

Dracula Weekend Popular Success

by Stephen R. Mills

Transylvanian weekend at Dalhousie University — Gothic capital of Eastern Canada? The spirit was willing but the flesh was weak.

Friday evening's flesh included Dal's own D.P. Varma, whose poetic introduction and inventory of home-grown ghouls, put to shame special guests, Ed and Lorraine Warren.

The Warrens, professional artists and ghost hunters from Connecticut, were a disappointment. They thanked Varma for his kind words, ran a taped interview with a woman who had lived in a haunted house, showed slides of the house and several "psychic photographs," and then entertained questions from the floor. Following this, and a short intermission, the film "The Haunting" was shown. It was a good flick but was unfortunately haunted by technical difficulties throughout.

The Warrens offered very little to those unfamiliar with the supernatural and nothing to those even vaguely knowledgeable about the subject. Ed Warren tossed off phrases like "aura," "ectoplasma," "karma," etc. but offered no general theory or specific beliefs he himself held.

Lorraine Warren, supposedly

a "light trance medium," looked like she was in a trance most of the night, perhaps going through a "recall" of the last dozen or so campus presentations.

The huge audience seemed pleased, if not enthralled, however, and most, if not all, returned Saturday for the all-Dracula lecture and film presentation. Prof. Varma was again MC and set the stage for Prof. R.T. McNally and Prof. Radu Florescu, authors of "In Search of Dracula," and, like Varma, authorities on vampirism and Dracula in fact and fiction.

Both profs gave short talks on their Rumanian adventures, answered questions, and showed a movie based on their book.

The movie featured Christopher Lee as narrator and star and was well-done, interesting and informative. Following an intermission, the Tod Browning-Bela Lugosi "Dracula" (1931) was screened. Very slowly-paced, even for a '31 production, the film was less frightening than one might expect. A generation reared on television and subjected to current standards of cinema violence would perhaps have appreciated the much more graphic Hammer films, featuring Lee.

A reception was held in the

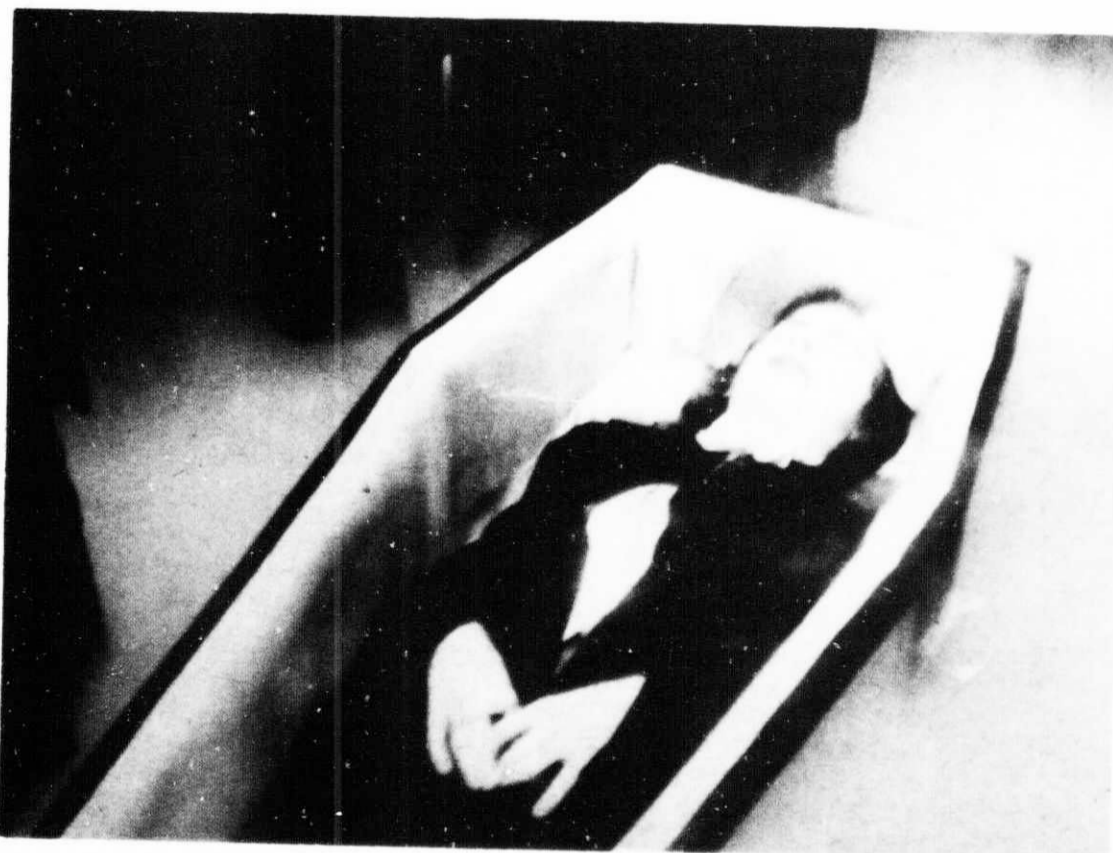
Green Room after the movie at which Dracula (aka Glenn Browne) was staked at midnight.

The featured performers, McNally and Florescu, were again disappointing. They

seemed to be riding on their reputation which, with a general audience, didn't take them far.

Friday was well attended, though, and Saturday was a sell-out, so Transylvanian

weekend will probably rise again next fall. Rumour has it that Vincent Price may be at the next one. Tang commercials aside, he may be more entertaining than this year's experts.



Vampire Glen Brown staked out for reception.

(arf mackay dal photo)

Pier 1 play Not up to Usual High

by Stephen R. Mills

Pier One Theatre presentations are usually satisfying and, at times, refreshingly innovative and original. This is due, I believe, to the company's willingness to experiment with new approaches and new material. Unfortunately, this policy can easily backfire, which seems to be the case with the current one-act plays at the Lower Water Street theatre.

"Maury's Lunch" and "Olga Visits Graham" opened last

week to a full house, which was too bad as they were without doubt the most poorly written and performed works I've seen at Pier One or anywhere else.

"Maury's Lunch" opens nicely with a group of characters sitting at a lunch counter in Downtown Halifax just after World War II. The set, costumes, music and dialogue create an authentic '40's atmosphere. Joy intermingled with inevitable sadness and loss is exemplified by Bryan MacPhee, a pilot who has

returned from Europe and, understandably, doesn't wish to discuss his experiences. His bitterness and bigotry provokes an argument with Maury, the Italian owner of the lunch counter. Maury finally shoots and kills MacPhee. The play, at this point, also dies.

None of the atmosphere and themes of the first sketch are continued, so nothing is realized or resolved. The jumbled sketches of MacPhee's past, Maury's commitment to a

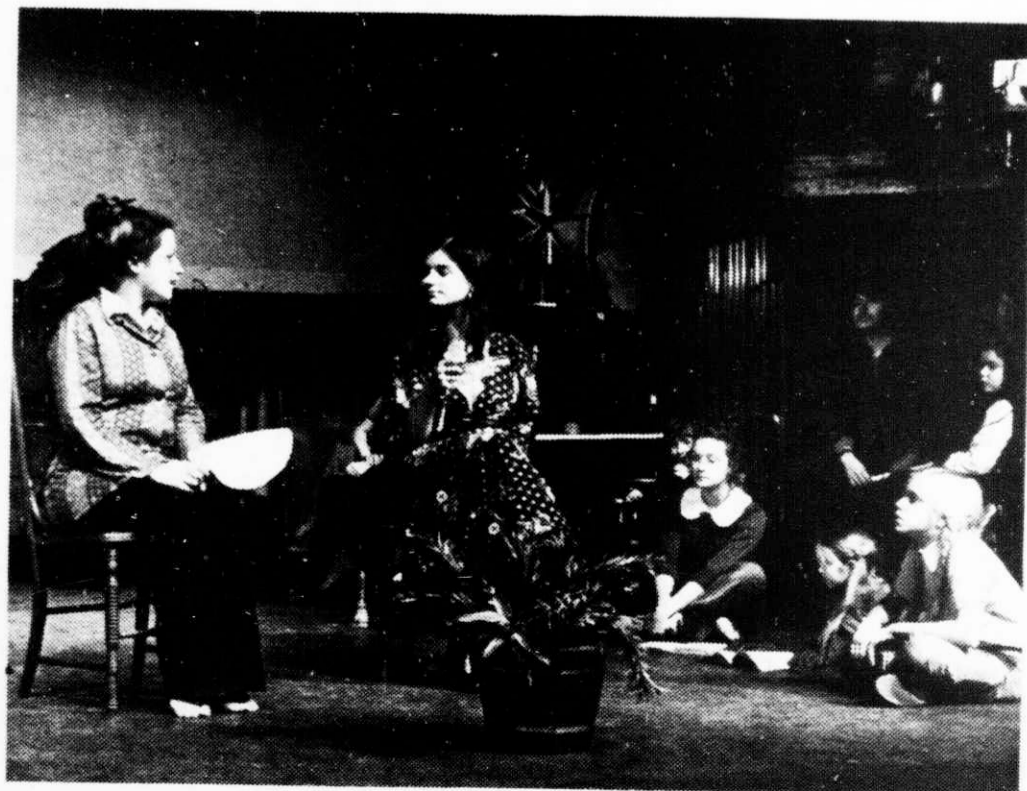
mental institution, and an embarrassing framing device make up the remains of "Maury's Lunch."

Many of the faults of the first play can be found in the second "Olga Visits Graham." Author Avro MacMillan seems to throw in every cliched convention of the avant-garde in an effort to succeed. The characters come out of the audience, the gravedigger is really Christ, nobody (including the audience) is really sure

who's who or what's what. Again, it all adds to nothing. The themes, and some are discernable if the junk is ignored, are not developed. Plot and characters are ignored, and the dialogue is silly.

One can conclude that MacMillan and Pier One strike out this time because they try to do too much with too little.

The theatre's next play — "The Empire Builders, an absurdist fantasy from the '30's — should be better.



Young performers in Neptune's "Listen to the Wind"

(lione simons)

Neptune's New Play Imaginative

by Marci Landry-Milton

"Listen to the Wind," a melodrama directed by Keith Turnbull, marks a departure from the stale themes of bitter laughter prevalent in today's theatre. The rejuvenating areas of the concentration are games and imitation; in short, the imagination.

James Reany, the author of "Listen to the Wind," remarks, "My play is about young people who put on Rider Haggard's "Dawn" because of its strong pattern."

The simplistic yet profound drama enacted by the children in "Listen to the Wind" is complicated by double shifts in characters and setting. The ten main characters placed at

Taylor Farm thus present their own creation, a drama, at Caresfoot Court.

Although the play is long, entailing three acts of forty-five, fifty-five and thirty minutes, its weight is elevated to amusing levels by the younger performers.

A large cast of children, through mime and gesture, become "The Wind", "a powerful yet gentle train," as well as other sets and props throughout the performance.

"Listen to the Wind" requires imagination on the part of the audience and, for those who wish to indulge it will be presented at Neptune until February 3.