

more difficulties than they showed in presenting the play. Hopefully, such student work will be more closely supervised in the future.

*Blood Wedding* may yet pull together as it continues its run until November 10 but at

present it is a rather demanding experience that is not too rewarding. Do go and decide for yourself. There is a good deal of hard work and talent at work here and a few days can make all the difference in the world.

Walter Plinge

## Muddy Waters run deep

It's about 9:30. Six guys come up on stage and start setting up equipment. They leave the stage. Studio City's Mike White does his thing and introduces the Muddy Waters blues band. The band guys come back. The band starts off with a nice flowing number, just to get everyone unwound and into the right mood.

Couple more numbers. Crowd starts to buzz 'cause there's no sign yet of Muddy Waters. They're into the fourth piece now, a fast driving, boogie that finishes up with a bang. Two guitars, bass, drums, piano, and a fantastic blues harp. Dude with the harp comes up to the mike and brings on Muddy Waters. Standing ovation. The man starts playing, and we're all sort of playing along with him, he knows what we want, and he's giving it to us. Everybody's kind of moving along with his music, everybody's smiling, feeling good.

Hard to believe he's sixty-eight. Few people get up and start to dance, hash fills the air. Muddy's sitting up there on a high back stool, his deep, rich, mellow voice echoing off the walls. What a voice! Teasing, playing, warning, sharing pain, belting out a raunchy tune, we're feeling right with him. Those musicians are sure going at a torrid clip. Piano player is about as old as Muddy, the drums are flying, the guitarists fingers blurring across steel, and leading them all. Muddy's guitar weeps, pleads, screams, under

those nimble fingers.

Song after song, he keeps on weaving that net, and pretty soon, everybody's caught up in it, everybody's creating a mood. The musicians feel the crowd's response, start to really work, play the blues in a way we'd never quite heard before. All too soon, Muddy gets ready to leave, we stand up and shout and clap and stomp our feet and ask for one more. He gives us one more. We're not satisfied. "All right," he says, "I'll do one more for you, I think you might like it." And everyone knows what he's going to play, we're ready for it, and when it comes Dinwoodie explodes. All 800 people singing, shouting, screeching, bellowing with him, "Got my mojo working."

Muddy kinda slips off stage, the band keeps on playing, the pianist working the vocals, drummer flying, guitarists racing, and we're still clapping, appreciating, thanking the band for a fantastic time, for the best blues concert in Edmonton for quite a while, till it's finally over. Everybody in Dinwoodie made a discovery people across North America have been making for years. Muddy Waters, he can play the blues.

The opening act was a group called Sweetcrab. I had never heard them before, and I found them rather enjoyable. Kind of pleasant and folksy. A really good warm up group for any act. Watch for them, they're going places. After the show, my friend and I talked to

## Faust goes to the opera

If Charles Gounod was somewhat unfaithful with Goethe's *Faust*, then the Edmonton Opera Association was downright promiscuous with Gounod's opera as the EOA opened its 1973-74 season last Thursday evening. It delivered a shoddy, particularly unmusical and untheatrical production which was riddled with elementary errors and which was unable to generate any energy whatsoever. One is almost tempted to say that the most musically satisfying sounds created Thursday evening were the ones that issued from the lips of one sleeping member of the audience. But, of course, that would be going too far.

EOA's *Faust* began with the members of the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra conducted by Jean DeLauriers playing Gounod's rather stodgy overture. If, as the textbooks tell us, the overture is supposed to foreshadow the action to follow in the opera, then the ESO's stiff and somewhat lumbering reading of the music left no doubt as to the nature of the operatic events that the audience could expect. Granted that the music itself, as the composer wrote it, must share some of the blame, but there really was no excuse for the clumsy, tranquilizing sounds that conductor De Laurier evoked from the musicians.

one of the guitarists in the band. According to him, every good bluesman to come out of Chicago has played at some time or other with Muddy. He found the crowd to be "really nice folks, they listen more, and show their appreciation for a well played piece." My friend and I were still very keyed up as we left.

Almost everyone had gone, and SUB looked deserted. The only thing we'd missed was a chance to talk to Muddy. We were walking down the hall, singing his blues, when Muddy Waters came round the corner. With delighted shouts of "Hey man!" we caught up with him, telling him what a fantastic show it was, how much we'd enjoyed it, and asked him to come back. Muddy kind of half smiled as if to say that he'd heard it a thousand times before, but it was really good to hear it again, and left us with a "take care of yourselves." We left with a feeling that a sixty eight year old man had given us the finest blues we'd ever had.

Satya Das

Riddled with timing problems and spiced with bad notes, the orchestra's rendering was unconvincing and somewhat ungrateful.

The opera, then centres around Part One of Goethe's drama *Faust*. Action begins with Faust (played by Edwards Alvares), an aging scholar, bewailing the fact that all of his accomplishments have not brought him happiness. In his despair, he decides to commit suicide. Mephistopheles (Paul Plishka) interrupts Faust and offers him the youth and vigour that he desires if he will only sell his soul to the Devil. Faust is convinced only after Mephistopheles conjures up the image of Marguerite (Doris Yarik). The two of them set out to find the opportunity for Faust to seduce Marguerite. This task is easily accomplished, considering Mephistopheles' powers, but not without bloodshed. For, when Marguerite's brother Valentin (Bernard Turgeon) returns from battle, he hears of his sister's misfortune and sets out to avenge his sister's loss of virtue. He is however, murdered by Faust. Marguerite then kills the illegitimate child she has had by Faust, a crime for which she is incarcerated. Faust attempts to carry her off from prison but she dies before he is able to do so. The seducer is then left to carry on his struggle with the Devil.

As the curtain opened on Faust alone in his study, the eye was immediately bombarded by a cluttered, perfunctorily designed stage. Throughout the evening, the stage design lacked focus and was hampered in its role as a visual complement to the opera by an absurd number of miscues by the technicians and utter disrespect from the performers.

When Edwards Alvares, playing Faust, began to sing in the opening measures of the opera it became obvious that the orchestra was going to have to try extremely hard not to drown out this extraordinarily weak performer. It was not until the last portions of the third Act that Alvares began to rise above the level of near inaudibility for anyone not sitting front row centre. About the most characteristic thing that this man did all night was to place his hand over his chest in the "classic" opera pose and push his hair out of his face with his hand. Paul Plishka's Mephistopheles was played with

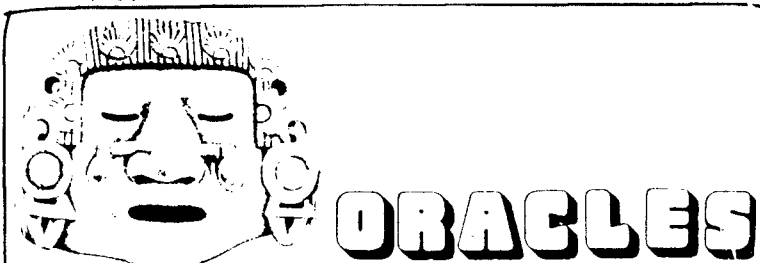
considerably more power, but his voice was disconcertingly inconsistent, especially in the lower portions of his bass register. All of the performers of the evening, with the notable exception of Bernard Turgeon as Valentin, seemed to equate projection with volume so that they could not be heard in the quite, supposedly poignant moments of the opera.

The way in which the performers were irresponsible with imaginative space which they and the set were attempting to create was most unforgivable. One must bear in mind that opera as an art form has traditionally taken liberties with the theatrical content of its production in favor of the musical content. However, when one makes use of the techniques of another art form, it is somewhat ungrateful to disobey the fundamental tenets of that form in the way that the EOA did. The characterizations all of the performers were inconsistent and some performers, notably Alvares, made no attempts to visually embody the notions that the music was expressing. Director Robert Darling must take a good deal of responsibility for the stiff movements of his performers and the clutter that he created especially in the crowd scenes. Having unessential performers cross the stage with their backs to the audience for no apparent reason during the middle of an aria, having performers wander on and off stage without there being any understandable reason for their entrance or exit, having props that have nothing to do with the next scene remain on stage after a scene change and then drawing attention to them by carrying them off during the course of the scene - this is the kinds of things that do not lend themselves gracefully to a clean, professional production.

Perhaps the most apt metaphor describing the performance was given by the person who attended the concert with me. This person draws comparisons between music and food, and says that when a singer sounds the way he or she ought to sound, then the voice has a velvety texture much akin to cream. Needless to say, the performers of Thursday evening's opera had the vocal texture much akin to powdered skim milk.

Everything considered, it was a performance that deserved to be experienced vicariously.

allan bell



theatre lives

*The Caretaker* by Harold Pinter and directed by Richard Ouzounian. At the Citadel. Now running until November 24.

*Blood Wedding* by Frederico Barcia Lorca and directed by Frank Bueckert. At the Studio Theatre. Phone 432-1495 for reservations. Tickets are free to university students. Opens November 1 and through until November 10.

easy on the ears

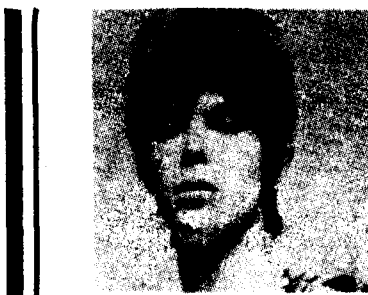
All Beethoven concert with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Lawrence Leonard. Guest artist for the evening will be pianist, Stephan Bishop. November 10, 8:30 p.m. and November 11, at 2:30 p.m. The women's committee of the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra is sponsoring a concert preview on Wednesday, November 7 at 9:30 a.m. in the Unitarian Church Auditorium at 12530-110 Avenue. Miss Anne Burrows will conduct the preview. Coffee will be served.

The University of Alberta String Quartet will be appearing at College St. Jean at 12:30 noon on November 7.

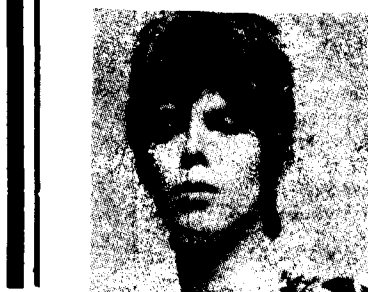
the eyes have it

The Edmonton Art Gallery is running an exhibit entitled *Just Before the War*. This is Urban America from 1935 to 1941 as seen by the photographers of the Farm Security Administration. These works by Ben Shahn, Dorothea Lange, John Vachon, Russell Lee, and more, add a new dimension to the outpouring of federally supported art during the New Deal. While they were primarily meant to document the work of the Farm Security Administration, the photographs are often works of art - unforgettable images showing how people looked at each other during this period of economic disaster and unemployment.

The Students' Union Art Gallery is currently featuring an art exhibit entitled, *French Canadians From Sea to Sea*. An exhibition graphically portraying contributions by French Canadians past and present.



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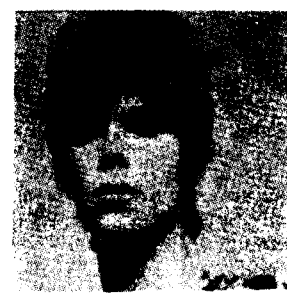
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