

Simplicissimus exhibit satirizes social disarray of Weimar republic

By JANICE GOLDBERG

The years of Germany's Weimar Republic, between 1918 and 1933, were times of political conflict, economic and social crisis, ideological controversies and moral antagonism. To the viewer today, the satirical drawings of the weekly magazine *Simplicissimus* (published from the years 1836 until 1933) are a sobering document of this troubled era. The exhibition *Simplicissimus and the Weimar Republic* at the Samuel J. Zacks Gallery until February 20, displays over 100 satirical cartoons and original magazine pages representative of 10 frequently contributing artists.

Simplicissimus (Latin translation "Isn't it Obvious") was founded in Munich in 1896. Its founding policy was "to subject evidence of serious and honest endeavour in art and literature to equally serious and honest criticism." The magazine developed a tendency to engage in political satires as a by-product of its critical disposition. *Simplicissimus* held the view that it was the artist's duty to tear away at the veil of hypocrisy and reveal deplorable social and political conditions.

During the Weimar Republic days, the magazine focused greater attention on political issues than in its pre-war publications. The cartoonists responded to the disillusionment and outrage of the postwar years with caustic and belligerent drawings. As the decade proceeded, the cartoonists returned to their accustomed, somewhat less abrasive mockery.

Their targets numbered among the petty bourgeoisie and various other philistines, both foreign and domestic. The artists had an endless supply of subject matter: The Weimer period was an era of contrasts—of hectic activity and hope, of eccentricity and despair, of diligence and the pursuit of pleasure. Everything was new, exciting, disturbing and

hence ripe for the barbs of the cartoonist.

All of *Simplicissimus*' cartoonists had fine arts training. Many would take their sketchbooks into the streets, bars, concert halls, and socialite affairs to record the activities of various social and political groups. The drawings are authentic representations of individuals and events, infused with a bit of exaggeration and distortion for effective sarcasm. The images are disturbing if not for their gross portrayal of characters and situations, then for their accompanying sardonic text.

Simplicissimus eventually suc-

cumbed to the tyranny of the Nazi regime. Censorship reduced, in fact annihilated the magazine's critical role. The magazine had been explicitly campaigning against the Nazi party, but satire was not a sufficient weapon for battling this rapidly growing insanity. The exhibition demonstrates the legacy of the magazine: its satirical drawings reveal more about the pre-Nazi era of German history than could be hoped from any textbook. For a humorous historical perspective, jaunt over to Zack's Gallery before February 20th.



Hoppla, we're alive: "A good seat in a box and the revolution on the stage, I can only say: *Vive la republique!*"

Plays overcome textbook tedium

By STEPHEN MILTON

Theatre Passe Muraille appears to have found an antidote to the stupefying boredom which the history of Canada before Confederation provokes in any Canadian who got through high school. They are presenting a series of plays by Michael Hollingsworth who has infused the history of the British rule over Canada with wit and disrespect entirely appropriate to their brutal behavior in bringing civilization to this backward colony.

The British is the second of a five-part series of plays by Hollingsworth, with each part consisting of four one-act plays. The entire series is called *The History of the Village of the Small Huts* and will take five years to complete. This year's plays follow the events which occurred from the siege of Quebec to the War of 1812. During the weeknights, two plays are presented at a time, while on the weekend all the pieces are performed back-to-back. Thus, "The Plains of Abraham" and "The Conspiracy of Pontiac" are performed together, while "The Loyalists" and "The War of 1812" are the second couplet.

Hollingsworth has clearly decided

that high school history texts are the best excuse for suicide that our culture has produced thus far, and has accordingly decided to ignore their approach wherever possible. The plays are historically accurate, but the tone of the pieces is completely irreverent, showing no respect whatsoever for the Europeans who colonized the country. This is the source of the plays' merit, for Hollingsworth underlines the brutal nature of the so-called "civilized" French and British colonizers as they try to destroy each other and the Indians.

In "The Plains of Abraham," the French generals and *haute société* of New France are presented as self-absorbed socialites who curse the day they were sent to Quebec and its primitive culture. The King's representative is a conceited autocrat who is completely out of touch with the political and social realities of New France, and is consequently a source of considerable humor. The British are equally unhappy with their posting yet are more restrained in their behavior, although this does not stop them from carrying out what one character describes as "the standard raping and pillaging." The tone of the first and third plays are reminiscent of Monty Python, and

serves to make this form of history a far more palatable concoction than that which is forced upon the general public.

The playwright has wisely avoided demanding sets that recreate the actual buildings and interiors of New France, and has opted for a minimal stage where characters are illuminated by isolated spotlights. Beside the obviously prohibitive expense of realistic sets, this strategy encourages the audience's imagination to recreate the atmosphere and appearance of the period. Moreover, the effect is to stimulate the mutterings and cries of ghosts from a distant time when the world we know was yet to be created.

Unfortunately, the series starts with enormous energy, yet fails to maintain its momentum. The "Plains of Abraham" is the first and best piece, followed by the "Conspiracy of Pontiac" which is much darker in tone. The second set of plays, however, lacks the wit which sustained the first two. Consequently, if one is considering seeing the plays, which is a fine idea if only to kindle an interest in Canadian history, the first two are the best bet while the second set may try one's patience and seem anti-climatic.

Readings Readings Readings
Canadian Women Writers at Glendon
Feb. 13: Gwendolyn MacEwen, Senior Common Room, Third Floor, York Hall, Glendon College

Elvis Impersonators Elvis Impersonators
Record Store
York Student Christian Movement Film Series: *Focus on Feminism*
Feb. 11 and 12: Behind the Veil (a new NFB documentary on nuns), S169 Ross, 5 p.m.

CALENDAR
Vanier College Productions Presents: *East Lynne*
Vanier College Dining Hall, Feb. 6, 7, & 8, 8 p.m.
\$4 students/seniors, \$5 non-students. Tickets available at Vanier College Lobby and Grooves Record Store

Film Film Film Film Film Film Film Film
York Student Christian Movement Film Series: *Focus on Feminism*
Feb. 11 and 12: Behind the Veil (a new NFB documentary on nuns), S169 Ross, 5 p.m.

Theatre Theatre Theatre Theatre Theatre Theatre
Dr. Mason's Cure
Calumet College Common Room,
Feb. 6, 3 p.m. & 8 p.m.

Dusa, Fish Stas & Vi, presentation of 4th year Theatre ensemble
Burton Auditorium, Feb. 11-14, 8 p.m. Matinees:
Feb. 12, 2 p.m. & Feb. 14, 12 noon
Tickets \$4 seniors and students, \$5 general admission. Tickets available at Burton Auditorium box office weekdays noon—2:30 p.m.

Simplicissimus and the Weimar Republic, original satirical drawings from pre-Nazi Germany
Samuel J. Zacks Gallery, until Feb. 20
Installation by Joan Frick
Glendon Gallery, until Feb. 16

Division, Crossroads, Turns of Mind: Some New Irish Art
AGYU and Winters College Gallery, Feb. 10-Mar. 23
Paintings by Nadine Norman
Calumet College Common Room, until Feb. 14

Galleries Galleries Galleries Galleries Galleries
The Icecube Committee presents: *The Creative Home Decorating Show—including Current Trendz*
IDA Gallery, Feb. 10-14.
Drawing Area Exhibition
IDA Gallery, until Feb. 7

St. Valentine: Day Massacre, the work of M.L. Knight, collages extraordinaire
Founders Gallery, until Feb. 9

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Information on our U.F.E. preparatory program will also be available.

Or, come to **SUTTON PLACE HOTEL, ROSEDALE ROOM, 955 Bay Street, Wednesday 26 February, 1986, 5 to 7 p.m., for information on the U.F.E. preparatory program.**

Information will also be available on the Chartered Accountancy Department.

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