

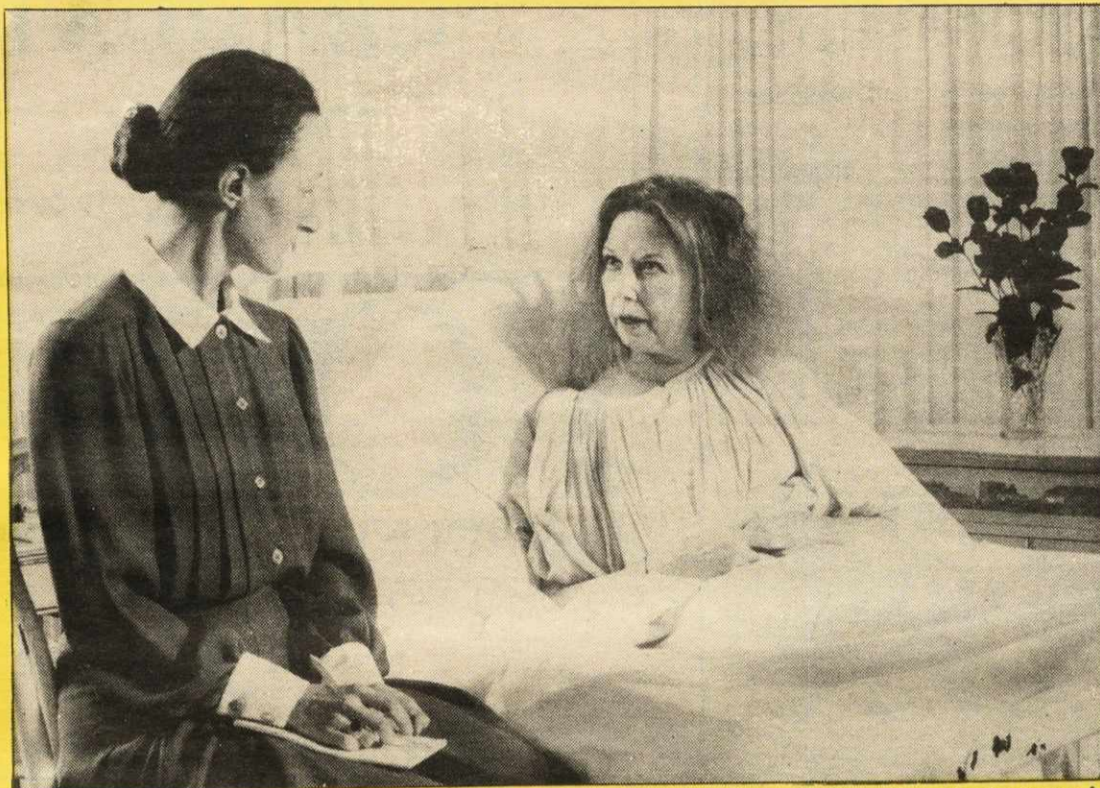
Mystery of Rose Bouquet

by Allison Johnston

This play is about conflict between women. The playwright is Manuel Puig, the Argentinian author of the well known *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, which was adapted for film. *Mystery of the Rose Bouquet* is a wonderfully touching piece.

It is set in Latin America in present day. The opening scene reveals a hospital room in a private clinic where everything is white. One wonders what it represents: death? purity? virginity? It could be any of these things. This play is about death in contrast with life and the will to live. This play is about the purity of an asexual friendship between women. This play is about the difficulties of being a woman.

An older woman (Anna Cameron) has admitted herself to the clinic because of depression and is a difficult patient. A new private nurse (Mary Colln Chisholm) comes into the Patient's life and the dance begins. Each character lets the audience get to know them through dream sequences, where the other actors play the other people in their memory. We slowly discover that



Anna Cameron (right) as an elderly woman and Mary Colln Chisholm (left) as the private nurse, in Manuel Puig's sympathetic play of women in a male dominated society

both characters are much more complex than they first appeared. The dance continues as the relationship develops into a pure friendship.

Puig deals with many interesting themes: companionship,

male domination, betrayal. He also identifies the women's happiness and despair in terms of men. However, Puig's sympathy for women as victims in a male dominated Latin American society is very apparent.

Both actors turn in convincing performances that absorb your attention throughout the entire production. Anna Cameron, who produced this play, is also acting the part of the Patient. She says she finds it difficult to "wear two

hats" in one production. However she does a wonderful job of portraying a bitter old woman. Mary Colln Chisholm is very touching and strong in her main and secondary roles.

It is a thoughtfully written piece that combines tragedy and comedy to play out the growth of a friendship. The audience is fortunate enough to get to know the individual characters so as to better understand the exchanges between the two women.

Jeffrey Stewart is the lighting director for the show. The use of light is exceptional. The opening and closing of the blinds is a wonderful touch.

Linda Moore directs *Mystery of the Rose Bouquet* and is described as the "nurturer" of the play. She will be taking over from Tom Kerr at Neptune as artistic director in June.

Lynne Gorman, originally cast in the part of the Patient, died of cancer in the fall. This production is dedicated to her and it does her proud.

Mystery of the Rose Bouquet by Manuel Puig at Cunard Street Theatre, March 22 to April 11. Regular \$10 for Students/half price on Saturdays at 5 pm and Sunday at 2 pm.

Childhood revisited... again

by Sandy MacKay

The best show of the year was at the Rebecca Cohn last Saturday. The house was full and the

audience was wild. They screamed and yelled and waved their arms and shook their bodies. It was beyond a shadow of a doubt the best show that has been

through Halifax this year.

Rod Stewart? No. Jane Siberry, with her whole band? No. LEAF roadshow? No. Peter Gabriel and Kate Bush, live together? No.

This show was put on by a man who likes to get into weird clothes, an androgynous child with a mop of stringy hair and a mute dog. These three performers out-performed anyone who has been in Halifax since Gord knows when.

I went to this performance with three friends — Colin, Howie, and Geri Wheeler. I have to name them because Colin said his friends wouldn't believe that he went to this great show unless his name showed up in this article. Colin and Howie are two of my young friends, and they took me to see Ernie Coombes — better known as Mr. Dressup.

Is there anyone in Canada that grew up watching TV that doesn't remember Mr. Dressup?

At two minutes to one o'clock, Colin said, "Everybody is here now. They should start early, 'cause the place is full. There's only around 700, I mean 7,000 people here."

Then, promptly at one o'clock, the theme to the T.V. show

started playing (do you remember it?), the lights dimmed and all 7,000 children began screaming.

Out strolled Dressup, in bright red suspenders and fancy Nike sneakers. He sang a little welcome song, and then tried to introduce another star of the show, Casey. (Question: Is Casey a boy or a girl? I asked a number of people in the audience last week and opinion is divided.)

Dressup swept his arm towards Casey and Finnigan's plywood house and announced "And now here's Casey!" To the delight of the audience, Finnegan popped up. Dressup did a double-take, and then tried to announce Finnegan. Casey popped up. Dressup tried to announce both of them, and they both disappeared. Just when Mr. Dressup was about to give up in disgust, they both popped up, to tremendous cheers.

Mr. Dressup then introduced the tickle trunk, which stayed still. He then went through the ritual of tickling it open.

Mr. Dressup, Casey and Finnegan then got dressed up as pirates, and went in search of treasure, and the audience was invited to help the three of them row the ship, toss out the anchor and sing

the pirate chant "YoHo!" The treasure search brings Mr. Dressup back to the spot where he started, and he exclaimed "POOEY!" This single word brought the strongest reaction from the audience all afternoon. (Those of you in the entertainment field should remember this!)

They sang some more songs, they invited us to sing and dance along. They did another dress up skit based on "Goldilocks and the Three Bears." However, due to costumes and numbers of actors present, they had to adapt it to "Grannylocks and the Two Bears."

The show ended after this skit. Colin simply said "It was fun." Howie didn't say anything. He had a big grin on his face and a fancy green hat that had Mr. Dressup written on it.

I loved it. What a great way to spend an afternoon. I was whisked back to my own childhood, and I got to spend a special day in the middle of two of my friends' childhoods. Take yourself out to one of those 'children's shows,' take a friend and kick back to when all you really cared about was candy and hugs.

