

o impressions...

stimulating dynamism—

by Micheleen Marte

Saturday March 19 brought a stimulating mixture of dynamic jazz and the discipline of classical ballet to Theatre. The Montreal-based Les Ballets Jazz met a capacity audience and with happy results. They began with a warm-up routine unconcealed by the long wait, allowing all to engage in an unpretentious preparation for the performance. The choreographer von Genesys was wise to begin with such an opening. It seemed to signify the innovative nature of the show and offered a new form of acquainting dancers and audience.

Carapaces followed the second major dance. It may be referred to as the thematic piece of the evening. A single dance of serious intent and slow development was a necessary change of tone to the company's very vigorous program. The dance concerned the self-imposed encumbrance of man symbolized by the sculptures of Walter Redinger. He covered the dancers' head and drew the arms in motion—therefore demanding much agility and skill to execute movements properly. Five were able to escape their imprisoning shells, but did not succeed in leading others to join in the new freedom. The angle of four males and one female interpreted privileged roles convincingly, and became prominent dancers for the rest of the evening.

This was particularly true of Thomas Pearce, the protagonist in the second half dance of *Sept*. This led to the energetic music of Dan Ellis. It seems the audience received this with some relief after the passage which was *Carapaces*. The elements and oppressive mood involved in this piece becomes a deterrent to many who are not fully aware of the nature of modern ballet. This is an unfortunate situation, for those who scoffed at the hardness with which many of the "human masks" travelled across the stage. The choreography of this dance was laudable, it was well choreographed and conceived.

The last piece *Jazz Sonata* was perhaps the best of the program, for it was an exhilarating experience for both dancer and observer. The transition of the pious classical dancers into the new form of jazz came in the first of three movements. One could feel the spontaneity of the event and the audience was responsive to the energy alive on stage. It was good to



Dancers of Les Ballets Jazz

hear perpetually silent dancers use their voices and hands in order to heighten the celebration of modern dance, brought about by the appropriate music of Trevor Payne. The concluding piece seemed to end too soon, with all being cut short from healthy stimulation before the process could exhaust itself.

Les Ballets Jazz brought to SUB Theatre a unified and inspiring performance, merging formalism of the art with contemporary sounds. The Montreal company is certainly a talented one and is deserving of the praise it has been receiving.

delightfully different

by Shirley Glew

Les Ballets Jazz presented a delightfully different aspect of dance to audiences at SUB Theatre March 18 and 19. Having never experienced these facets of dance expression before I was elated, entranced, and left mystified as to why we don't see more of this ambrosial mixture of sensual bodily movement with the musical idioms of jazz.

Expressed so much more immediately, idiosyncratically, explicitly than classical ballet and even much contemporary dance, it is catalysed by the music that inspires it.

The first number *Warm Up* was just that, a very loose, relaxed assemblage of the whole company who seemed to be enjoying the performance as much as the audience. The dancers seemed to lose a certain self-consciousness discernible in this piece and gain in concentration with successive numbers.

Homage A Duke, second on the program, was a lively amalgam of diverse passages of Duke Ellington's music and interpretations ranging from a duo to the whole company of 12 dancers. The costuming, which was consistently less effective for the female dancers than the male, was at its weakest in this number and tended to detract from its import.

Carapaces, choreographed by Brian Macdonald, was the most unusual piece of the night with the dancers manipulating small shield-like shells in a series of effectively unique and suggestive sequences. Clustered and twitching in a crustacean-like mass of movement and appendages, they were deployed in an insectlike combination of hesitancy and speed. Faces furtively concealed were in turn joyously revealed or joltingly wrenched free of their armoured masks only to reveal the frenzied obsession and tender entanglements still bound to them. Sequences of male dancers embracing and lifting one another were exciting, partly, no doubt because so seldom seen.

The finale *Jazz Sonata* made effective use of color in costuming and background in a contrast of the balanced processional classical movement and the freer, more fluid jazz idiom, naturally with the latter swiftly gaining predominance.

Les Ballets Jazz exhibited professional competence as well as ebullient expression in a combination of dance and music which was uniquely expressive.

long night's journey

by Don Truckey

Day's Journey Into Night; Theatre 3

The staging of Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey Into Night* is one dominated by the difficulties of tempo inherent in this play—for O'Neill wasn't using a useless adjective when he calls it a *long* journey into night.

It is very long—over three-and-one-half hours of time—and for the most part Theatre 3 and Mark Schoenberg have handled it well. Above all they haven't made the mistake the audience is waiting for as the show grinds into its third hour—they haven't accelerated the action—which would have played the merciless oppression O'Neill successfully constructs. Unfortunately, the grueling tempo is served at the expense of intermissions between all acts—instead there is only one—but it's a question of one a.m. curtain or intermissions, and the theatre has wisely made the right choice.

All this worry about pacing is justified, because the heaviness of the story needs the sense of suffocation only drawn-out scenes can provide. The story is that of an Irish-American family, the Tyrones, festering in August of 1912 in their New England summer home. The mood opens with that tone of strained delicacy that indicates everything is not at all normal. Walter Kaasa competently plays James Tyrone, the drunkard, and above all self-righteous miser. The play is one of circling—a succession of three against three combinations—as the family forms and dissolves in a process of bitterness within itself in a sickly meshing of dependence, greed, malice and the remains of a love since blackened by the host of baser emotions cutting it.

Discrimination abounds—because the Tyrone family is eaten through with rot, and each of them has a list of reasons why the others are to blame. The devilish in the family is Mary Tyrone, James' wife, addicted to morphine and not above any ploy to keep her habit. Played by Jacqueline McLeod, Mary is alternately an affectionate mother and vicious—sometimes in the same breath. Ms. McLeod's performance seems overstated in the first minutes of the play, but one soon learns the character herself has a weirdness throughout, which, though hardly unbelievable, requits McLeod's interpretation of the horror of Mary's condition is elaborated. McLeod is capable both of tenderness and a terrifying skull quality—all snarling teeth and bone-

encased eyes, that suits Mary's transformations perfectly.

The rot has spread to the Tyrone sons, James Jr. (Jamie) and Edmund. Jamie has failed to rise even to the level of his father's none-too-successful acting career, and seems to take his revenge in surpassing the old man in guzzling whiskey. The role is played by Larry Farley, who began with the production as stage manager and stepped into the acting slot when Michael Murdoch, for reasons unexplained, could not continue. Farley only slips noticeably once (though in a play this length, "once" means twenty minutes), during his final drunken outburst—but, for a one-rehearsal performance, he does a magnificent job over-all. And Kaasa, playing the drunk in the same scene, does a stagger and belch routine hard for Farley to equal.

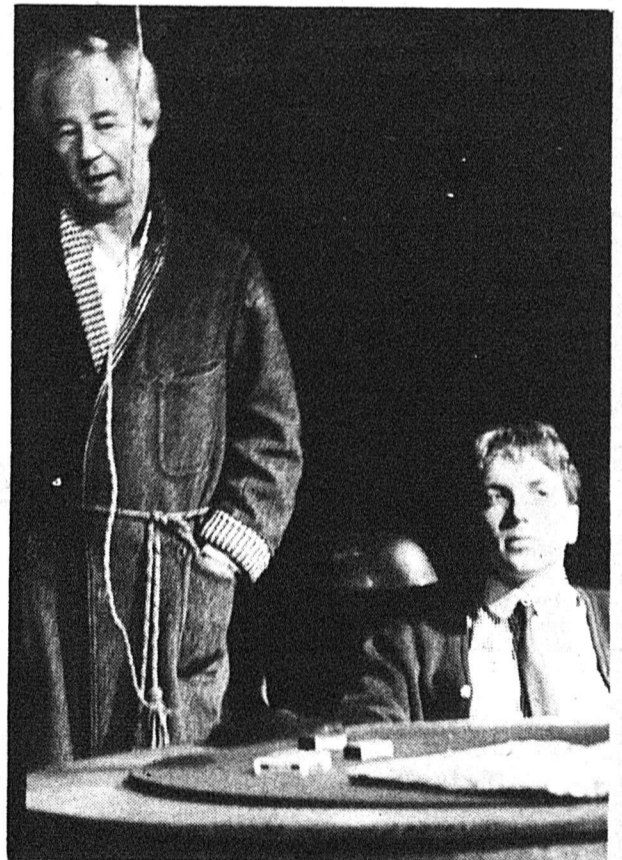
Guilt, due to failure and weakness push each member further into persecution of the others, creating only more guilt after the relief afforded by outburst wanes. The persecution of Mrs. Tyrone is an expected revulsion at the savage mistrust and slyness of the addict, but, in the end, the real focus of the family's bitterness is Edmund, played by David Mann. For he is the only one of them who fails, not from personal greed, sloth or weakness, but mere disease. Jamie actually tells Edmund he hates him for the strength he retains even when sickened with tuberculosis.

The progress of the family rot in Edmund is the question remaining at the end of the play—his inbred tenacity favors his survival; but his penchant for drinking excessively with his brother, and his father's incredible cheapness in settling for a second-rate doctor and a state-run sanatorium, point to a slow degeneration for Edmund along with rest.

Mann's chief attribute in the role—by no means a small one—is the gargling, choking voice he uses, which constantly underlines his sickness. He is often a near-impotent figure, an impression Mann has to guard carefully, especially given his obvious talent to play a more active role. Mann's hands in particular command an assurance, when he waves or makes a sweeping gesture, unsuited to Edmund.

Given the misery and bitchiness inevitable in spending a long day and a long night with this family, and the play's force—and debilitating length—begin to tell. It's the kind of infighting that can only ripen after an entire day of bad company—magnified by the scars carried by the Tyrone family.

Kate Gentles, as the Tyrone's maid Cathleen, is a weak link in the cast, unfortunately overplaying her Irish brogue, or whatever it was, and lolling around the



Mr. Tyrone and Edmund

stage, disrupting the more careful movements of the other players.

Another unwelcome touch intrudes when overly dramatic lighting is thrown on Mary; a play with as much tension as this one doesn't need any manipulative lighting to help it along; in this case, the attempted help is nothing but a hindrance.

Theatre 3 can be congratulated for a modest success in producing one of the greatest of American plays—better to reach up and fall a little short, than to stoop to an empty success. Edmonton audiences, as usual, are to be chastised for laughing at lines wry but not funny, and matching line for line in the seats the deliberate vulgarity of the characters on stage.