his position and thus set up the plays ironic ending with a beguiling deftness. No mean achievement in an almost transparent plot.

As always the Theatre Beside lent itself to imaginative set design. Len Boscoe and Gene Boettcher managed to construct an illusion with both charm and simplicity. Now if only the theatre had more comfortable seats.

The Shop at Sly Corner was marred by a lack of pinache but it was also marked by a nice old fashioned sense of delight in unpretentious theatre entertainment. It's the sort of entertainment the forgotten audience so frequently laments the lack of these days. This audience will have another opportunity on April 18 when Phase II opens Patrick Hamilton's Victorian thriller, *Angel Street*. I'll be there. I hope some of you will be there as well.

Walter Plinge



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That Championship Season

That Championship Season by Jason Miller opens at the Citadel Theatre on March 16. Winner of the Pulitzer Prize, Tony Award and Best Play of 1972, New York Drama Critics, *That Championship Season* shows why the American dream has curdled to a nightmare.

John Simon in his review of Miller's play says, "The play shows grass-roots America and it is these people that are revealed to be weak, cowardly, prejudiced and sustained, if at all, by self-delusion...the judgement is made regretfully,

without rancour, almost with love."

The five characters, a coach and four members of a high school basketball team gather for their twentieth reunion to celebrate the winning of the Interstate Basketball Championship and take this occasion to discuss the mayoralty campaign of one of the teammates.

"We are allowed to judge the lives of these people, their bigotry, their source of survival and we cannot deny that these elements," says Director Tibor

Feheregyhazi.

A powerful cast has been assembled for *That Championship Season*; Richard Kuss as the Coach, the social, moral and political mentor of his boys for life; Douglas Chamberlain as George, the mayor; Michael Donaghue as the rich Phil Romano; Peter Rogan and Edward Rudney as the brothers, Tom and James Daley.

That Championship Season runs at the Citadel March 16 to April 13. Limited numbers of tickets are still available through the Citadel Box Office, 424-2828



Val Hirsche



Brent Hatch

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