

Make way for Young Triffie

BY JUDY REID

Even if your ear is quick enough to pick up all the jokes, you may laugh so hard you'll miss the punchlines in *Young Triffie's Been Made Away With*.

The latest offering from Neptune's Studio Series is a whodunit play set in outport Newfoundland in the early 1950s. But it's not all laughs, Jaysus H. Christ, no! There's incest, alcoholism, drug addiction, suicide, post-war trauma, a smattering of pornography, and of course, the terrible murder of poor Triffie Pottle.

Anyone can take an awful truth and twist it into a laughing matter, but Newfoundlanders seem to be better at it than most. And one of the best is Ray Guy, the author of "Young Triffie." Mr. Guy is a renowned author, humorist, and story-teller. Most Newfoundlanders probably recognize him as a weekly commentator on "Here and Now," Newfoundland's supper-time news program, and those of us who can remember way back to junior high may also recall some of Ray's funny stories in our literature textbooks.

Two more crowd-drawing names of this Ship's Company Theatre production are Mary Walsh and Andy Jones, who both performed in the Newfoundland comedy troupe and TV program, CODCO. Ms. Walsh is the director of "Young Triffie" and a recent Gemini award winner for both writing and performing in the CBC comedy *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*. Andy Jones plays the father of Triffie, Pastor Pottle, which is kind of ironic, considering Mr. Jones left CODCO because producers thought his portrayal of a "buggering" priest too controversial.

These three well-known names may have attracted the crowd to the Sir James Dunn Theatre, but it was the actors' performances that kept them there. Michael Chiasson played the bottle-a-day Dr. Melrose in various degrees of drunkenness to a "T." The doctor's missus was played by Gay Hauser, who could show the depths of her hysteria, and her hatred of the tiny outport, by just widening her dead-staring eyes.

The highlight performance however was given by Mary-Colin Chisholm who played the nosy post-mistress Mrs. Millie Bishop. You should hear the mouth on her! She comes up for air half as often as the great white whale, as the good doctor would say. Chisholm played the fast talking, hard working, scared of nothin'

Newfoundlander to a very appreciative audience. The portrayal of the widowed Mrs. Bishop evoked laughter as people recognized mannerisms and sayings from the "rock" even while acknowledging the Newfie stereotype.

Set designer Stephen Britton Osler created five effective and flexible settings on the Dunn's small stage.

The opening scene between Dr. and Mrs. Melrose is only heard by the audience. From there, the 17-year-old Triffie (Alyson McCready) is found deader than a door nail with four stab wounds in her back by the slightly-more-than-half witted Billy Head. Enter the squeamish but earnest Ranger Hepditch played by Stephen Hepditch to catch the killer.

So who did dunit? The depraved Pastor Pottle, recluse Ol' Man Washburn (Joseph Rutten), or Mrs. Bishop's shell-shocked, foul-mouthed son Vincie? Fortunately, theatre goers will have no problem sticking around 'til the end to find out.

Young Triffie's Been Made Away With will be playing at the Sir James Dunn Theatre in the Dalhousie Arts Centre until Sunday November 12 with evening shows at 8 p.m. and matinees at 4 p.m. Saturday and 2 p.m. Sunday. Tickets are \$14 for adults and \$12 for students and seniors. Call Neptune Theatre at 429-7070 for more information.

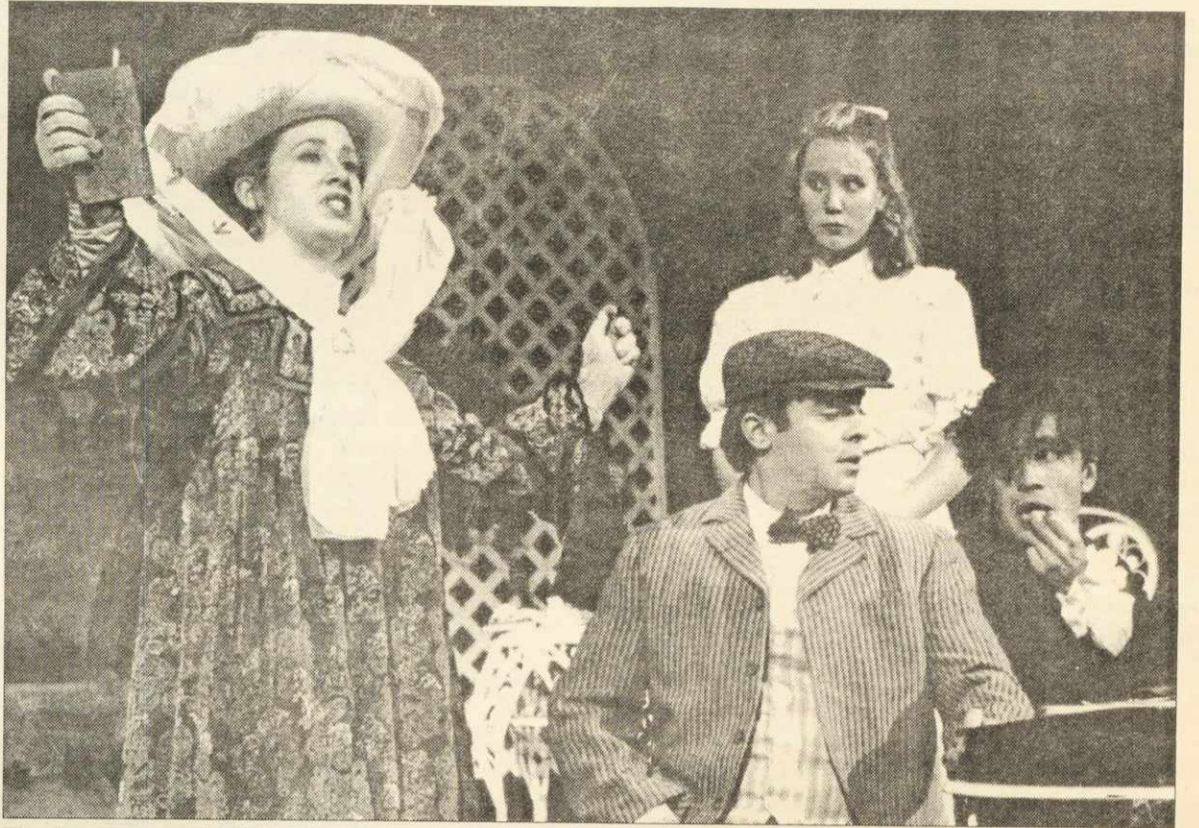
Women's film fest

BY TANIA TREPANIER

The opening night of the Women's Film and Video Festival featured flowers and news crews, hysterectomies and cookies, mud huts and interviews. The six pieces shown varied in length, style, and content, setting the tone for the rest of the festival, which ends this Sunday.

The directors of the first two films were present at the screening and answered questions from the audience after their films were shown. The first was *The Vessel*, written and directed by Helen Hill. It is a lovely animated short which employs a variety of animation styles, starting with a two-dimensional shadow puppet technique, switching to drawn animation, and ending with three-dimensional animation. Hill, who is originally from the States, explained that her film started as an autobiographical poem. She produced the film while she was a student, taking ten months to

Wilde at heart



The Importance of Being Earnest runs from Nov. 9-12 at the Church.

GAZETTE PHOTO BY GEOFF INESON

BY GEOFF INESON

If the cast of *The Importance of Being Earnest* are occasionally a little over-dressed, they make up for it by being always immensely over-educated. *The Importance of Being Earnest* is a play by Oscar Wilde that celebrates the absurdities of social propriety. This simply splendid comedy exemplifies the extent to which people will go to keep up their 'acceptable' appearances.

We start in the London apartment of the fairly well-to-do, irrepressibly aloof Algernon, played by Josh MacDonald. In walks Earnest (as he is known in the city) and then at the badgering of Algernon, they soon get about to the business of Earnest's true identity.

As it turns out, Earnest is an assumed name, which Jack uses when he is in London courting the lovely lady Fairfax (Kelly-Ruth Mercier). In the countryside Jack lives a 'respectable' life, where the truth of his involvement within the social circles of London would be unbecoming to one in his position.

Jack (Sam White), you see, is the guardian of the whimsical Cecily, and his responsibilities — his "high moral tone" — include sheltering her from the London sophisticrats. Jack cannot resist his romantic calling to Gwendolyn however, and so he creates a younger brother named Earnest — a dupe, or "Bunbury," as Algernon puts it — whom Jack must often visit in the big city.

There's playful deception and posturing within all of the characters — even the pure, innocent Cecily. Jennie Raymond, who plays Cecily, and Mercier are both Dalhousie Theatre graduates and their performances were very convincing. Indeed many kudos should be paid to the entire cast that has worked so hard to wrap their Canadian tongues around the rapid-fire witticisms and multiplicity of paradoxes from the great Irish playwright.

"It's all about language, paradox and posturing," says director Glenn Walton. "This is why this play is so very enjoyable." The articulation of the play's dialogue is extraordinarily refined. The cast, too, is extraordinarily refined. Walter Borden plays the Lady Bracknell, an atypical old battle-ax with a glimmering and often misguided mind. (S)he moves gingerly yet gracefully across the stage in a fashionable floor-length gown. Borden is a well-known actor and writer who resides in Halifax. Equally revered and established David Renton —

who has been double-cast as Lane, the butler, and Ms. Merriman, the maid — also does the atypical typically well.

I find that the main tempo of the play, or pace with which the lines are delivered, falls upon the shoulders of actor Josh MacDonald as the incurably frivolous Algernon. The energy and rapidity upon which the dialogue rides will be dependent upon this secondary, yet very central character. It's a demanding role too, a very physical role, with an intense emphasis on enunciation and attitude. MacDonald possess an exceptional energy and I am confident that he'll please every upcoming audience.

In a society full of posers, who win or lose themselves at the drop of a hat, one just has to laugh throughout this comedy of assumed identities. 'Tis an excellent choice to celebrate the centenary of Oscar Wilde's unjust conviction and exile from England. This and other upcoming tributes to the great writer are being put on by a group who call themselves "Wilde in the Street," so watch out for them in the future!

The Importance of Being Earnest runs Thursday, Nov 9th through Sunday Nov. 12th, and then again on the 16th-19th. All shows are at 8 p.m. at the Church, 5657 North Street @ Fuller Terrace. For more information or reservations call Michael Wile, 425-5486. Tickets are \$10 for students, seniors and unwaged; and \$12 for everyone else.

complete it from the storyboard stage to the finished product.

The second piece, *The Nukes and Golf Coincidence*, is a humorous treatment of the media coverage of the 1995 G-7 Economic Summit in Halifax that was produced and directed by Ariella Pahlke. When answering questions in person, she discussed how her work was a collaborative effort. Rather than being scripted, it was developed with the helpful feedback of her friends and neighbors. Pahlke commented on the unfortunate lack of improvisational and experimental works, especially in the context of a growing film and video industry.

The other films screened included an experimental documentary about nine women's experiences with hysterectomy, a powerful drama with no spoken dialogue about an African woman who feels displaced in England, a whimsical vignette

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