

York workshop productions tackle cosmic worlds and sterile wombs

By ANDREA MONTGOMERY

If you've wondered what York University's theatre department was up to but were afraid to ask, now is the time to find out.

From Tuesday, November 12th until Friday, November 15th three theatre department shows are going up in Atkinson studio, two a night starting at 8 o'clock, with extra matinees at 3:00 on both Wednesday and Friday. Although they're all presented under the auspices of the department at the same time, the three shows—*Cosmic Abuse*, *Jenny's Story* and *The 5th of July*—are quite different. They certainly offer enough variety to please diverse theatre palettes.

The first, *Cosmic Abuse*, was written by John Gregory, a graduate playwrighting student at York. It is the shortest of the three, the "curtain-raiser" for each of the other plays. Don't worry about seeing it twice, however. Director Julie Bond, herself as actress with the graduate program, has done some very interesting things with the script. Not only are there simply two characters—played by third year performance students David Burgess and Angelo Celeste, but together they and Bond have worked out two completely different approaches to the script. Tuesday and Wednesday the actors use one approach, then Thursday and Friday they switch characters and tackle the other. Asked to describe the play, one of the actors ventured, "if you put playwrights Sam Shepard, Samuel Beckett and Ionesco in a room together for three weeks and told them to write a Thornton Wilder play, this is what you might get." We end up with two very human characters, attempting to deal with each other, and a crazy world.

The second play, *Jenny's Story*, is written by western playwright Betty Lambert. It appears Tuesday and Wednesday, directed by Jane Carnwath, another graduate, and features a much larger group of third year acting students. *Jenny's Story* is the obvious powerplay of the three.

Concerned as it is with the Canadian Sterilization Act, which permitted the sterilization of people deemed genetically or psychologically incapable of bearing children, the strength of the plot could be overwhelming in performance. Both actors and director are trying, in this production, to meet this challenge. According to director Carnwath "the actors must understand the play's symbolism, then move beneath to the human



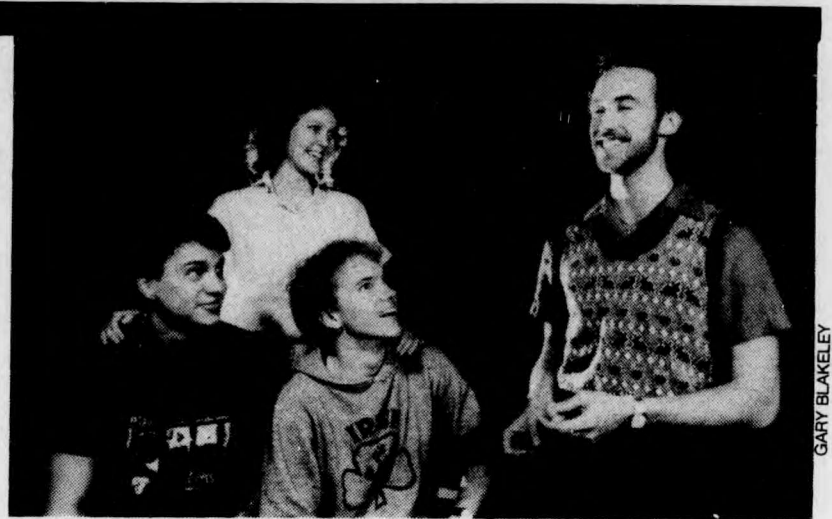
5th of July sax fiend.

relations between the characters if they play is to have meaning for the audience." The play is an excellent choice for younger actors, with its balanced roles and emotional range. It should be a good illustration of the department's theatre training.

Finally, *The 5th of July*, by Lanford Wilson, which closes the run Thursday and Friday, has some interesting contrasts within its make-up. Although it is acted primarily by third year students, two performance students from second year provide a glimpse of what is yet to come. The director, Julia Stan, again a graduate student, brings to her directing extensive experience from the University of Bucharest. She is working on what is essentially a gentle, rambling account of the after effects of Vietnam on middle class America. It

will be interesting to see the character insights the actors develop under a director with different cultural experience. Stan sees the characters in this play as the map by which theme and ideas may be understood, and it is on them the audience should concentrate.

The performances are all "productions in process" and as such they become a test of the actors at their craft.



WE MISSED THE JOKE: 3rd year actors laugh it up.

Pataphysical paradoxes

By PAULETTE PEIROL

Forget plot. Forget setting. Forget the ABC's of logical deduction. They won't help you understand Alfred Jarry's schizophrenic world of "Pataphysics" now being exploited to its most lustful extent in *Supermale* at Theatre Passe Muraille.

Pataphysics is "the science of infinities and imaginary solutions." It is the brain-warp of French symbolist, "father of Surrealism" and self-proclaimed absinthic Alfred Jarry. It is "presently and not so presently" an obsession of actress-turned-playwright Jo Ann McIntyre. It is, in effect and effectively, responsible for the phenomenal performances of Jackie Burroughs and Nion (a.k.a. Ian Wallace) in the outrageous *Supermale*.

And outrageous it is, simply and not so simply. Burroughs plays Jarry himself, notorious for his "semisucides with carbon tetra chloride." She also plays and plays with his schizophrenic manifestations, seven in all, both male and not male. Her roles are much easier described than done; costume changes help the transitions, but Burroughs gets the credit for maintaining subtleties in speech and mannerism to delineate personalities while keeping a central consciousness throughout.

Nion has captured the energy of a pubescent boy with the concentration of a karate expert in his acting. His roles in *Supermale* demand and display both skills to the hilt. From his aloof yet mesmerizing Excellency to a perverse and justifiably proud Indian (after making sex 72 successive and suggestive times) Nion holds the audience transfixed.

Yet the play has and is not without its problems. Jo Ann McIntyre's "superloosely adapted" script, while faithful to Jarry's linguistic nuances and ideas, is too long. More specifically, the dialogue in Act One is succinct and compelling while the extended grunts, groans, exhalations, awes, oos, coos, and squeals are, to take a breath, overdone in Act Two.

So is the action. Granted, 72 repetitions of assorted coition cannot be given justice by imagery alone. But after ten minutes of watching two bodies frolic in a gigantic (30 foot?) cock, we get the idea...

In fact, we get plenty of visual ideas thanks to the imaginative "Set Art Installations" on stage, all functional apparatus.

Theatre Passe Muraille's tiny Backstage Theatre is enlarged greatly by the extension of props and platforms into airborne space. The installations contribute to the sur-

realism of *Supermale*; Burroughs rides a bicycle (by Bob Aaron) without handles or wheels while large black train wheels (by Robin Len) spin light in the background.

Sound and light effects are also an integral element in this production. Strobe lights are effectively used for gunshots and scenes with electronic gadgetry. Taped sound creates mood; a Parisian cafe, computer babble, a train racing. The only grossly inappropriate sonic effect is that of a toilet flushing amplified about twenty times for no apparent or translucent reason whatsoever.

Under the direction of Richard Pochinko, a teach of clowning and kinetics, *Supermale* is a collaborative work, using the varied talents of its members to the fullest.

The production also uses and abuses its unsuspecting audience to a delightful degree. "Here here," Jarry might exclaim. Well well...

Supermale is scheduled to play at Theatre Passe Muraille until November 10th. The show has witnessed full houses since it opened Halloween night. Hopefully, its run will be extended for at least another week. *Supermale* is a must for anyone in the least or most bit interested in theatre, Surrealism, or pataphysics in general and specific. "There there."

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