

ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE DEAD

By Kevin Bruce

The UNB Drama Society last Tuesday evening presented the first of three performances of "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead" before a modest but receptive audience.

It is a most strange and interesting play. Even the author Tom Stoppard has insisted his play is a comedy, and it is, but it's a 'funny sort of funniness. The play's main point of departure of course, is taken from the ambiguous part that the two figures Rosencrantz and Guildenstern play in their original context of Shakespeare's Hamlet.

However, this becomes but an incidental vehicle which allows the main characters to reflect upon the tragic nature of all human life,

just as Hamlet symbolically does, and yet their attitudes toward this truth are radically different. While the tragic conclusion of Hamlet relies heavily upon our involvement with the characters and the significance of their predicament -- in short, it calls for a reverend attitude towards their death and therefore all death -- "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern", on the other hand concentrates on the ridiculous and comic aspects of any human struggle -- tragedy and life are synonymous.

But don't let me mislead you with this weighty interpretation because the surface element of comedy is still lively and interesting enough to provide an enjoyable evening.

To successfully perform a play with such intricate and exuberant verbal interchanges, demands practiced and competent acting; the Drama Society fortunately received that from its principle players, Laurence Peters as Rosencrantz and Richard Bryan McDaniel as Guildenstern, along with a fine supporting effort by David Dawes as the player.

The entire cast in fact, showed little of the trying-too-hard quality which is naturally expected, and usually marks, so many amateur productions.

Commendations should also go to the setting and light crews who created a set which was well and fully utilized and



photo by Rudi

From left to right; (Rosencrantz) Laurence Peters, (Guildenstern) Richard Bryan McDaniel, (Hamlet) Glen Nash.

an atmosphere which exploited a large portion of the possible realms available under somewhat confining conditions.

In short the Society should be praised for its choice of material and for the hard work

and dedication which have gone into its execution. Those who were absent should be admonished for their lack of cultural patronage (what essay?) while those who attended have their own reward -- they saw a good play, well done.



From left to right; (Mr. Paravicini) Jack Medley, (Mollie Ralston) Mary Bellows, (Giles Ralston) John Cutts.

THE MOUSETRAP

by Elizabeth Smith

One of the world's most famous whodunit was performed by the Theatre New Brunswick company of the Playhouse in Fredericton last week.

Agatha Christie's "The Mousetrap" has been playing in London, England for eighteen years and has made the grandson to whom she gave the royalties, a millionaire. This

is the first time TNB has presented it to New Brunswick audiences. It opened in Fredericton on February 17 and is being shown on tour in several New Brunswick cities and in a special performance in Charlotteville, Prince Edward Island.

"The Mousetrap" opens to a dark stage, lit only by two small wall brackets. The first few bars on the nursery rhyme "Three Blind Mice" plays loudly behind the audience, which seems to rivet the audience's attention to the stage.

The murder is introduced by means of a news bulletin over the radio and the first suspect is the second actor on stage - wearing the described "dark overcoat, light scarf, and soft felt hat."

During the next two hours every character in the play is

suspect as the murderer at one time or other, but as the tension mounts and the real identity of the killer is finally revealed, probably no one in the theatre has guessed correctly. In London, the theatre manager asks each audience not to give the plot away and, judging by the play's success, they haven't. One hint: it isn't the butler (there isn't one).

On opening night of "The Mousetrap" the cast were in top form. McKay Silk, who has had character roles in all the recent Playhouse productions, played the rather gruff and hardened Miss Casewell. Miss Silk played a carefully studied role, with lavish attention to mannerisms and produced a very complex character.

The audience reacted most

warmly to the young, gay Christopher Wren, who found the police sergeant "very attractive". Colin Miller did a convincing portrayal of a hyperactive and nervous young man.

"The Mousetrap" is a completely enjoyable play. The tension, so important in a thriller, was well constructed and the whole audience held their breath for the two climatic scenes.

"The Mousetrap" was a far more successful production than the previous TNB play, "A Man For All Seasons" and if this is an indication for the future, "Playboy of the Western World" should be lots of fun in late March.

LOVE FROM JUDY - FLOP MUSICAL

by Pepita Ferrari

Amateur musicals fall into one of two categories. There are the select few which are impressively produced and then there are the multitudes of enthusiastically but definitely unimpressive productions.

It might be considered that musicals in general are fairly out-moded by now and understandably so due to the more sophisticated tastes of the majority of today's audiences. However, before explaining how the STU production of "LOVE FROM JUDY" fails as far as musicals go a certain amount of credit must be given for actually presenting an amateur production on such a vast scale in the Fredericton area.

"Love From Judy" is the story of the rescue of a bright imaginative teenage orphan girl (Judy Abbot) from the plight of unpaid servant for

the orphanage in which she has been brought up in. It is Mrs. Grace Pritchard who decides to maneuver the unsuspecting new trustee Jervis Pendleton into secretly becoming Judy's guardian ships her off to Fergusson Ladies College. But complications develop when Judy unknowingly falls in love with the very same Jervis Pendleton.

Perhaps the good five minutes of total silence following the dimming of the house lights preceding the opening strains of music were provided for the purpose of group meditation or better still to give the audience an appreciative rush of apprehension. Whatever the intent, it appeared only as a gross lack of backstage organization, especially when the musical

introduction was followed by a further two minutes of silence before the opening speech was delivered. But fortunately, apart from a few small occurrences of fumbled lines and the delayed appearance of spotlighting for a particular front-stage scene the remainder of the performance seemed to flow fairly evenly.

When the show finally did get underway it was with a very effective burst of gaiety but by the conclusion of the three and a half hour production the initial healthy impact had quite worn off. There was the usual excess of musical numbers and painful solos. The display of modern dance was certainly lacking in technique and unision but was appropriately presented throughout the production with the exception of the sequence in which it

became rather inconsistent and drawn-out.

Although Elyn Henderson played a secondary role she was undeniably the individual to most suitably portray their designated character. She performed the role of Mrs. Grace Pritchard, an exciting young divorcee possessing an admirable air of finesse, with an impressively easy stage presence. She was about the only actor to seemingly lose all sense of self-identity and to actually become the individual that they were portraying.

Peggy McGloin and Linda Barry skillfully filled their roles as Julia Pendleton and Sally McBride, room-mates of Judy Abbot's at the Ladies College, somehow lacking in authenticity. This was true to an even greater extent of Helen Stephen's sad although vigorous in-

terpretation of the female leading role. Her portrayal of the bright, imaginative, over-worked and under-fed orphan Judy Abbot was overly boisterous and insensitive.

As for the male members of the cast, Bill McGraw is regrettably the only individual worthy of recognition and praise of any sort. His infatuation with Judy Abbot was amusing and convincing if a bit fictitious. It was rather ironical that Terry Pond failed just as adequately in the male lead as Helen Stephen did in the female lead. The leading characters were undeniably a well-matched couple, if nothing else.

It was just one of those evenings that you spend squirming in your seat and planning a polite means of escape through the back exits.