



Nicola Lipman, Florence Paterson, and Lee J. Campbell in *Another Season's Promise*

## Another Season's Promise unfulfilling for audience

**Another Season's Promise**  
Shector Stage, Citadel  
Run ends November 22

review by Terry Gale

It is always disappointing when a play that holds so much promise does not live up to our expectations. *Another Season's Promise* is such a play. The play by Anne Chislett and Keith Roulston focuses on the Purves family, a farming family trying to make ends meet in the face of rising interest rates and falling corn prices. Through this play, Chislett and Roulston raise many important issues which are pertinent to many Canadian farmers. However these issues are lost to the audience in this bland and unexciting presentation.

*Another Season's Promise's* plot is very simple. Ken Purves, the head of a family operation, ends up in debt when he tries to expand his business too quickly, and therefore has to sell out to a foreign company. This incident causes problems for himself and his family as they all learn to cope with this situation. Ken's long suffering wife, Helen, has to go back to work in order to help with the family's shaky financial situation which had been kept from her by her husband. She naturally turns to tranquilizers in order to cope with her problems. Then there is Granny Purves from whom Ken also tries to hide the state of the family farm, and who is naturally upset when she discovers that her family heritage is being destroyed. Finally there is the prodigal son, Robert, who gives up his successful career in the perfume business and returns with his own son Sandy to live on the Purves farm.

The major problem with this play is that it never goes beyond this basic outline. What should have been a gripping and compelling drama is reduced to just a basic plot with not much behind it. Chislett and Roulston have failed to create a play full of dramatic tension and suspense; instead, they have provided their audience with a predictable and "too good to be true" story with characters to match. The audience is therefore left feeling empty because the play does not serve to stimulate, affect, nor excite its imagination and perspectives.

There are times during the play in which the dialogue and situations are very realistic. The scene where Granny Purves forgets to turn on the oven and has a fight with her daughter-in-law over how things should be run around the farm has an aura of truth about it which provides the audience with a naturally comic moment. These moments, however, are few and far between, and their effectiveness is hampered due to the melodramatic and contrived moments found in the rest of the play. When Ken tells his son Robert that he has sold the farm, all Robert can say is "What?", "No!" and then he turns

to his old girlfriend, and says, "Jane." How can an audience be compelled with lines like this?

Another problem with the play which serves to prevent the audience from being drawn into the story is that there is too much left unsaid by the play's characters. When Robert therefore wants to leave his lucrative position in the perfume business to invest his money in the failing family farm, the audience is not left with a plausible explanation for this behaviour because whatever led up to this decision has occurred off stage. The situation just seems too good to be true.

When there is a chance for some of what has happened off stage to be revealed by the characters, it is suppressed by the playwrights. When Robert asks Jane about her husband's death, all that she says is: "It's too painful for me to talk about." And when Jane asks Robert about his wife, he too would rather not talk about it. This does not make for exciting drama, and does not leave the characters with much motivation.

The actors in this play therefore are not given much to work with by the playwrights and this shows in their individual performances. They, like the play, seem to be flat and uninteresting. The grandson Sandy, played by Jerrod Button, is basically cute and helpful and that is all the audience gets from the young actor's performance. The son Robert, played by John O'Kraney, is basically boyish and charming.

Jane, played by Laurel Paetz, is very bland and uninteresting for a woman who has managed to succeed in the business world after her husband's death, and who is trying to control her current desires for her ex-boyfriend. Even the character of Pete, played by Peter Smith, which like the character of Jane has potential to be very dynamic and exciting, lacks the fiery spirit of someone leading a group of survivalists against the takeover of family farms by larger corporations.

The only actors that manage to transcend this material are Florence Paterson as Granny Purves and Nicola Lipman as Helen Purves who provide the audience with sensitive and compelling performances as women who find their worlds collapsing around them. Unfortunately Lee J. Campbell, is not able to do so with the character of Ken.

*Another Season's Promise* is not a bad play. It is just not a dynamic nor exciting theatrical experience. The issues raised are very relevant and pertinent to today's farming families, and it is a shame when a talented playwright like Anne Chislett and a director like Linda Moore do not manage to breathe life into a piece of work that holds so much promise. This promise, like the promise made to the farmers in the play, is not fulfilled and we are left feeling cheated by the whole experience.

## BFA Drama double bill

**A Memory of Two Mondays Suddenly Last Summer**  
Studio Theatre  
Run ends November 14

review by Rosa Jackson

The third year BFA Drama students opened the season at Studio Theatre with an ambitious production consisting of two classic one act plays: *A Memory of Two Mondays* by Arthur Miller, and *Suddenly Last Summer* by Tennessee Williams.

Unfortunately, this marathon performance, which lasts three and a half hours, tends to lag. The plays are demanding for both the actors and the audience, and the obstacles which the actors fail to overcome make it difficult for the audience to maintain its interest.

The plays are interesting in themselves and thematically similar, but together they provide a huge amount to absorb in one night.

The first play, *A Memory of Two Mondays*, is set in an auto-parts warehouse in New York City in 1933. Miller creates a mirror of our world in his examination of the aspirations, or lack thereof, of the characters in this play.

*Suddenly Last Summer* takes place in 1936 at a mansion in New Orleans. It tells of the dilemma which a physician must face in deciding whether to perform a frontal lobotomy on a sane but mentally tortured patient.

In each play, the character who should be central to the play is a disappointing performance. As a result, the minor characters become the central focus, especially in the first play.

In *A Memory of Two Mondays*, Bert (Stephen Sparks) seems to be more of a

narrator than a character. We do not see to a great extent the effect which the other characters have on him, so we become more interested in the minor characters themselves. Andrew Dolha and Shaun Johnston steal the show as Tommy, the recovering alcoholic and the European immigrant Gus.

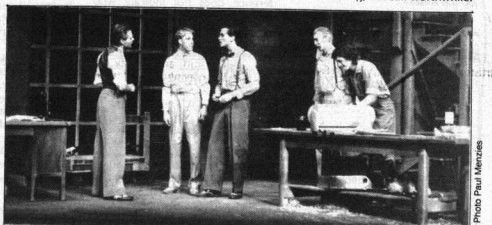
Although accents are essential to certain characters in this play, such as Gus and the Irishman Kenneth (Kevin Hare), in some instances the American accents used make it difficult to catch all of what is being said.

In *Suddenly Last Summer*, Elizabeth Brown gives a strong and sometimes moving performance as Catherine Holly, a woman on the brink of insanity. Lindsay Burns is convincing as Mrs. Venable, the old woman who wants Dr. Cukrowicz to operate on Catherine. However, James Anderson does not manage to make Dr. Cukrowicz believable, and the long opening scene between him and Mrs. Venable drags. We see no signs of the conflict which the doctor must be undergoing in having to decide whether or not to perform the operation on Catherine.

Occasionally, the minor characters' performances in *Suddenly Last Summer* are excessively melodramatic. George Holly and Mrs. Holly (Glenn Wallis and Rebecca Starr) are almost caricatures, and detract from Catherine's reality. However, Mrs. Venable's nurse, Miss Foxhill (Karen Cogan), and Sister Felicity (Margaret Gobie) both provide some entertaining moments in their attempts to deal with their respective charges.

The sets, designed by Douglas Parashuk, are effective and adaptable. In the first play, the lighting is unobtrusive; but in the second, the blackout seem to serve no purpose.

In choosing these plays, the director, James DeFelicie was making his job difficult for himself. The combination of the two plays is rather overwhelming, but still worthwhile.



Studio Theatre presents *A Memory of Two Mondays*

## Affair made fun in *Same Time*

**Same Time Next Year**  
Walterdale Theatre  
Run ends November 14

review by Carole Amerongen

Doris and George never really connect. They come close, but they never bridge the gap. This adulterous pair always seem to change their points of view during the interval between their meetings. In the Walterdale's production of *Same Time Next Year*, the two characters secretly meet at — surprise — the same time each year for a weekend of passion and companionship (but not necessarily in that order). It is a kind of extra-marital reunion which carries on for twenty-five years.

Bernard Slade's two act comedy is about the changes in George and Doris as they travel through the conservative fifties, the radical sixties, and the liberated seventies. When they first meet, George is a conservative chartered accountant who is short on self-confidence (although his wife's supportiveness is remedying this) and long on guilt (he is certain that his wife's intuition has alerted her to his infidelity). Doris, a young housewife, is short on guilt (she was supposed to be on a Catholic retreat) and long on adventure (she has to get away from T.V., bowling, and a husband who sells waterless cooking).

The couple march to the beat of different drummers every time they meet. She shows up impatient and anxious for sexual fulfillment, she arrives as pregnant as a Brkeley in full sail." When she becomes a "fringe hippie, he has become a right-wing money-

maker. So the story goes, but George and Doris never let their differences end their relationship.

Judy Unwin, a veteran Walterdale performer, plays Doris convincingly even though she does not have the appearance of a twenty-five year old woman during the first scene. In later years, as her character advances, she looks more appropriate in the role. Unwin has the good feel for comedy that is essential for this play. When George says that she looks more radiant in the morning than most women, she replies, "I guess God thought chubby thighs were enough."

Duane Mills, as George, is smooth with the one-liners as well; he describes his impotence for his wife as "not something you have to nip in the bud." Mill's character takes time to grow on the audience. Initially, when his character persistently whines over his guilt, he is hard to digest; but as his character ages, Mills becomes interesting to watch. Although it must be difficult to perform a play with two character cast, with the help of director Mark Milne, the actors make it look easy.

Petra Hammond does a great job on sound even though it is the first time she has worked in this area of production. A series of songs not only smooth over scene changes, but also add to the meaning of the play. "Twist and Shout" for instance, follows the scene where Doris is pregnant. Also worthy of mention is the carefully constructed set. No part of it strikes you as being out of place.

Even if you have seen *Same Time Next Year* before, you cannot help but enjoy the comedy which arises from the changes in this couple.