

Chekhov farces a gas

Production exhibits more "smoke" than "fire"

By RISHA GOTLIBOWICZ

It was interesting to see what the fourth year performance class in the theatre department did with three Chekhov farces, *The Bear*, *The Jubilee*, *The Proposal*. Director Neil Dainard said that this was the class' first professional effort.

FUNNY STUFF

The sets and props furnished a large portion of the experience. On a budget of \$3,000, designer Michael Maher managed to invent some pretty funny props and sets; the furniture was actually stuffed, for example. According to producer Fran Fagan, the furniture was designed to look a little bit too big and clumsy and everyone to be a little bit too grandiose.

The furniture was not the highlight of the entire show, however. The actors incorporated these props for an amusing effect, as they tripped over this, stumbled over that, and generally acted roly-poly.

In *The Bear*, actor Gord Masten, as Smirnov enters the home of Mme Popova in order to collect a sum of money. Mme Popova is

still mourning the loss of her husband and is ill-disposed towards this coarse-mannered man. In between their rantings and ravings, the servant enters and exits through various sets of doors. Smirnov lashes out inflated hatred for Mme Popova, proposing a duel; while she fetches the guns, he has an overwhelming change of heart, falls madly in love with her, and must wriggle out of his original stance. Finally, they embrace, and all ends well.

GOOD TIMING

The timing proved appropriate to the humour, with all the right ingredients striving to arrive at the fore. Michael Maher's costumes were exciting and colourful. Irene Matyas, as Mme Popova, manager her role affably, but lacked a certain passion. Murdie Campbell, as Luke the servant, was amiable, exploiting the role of the eccentric gasping servant with keenness. Gord Masten as Smirnov palpitated suitably and swiftly.

As a whole, however, it was all a little too obvious: the costumes, the makeup, the props, the acting were all pushing for bombastic

frills.

The next farce, *The Jubilee*, is set in a bank. The incident revolves around Mrs. Merchutkin, a churlish woman in hoop skirt and bonnet (right out of Little Miss Muffet) who enters the bank for money, making threats and eventually creating a general hub-bub.

At one instant, I thought I was watching an animated version of *I Love Lucy*. However, there was no mistaking that this was farce, as everyone fluttered about like stuffed cabbages and ended up piled on top of each other.

Diane Elliott played her role as

Tatyana with lots of spit and fire, but I wondered if she came across a little like Mae West, and whether she had anything to do with *The Jubilee*. Angela Winter as Mrs. Merchutkin was forcible; she seemed to have just the right touch, playing the eccentricity with wit and verve. Gord Masten was adequate as Khirin. Murdie Campbell played Shipuchin somewhat comtemply, and Paul Healy together with Dean Smith made themselves quite understood as the Shareholders Deputation.

In the last farce, *The Proposal*, Chubukov (Gord Masten) wants to marry Natasha (Angela Winter),

his neighbour, but falters both mentally and physically. The two become embroiled over a property matter, he rushes out and she finally learns his matrimonial intent from her father, Mr. Lomov (Murdie Campbell); she screams to bring him back and they are united.

Again, the various elements came across as pleasing, but too many things were happening at once. As a result, the acting tended to get bogged down in between the costumes and the props.

Comedy is a difficult genre, and director Neil Dainard provided a solid ground for his actors.

Filling showcase with quality work: CBC hatches "Canadian Collection"

By EVAN LEIBOVITCH

One facet of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation that is not too well known, is that of the CBC as producer of a fairly extensive line of recordings in *The Canadian Collection* and readily available to the public. Most of the works are modern jazz and

classical, though there are many exceptions.

The idea behind the recordings was to provide outlet for Canadian composers and performers that would not be available elsewhere. Some of the records are distributed world-wide through Radio Canada International.

A random sampling of the

collection reveals the high quality of production. One especially interesting recording, titled *All-Star Jazz In Concert* at the CNE (August 29, 1973), could have easily been the predecessor to the *Boss Brass* under the direction of Guido Basso, comprised as it was of some of the best jazz musicians in Canada. A second selection was created to mark the Toronto Symphony Orchestra's 50th anniversary. It contained Beethoven's sixth symphony, and was recorded live at Massey Hall.

The more recent compositions of 13 Canadian composers are included in another sample, a four record set from the International series titled *Music of Today*. Yet another selection is of the documentary and spoken word series, titled *Cries of the Wild*. Taken from the Audubon Wildlife Theatre, it includes the sounds of animals from around the world, with narration, and surprisingly good fidelity on the record.

Although each record existed within its own groupings, every selection exhibited a level of care and quality rarely found in commercial pressings. The covers are sturdy, simple, and all of have ample liner notes. The pressings have no trace of warps and low hiss levels, even on quiet passages. It is obvious that much attention has gone into the assembly of this first-rate collection of the type of recordings you won't find at Sam's.

In fact, the only way to get them is through the CBC. The original system is mail order via CBC Publications, Box 500, Station A, Toronto M4W 1E6. During the postal strike, you can probably get a catalogue, or order by calling the CBC at 925-3311 (extn. 4895), and work something out.

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