

Raw passion explodes on Cloud Nine

by Janice Fiander

Dalhousie Theatre Productions begins its 1989/90 season this month with Caryl Churchill's play, *Cloud Nine*.

Written in 1981, *Cloud Nine* was first produced that year in Greenwich Village, New York. The play deals with the issues of homosexuality, bisexuality and adultery. It was well received by New York critics, surprisingly so, considering Churchill's use of explicit language. Walter Kerr

wrote in the *New York Times*, "I do recommend the evening, overall to you. It's succinctly sassy, elegantly insulting, written with a quill pen that seems to have been deftly dipped in ice water."

Indeed, *Cloud Nine* has many beautiful moments. Although Churchill does use startling language, she doesn't exploit it. Her choice of words is completely natural, given the circumstances of the play.

The first act of this two act play is set in Africa in the year 1880. It

parodies the values and social expectations of the Victorian Era. In this act, some of the actors are required to play roles of the opposite sex or of a different race. Reversals of this nature are very challenging. Any role an actor plays requires careful, analytic preparation, both internally and externally. When playing the role of a character not of one's own sex, the actor has even less personal experience to draw upon. Voice, gait and mannerisms may need to be modified. This is difficult to do without creating a caricature. The action must be as natural as possible. This is part of the challenge confronting the players.

Act II takes place in London. The year is 1980, but the characters of Act I are only twenty-five years older. A century has passed and we would assume the repressed characters of Act I would have been liberated with the close of the Victorian Age.

However, Churchill forces us to ask ourselves, have we really been liberated? And if so, how far? Can we accept who we are? Churchill explores contemporary issues such as what we accept to be normative behaviour, self-acceptance and denial, the expectations of society forced on the individual and the treatment of the "abnormal." *Cloud Nine* addresses both sexes and provokes us to consider the criteria we use to judge people. Churchill also investigates relationships. She focuses on relationships some may consider normal and those some may consider abnormal. Is there such a thing as a "normal" relationship?

If there is, what is it? Are our responses to these questions based on stereotypes rooted deeply in our cultures? All of these relevant questions are raised by this play, which is one reason why it was chosen for a student performance.

All of the actors are students of the Dalhousie Acting Program. The Director is Patrick Christopher, the head of the Dalhousie Acting Program. The stage manager is Dan Crowley, a third-year technical student at Dalhousie. The scenographer of *Cloud Nine* is Peter Perina who designed over one hundred productions throughout Canada and the United States. Lighting for this production is under the direction of Bruce MacLennan, who has been working as light and sound technician at Dalhousie for the past six years. MacLennan has also worked with Neptune Theatre and other local companies.

Cloud Nine begins on October 18, in Studio One of the Dalhousie Arts Centre at 8 pm and runs until October 22. Tickets are available at the Arts Center Box Office. Series subscriptions are also available until October 18. Student prices for a subscription are \$23 and \$26.

Avoiding top forty trash

Monotonous Spawning

by Cigana Raven

If you caught the Grunions at the Grawood last Wednesday, you might have heard them read aloud an anonymous letter prior to the second set which read: "To the Grunions, why are you no longer Spawning, and please learn some original material instead of butchering songs I used to be fond of." The first question was answered, "We had problems getting hired with the word spawning in our name so we dropped it," the second question "We like playing original material, and why doesn't the young lady who wrote this get up here

and play us a set. Now we're going to butcher this song for you."

Okay, I am now taking full credit for that letter and have to ask if it didn't occur to the band that maybe the reason they weren't getting hired is because it doesn't take much talent to play cover material, and if you must play cover material I would suggest putting some more feeling into it, and possibly some music lessons.

If you didn't catch the show, pull out some "Greatest Hits of the 80s" LP, scratch it a little and you'll get the basic idea.

Black Pool

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and pretty. "World of Confusion" sounds a little like REM. What is that chorus? "Ray-dee-oo ah fah so la tito" is what it sounds like. A century honing dead Yugoslavian heroes? Seriously, I like this one as much as the last. It has a lilting melody backed with C&W guitar riffs. A neat mixture, Irish with a bit of down-home. I haven't heard anything I liked so well since.... This song is reminiscent of The Band. (Is it bad to make all of these comparisons? When Black Pool is having their tenth anniversary, will someone say "Hey, you guys still sound a little like The Band"? Don't be tricked by comparisons. This music is different from all the bands I have mentioned, but these reference points are handy.) Haunting song this, pretty and rocky. Could use a bit more vocal harmony. Oops, there it is. More harmony then. I can hardly hear the back-up vocalist. Maybe they left it bare for people like me to sing along. Another tune in 4/4 time. All these songs have been in 4/4 so far, but the way they are constructed fools your ear. "World of Confusion" is a series of rhyming triplets. This is interesting; it creates a waltz sway within the often stilted 4/4. I heard this song before and I have been singing it for a week. "World of Confusion" is my favourite song today. 10/10!

I've been limited to two pages of raving and I'm getting close to

that limit. One complaint I have is that the bass and drums are notably simple. This is guitar music, and the lack of flair and splash from the rhythm section is annoying. I don't think it's just because the musicians are incapable. I would like to hear the bass take a lead now and then, the drums featured, a little less guitar every so often. The music is full and melodious, but a little "less is more" thinking and sharing of the spotlight would make me happier.

"The Well" is a song about Christianity, slow and full of the vocal harmonies mentioned earlier. It says we've strayed too far from the original concepts of Christianity, as far as I can tell. Proof Black Pool is not a bunch of drunks; here's a spiritual.

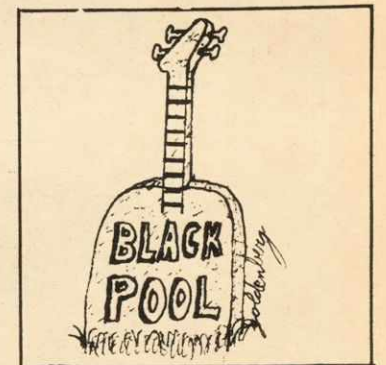
I'll stop analyzing every song. This is a cool album. Is Black Pool new or are they old? Are they simply following patterns of a genre of rock music or are they breaking unique new territory?

With a basic set-up, Black Pool does some different things. The tin whistles and mandolins add a haunting quality. The words to

the songs are clear, and that's pretty unique; the messages are thoughtful, even if they won't stir anyone to revolution. Maybe that will come with the second album.

Cemeteries is a good mix of some straightforward energetic R'n'R and chiming, haunting songs that mix some strange instruments together with agreeable effects.

Black Pool is releasing *Cemeteries* tonight at the Flamingo. From the sound of it, it will be an excellent evening of music. No, it will be more than that. It will be an Event, an important milestone for music in Halifax.



POETRY

The Enchantress

Such a beautiful woman,
But the ways of a child do possess her,
No matter how hard you try to reach her
You'll end up with tears in your eyes.

It is no surprise
How you enthrall your man,
It is no surprise
To see, later, enchantment vanished
Leaving a scar of memories and desires behind.

No one can reach you,
And anyone who has suffered
Under your unfeeling games
Dares not try,
For fear of again being spellbound
And then abandoned,
When your mind becomes one
With your cold, cold heart.

Herb Therieault

Shadows

I want to talk with you
Maybe for a little while
Just to let me know where I stand,
things never seem to work
As we plan them.
Is it just us...
I'm tired of waiting,
I'm tired of wishing.
Someone once said,
"If every wish were a drop of
water,
The entire world would be an
ocean."
I must have flooded the world
Ten times over.
This time I won't try to fool
myself.
I'm tired of games,
People games.
I want something real,
Something as solid as the ground
beneath my feet,
The ground that seems to slip
away
Everytime I manage to stand up
Straight and tall — straight and
tall.
There are others,
But they are only considerations,
Notions.
You are more than just a thought,
But not quite a reality — yet.
Someday I'll take that one extra
step
But can I be sure it'll be you there,
Or simply shadows,
Laughing shadows.
For at the darkest times, when I
reach out for you,
My hands touch only
nothingness,
Empty shadows.

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Your Yearbook

If you're a student at Dalhousie University then *Pharos* is your yearbook. If you would like to get involved in *Pharos '90*, come to the meeting at our office (fourth floor, SUB) every Thursday, at 6:00 pm or phone 424-3542. All welcome!