

Brel's music makes it worthwhile

by Richard Whitby

Before you go to the "Jacques Brel is Alive and Well and Living in Paris", you should be warned that this is not a typical play. In fact, it is more like a concert of Brel's music than anything else. As a consequence of this, there is a certain sense of disorientation at the beginning. You find yourself asking what is going on. However, once the show starts to gather momentum it becomes a thoroughly enjoyable experience.

The show originally opened in the basement night club, The Village Gate, in New York City, where it languished until "Discovered" by a reviewer from the Times. From there it has enjoyed success across the world and has made Brel a very rich man.

Brel's songs explore the many facets of life such as growing old, lost love, death, birth of new spirit, and the lyrics are very moving. You cry, laugh, sulk and generously applaud as each one concludes. They are what



From left to right — BRIAN McKAY, SHARRON TIMMINS, P.M. HOWARD, NICOLA LIPMAN, RORY DODD and MARY McMURRAY.

makes the show and it seems that even poor acting could not take much away from the emotion in it.

The acting is not poor in this version, however. Once again the Neptune players, under the direction of John Wood and Alan Laing, have taken a proven successful piece of theater and added

their own force to it. That is not to say that the performance is overwhelming, it is not, but in presenting it in a different manner that it has been in the past, they add a certain amount of new life to it. I saw no particular characters that stand out in mind with the possible exception of Rita

Howell, but nevertheless they are all somewhat better than competent. Howell appears briefly as the first part (not act in this case I think) draws to a close. Her portrayal of an old woman is more than a peculiar person in a show. It is the anthropomorphic description of old age and I

think that it is Ms. Howell who elevates it to this position.

I truthfully cannot find much wrong with this piece of experimental theatre except perhaps that the first part drags a little towards the middle and that on opening night the actors did not have their timing down in some places. The music is excellent and the musicians, Alan Laing, John Bird, John Roby and Joel Zemel deserve mention for their fine interpretation of it. The set design in both functional and pleasing and the costumes are not designed which means you spend more time listening and looking at the actors than at what they are wearing.

If you've never seen "Jaques Brel...", it is worth the price of admission. If you have seen it somewhere else, it may be worth seeing again for both the greater appreciation you usually have of something like this the second time around, and to see the changes that Neptune has incorporated into it.

Anna Wyman talented

by Margarita Hord

A series of bright red arrows shot from a bow flashed through the air; fat striped tops spun across the stage; a reaper clawed its invisible harvest.

Yet these were human beings, becoming all and anything to suit the fancy of choreographer Anna Wyman.

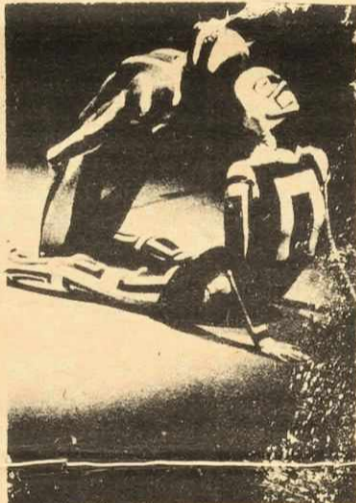
On March 20 and 21, the Anna Wyman Dance Theatre performed at the Rebecca Cohn Auditorium, proving themselves to be a truly talented company, worthy of their being sponsored by the Touring Office of the Canada Council.

The program opened with "Here at the Eye of the Hurricane", drawing the audience into another world with its eery background of nasal chanting. The unusual chorus line of dancers were of graduated heights but became depersonalized in their identical costumes and strange wigs with tight upright topknots. They dressed as monks or as balloons, created visual snapshots of still motion, then became experiments in movement.

Each part of the body was in perfect control. Not only did legs and arms form lines, but motions were isolated by grimacing faces, dancing fingers or sinuously waving bottoms.

The nine dancers worked as an integral whole, not as individuals competing for the limelight. Anna Wyman not only uses line-ups effectively, but is especially impressive in working her dancers into clusters.

In sharp juxtapositions the group poses, leaves an impact on the eye of the observer, then interacts to continue its visual tale. As



single units, too, the dancers can freeze in mid-air to flash a picture, which because of contrast makes the preceding movement more dynamic.

In "Peacemaker", part of the choreography included a duet or solo by a spooky "Spider Man" creature which consisted of two bodies in a long elastic tube or web. The uniting thread made the "being" somehow less than human, like a strand of putty that stretched with a life of its own. The contortions were backed at times by "water" sounds, thus intensifying the image of total fluidity.

The strength, the training, and the ability of the Anna Wyman dancers were unquestionable and reflected the efforts of a competent teacher. Yet for some reason the adjectives used by the advertising media to describe the company did not seem appropriate. Other groups have seemed more "dynamic and exciting". True, the movement was tight and precise, never sloppy. But all too often the feeling conveyed was one of coldness, as the dancers became automatons, or androids in stark

white. They seemed to be space-age worshippers of some strange cult. The music was at times so piercingly electronic that the audience collectively shivered.

Not that coldness doesn't convey a message. Modern man in mechanized society can easily identify the isolation and starkness of his life, but he wants to believe that there is something more.

The one piece that provided that human escape or outlet was "Dance is..." Here there was comic relief as the dancers played, cavorted, rode a variety of unusual bicycles silently across the stage, and energetically warmed up for every sport

from discus-throwing to football. Everyday human movements were seen as a part of the ongoing dance of life. The "Dance Theatre" concept came alive as mime and dance frolicked hand-in-hand. The audience loosened up and allowed itself to laugh a bit, because the dancers no longer seemed to take themselves too seriously.

If it hadn't been for "Dance is", the night would have been incomplete. That particular experiment in joyous creativity with an element of fun redeemed the program as a whole. Without it I would have wondered if Anna Wyman was really as "exciting" as claimed.



CINEMA SHOWCASE

"EARTHQUAKE"
2, 4:30, 6:40 & 9 P.M.
ALL SEATS \$3.00
429-3432 or 429-3433
SCOTIA SQUARE CINEMA
BARRINGTON & DUKE ST.

"MURDER ON THE ORIENT EXPRESS"
2, 4:15, 7 & 9:15
ADULT ENTERTAINMENT
423-6054
PARAMOUNT cinema 1
1577 BARRINGTON ST.

"LENNY"
1, 3, 5, 7 & 9 P.M.
RESTRICTED TO 18 YRS.
423-6054
PARAMOUNT cinema 2
1577 BARRINGTON ST.

"5 FINGERS OF DEATH"
PLUS
"ENTER THE DRAGON"
429-3274
cove cinema
2112 GOTTINGEN ST.

"JIMI HENDRIX"
PLUS
"MEAN STREETS"
DAILY: — 7:00 P.M. ONLY
RESTRICTED TO 18 YRS. & OVER
penhorn mall cinema 1
463-2597

"JEREMIAH JOHNSON"
7:15 & 9:15 P.M.
ADULT ENTERTAINMENT
penhorn mall cinema 2
463-2597

"ALVIN PURPLE"
7:30 & 9:30 P.M.
RESTRICTED TO 18 YRS. & OVER
penhorn mall cinema 3
463-2597