

entertainment

Some master drumming at Burton

By Ted Mumford

In West Africa, few men are more respected than the master drummer, the virtuoso musician who knows every native rhythm as well as his own heartbeat. In a concert Saturday, Ghanaian drummer Abraham Kobina Adzinyah showed an electrified audience in Burton Auditorium that he is a master among masters.

Adzinyah left Ghana nine years ago to take a teaching post at Connecticut's Wesleyan University, where his students included Bob Becker and Russell Hartenberger. Both are now members of the percussion ensemble Nexus, and they teach percussion at York and U. of T. respectively. Adzinyah was in residence with Becker's African Percussion Workshop last week,



Abraham Kobina Adzinyah.

preparing for Saturday's concert.

For Adzinyah, a man who feels and transmits joy in his every performance, his visits to York (he was here last year as well) must be a special pleasure. At the centre of the performing group Saturday, he seemed a proud patriarch, surrounded by his students — Becker and Hartenberger — and his

students' students: eight members of Becker's workshop. Sadly, unlike last year's concert, Hartenberger took part in only some of the pieces Saturday.

On stage in front of an array of umpans and donnos (talking drums), shakers and bells, Becker identified each song by its tribe, region and function (festival dance, funeral dance, etc.). Both the size of the performing force and Adzinyah's costumes changed to suit each piece.

Personal highlights included a trio by Becker, Hartenberger and Adzinyah and dances by Adzinyah: doing a duet with Liz Hartenberger, nimbly prancing while playing the double-headed donno, and portraying a priest being coaxed out of a trance by music.

As is the case with much good music, it isn't easy to listen to West African drumming. What may seem on the surface (especially to Western ears) to be unorganized bashing and shaking, reveals itself upon careful listening to be an intricate system of polyrhythms, with the master drummer improvising (as is his designated privilege) on top of the matrix built by his fellow drummers.

This music shouldn't be separated from its functions in dance and ceremony, and happily, Becker invited the audience to participate in the last number. The less-inhibited portion of the audience spilled onto the Burton stage and danced out all their pent-up rhythm. It was gratifying to liberate the stage area and break down, for once, concert audience-performer barriers. And when it comes to dancing music, twenty batteries of electric guitars couldn't hold a candle to the multiple rhythms of this music. You just take

your choice of rhythms and latch onto one. Drummers and dancers kept it up at a furious pace for almost half an hour for a fitting finale.

My only regret was the locale: last year when Adzinyah visited York, a similar concert was held in the

homey Calumet common room. There, people danced when and where they wanted and by the end of the concert, performers and audience as one were celebrating the music in a dancing throng, raising the room temperature to sauna level. In the more formal setting of

Burton, only part of the audience could actually participate.

Of course there was good reason for holding the concert at Burton — three times as many listeners were accommodated this year and the larger stage gave Adzinyah sufficient room to dance.



Some students in the African Percussion Workshop who played in Saturday's concert.

Enthusiastic ovations for "Orphan Annie"

By Rick Beales

The hit Broadway musical *Annie* opened its run at the O'Keefe Centre last week to enthusiastic standing ovations. Based on the comic strip *Little Orphan Annie*, this winner of

seven Tony awards will continue until April 15.

It won't be surprising if the play is held over well beyond this date. Director Mike Nichols has done a superb job with the touring company. Teamwork and timing are the

keys to *Annie's* success. Nichols and choreographer Peter Howard have excelled in these aspects.

Although Charles Strouse and Martin Charnin (music and lyrics) will never replace Rodgers and Hammerstein, *Annie's* score is a lively, funny one.

The plot line is, of course, absurd. A group of young orphan girls tyrannized by evil orphanage manager Miss Hannigan (Jane Connell) see one of their members plucked from obscurity by billionaire Oliver Warbucks (Norwood Smith). Young Annie (Kathy-Jo Kelly) spreads her doctrine of optimism — a staple for downtrodden folks of the depression era — in an attempt to find her long-lost parents. With Warbucks' aid, she soon has even President F.D. Roosevelt on her side.

Fortunately, Thomas Meehan's witty dialogue saves *Annie* from being too 'cute'. Often, the show is refreshing in its self-satire.

The lead roles are handled capably. Kelly belts out her songs with charming vivacity; Smith and Connell also prove competent in their parts. The real show-stopping numbers, however, were those performed by the chorus line of orphan girls. Led by rubber-waisted second-grader Kristin Williams, the girls gave marvellous renditions of *It's a Hard-knock Life* and *You're Never Fully Dressed Without a Smile*.

Sam Stoneburger plays FDR as a pompous, scatter-brained fool, and the result is hilarious. The fantasy of *Annie* reaches the extreme when the president, a victim of Annie's cheerful optimism, exhorts his cabinet to join the girl in the singing of *Tomorrow*. Roosevelt then proposes the 'New Deal' and everyone goes home happy.

Last fling for Literary society

Philip McShane, of Boston University, will speak on Phenomenology and the Transformation of Literary Criticism at 4:15 pm, Tuesday, April 4, Vanier Senior Common Room.

This lecture is last in a series sponsored by the York Literary Society. Admission is free.

A beer-drinking statue of liberty?

Sounds weird
but that's what
this artist is,
as well as a
turkey, a conifer
and an egg



By Ted Mumford

"Pat Oleszko makes a spectacle of herself... and she doesn't mind if you laugh!" declared the poster. Indeed, Pat Oleszko is the most uninhibited person you'd ever care to meet.

As well, she is the "Fellini of fabric"; she takes her art into the streets (and forests); she loves making rotten puns; she'll do anything for a laugh; and she's a unique and riveting artist with a deadly-accurate satiric aim.

Great, you say, but what does she do?

Basically, she puts costumes on things (trees, fountains, but mainly herself) but to really understand the state of her art, well, you had to be there when she visited York last Thursday.

The visual arts department brought Oleszko to York (she was also here in '75) for a slide show talk and a brief performance. About 80 people jammed into a multi-purpose room in Fine Arts for her visit; presiding was York's experimental directions/multi-media czar George Manupelli (with whom Oleszko studied at the University of Michigan).

Emerging from an adjoining office, Oleszko (six feet of her, in a plaid shirt open to the waist, black pants and a belt made of dominoes) announced, "I make costumes. I wear the costumes as part of my daily life."

To illustrate, she presented a slide show of her past opuses and follies.

The perfect inspiration for her bizarre genre came during college, when she supported

herself by working as "Pat, the Hippie Strippy".

Thereafter she stalked the strange path of satiric costuming in New York — on the streets and in magazines (*Ms.*, *Esquire*, *Sesame St. Magazine* and all the top-drawer skin-trade rags). A few examples:

- Each year Oleszko marches in the otherwise well-marshalled Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade as a giant turkey, much to the chagrin of the city's police.

- One Christmas she made herself into a Christmas tree and went window-shopping.

- Picture the Statue of Liberty trying to hail a cab in downtown New York, or drinking Schlitz. Complete with tiny tourists in her crown, Oleszko was the statue in a July 4 parade (towed on a cart by a friend disguised as a tugboat). Parade-goers were delighted: "I look down and everyone's face is a Kodak," she commented. (She also appeared on the cover of the bicentennial issue of *Ms* in her statue getup.)

- Puns: Oleszko in a real sandwich board: bacon, lettuce and tomato; a "coat of arms" — made completely of arms, of course.

- "In a blatant attempt to get in the centrespread of the *Daily News* (a New York tabloid)," making herself into a giant bespectacled and bereted egg at Easter, pulling a wagon of easter eggs behind her in downtown New York.

Those are a few of the easier-to-describe costumes Oleszko showed in her slide presentation. Her series of "New Yuk Women" defies description — suffice to say her mockery of a Playboy bunny had her thrown out of one of the corporation's clubs and threatened with a lawsuit for "visual slander". Her "Sally Sexetary" got Oleszko arrested on 5th Ave. for disrupting an Easter ceremony.

But how does one make a living dressing up as a taxi, a wind-up toy, a muscleman or Norman Mailer (to name a few more)?

Lectures for one, of course, plus other "assordid events" commissioned by galleries and community festivals. With her entourage the Token Pole Associates (Oleszko is Polish, get it?), she let loose her creative energies on "Art Park" on upper state New York.

Trees were clothed as humans; humans were clothed out of forest materials; a forest was turned into an art gallery.

Oleszko also has a one-woman show combining costumes with film (a short was shown Thursday), dance and monologue. After her slide show at Fine Arts, she did a rather awkward (probably because of the setting) strip in her "coat of arms" to a taped recitation.

The audience reaction was warm — ideally, however, the event should have been staged at Yonge and Bloor, where Oleszko could have performed her art in high-flying lampoonist form.