

To gnaw at the spirit of a nation

The Suicide Studio Theatre

review by Anna Borowiecki

The Suicide, a Russian farce, premiered at Studio theatre to a nearly full house on Thursday night. It's a play expounding themes of human suffering and endurance.

Nikolai Erdman, the playwright, wrote the script in 1928. *The Suicide* was rehearsed for 18 months before it was eventually suppressed by Stalin's government. And in 1932 the controversial Erdman was packed off to Siberia.

It was precisely in this period of history that Stalin moved to industrialize Soviet Russia. he pushed 25 million people off their land and formed 100,000 collective farms. Scarcity of jobs and consumer goods in urban centres combined with the insecurity of watching all institutions come under government control, gnawed at the spirit of the nation.

The play is set in urban Russia in a crowded tenement that depicts the drabness of the everyday life of the lower classes. But even in the face of adversity Erdman gives his characters laughter to combat the tears.

On the surface, this play is a humorous farce about a man who has been unem-



The Suicide — laughter to combat tears

ployed for over a year, and through a series of misunderstandings he's encouraged by his friends and neighbors to commit suicide.

But in the sub-text, Erdman takes us to the heart of Russia — the fight for personal freedom against a weighty and terrifying political system. It is also a desperate and passionate

plea for the little man on the street who is often forgotten and trampled upon by bureaucracy.

All the characters desire a better, healthier life but don't know how to achieve it. And fewer still have the initiative to achieve their goals unless it means taking advantage of others.

Semyon (Weston McMillan) is a huggable, buffoonish Russian who has the ill fortune to be unemployed. He lives on his wife's meager earnings and it hurts his pride to depend on her. He soothes his bruised ego by either acting as a child throwing tantrums or soaring off into flights of fantasy visualizing himself as a heroic figure.

When he first voices lines such as "I'm not ready to die yet. I haven't got the time," he is perceived as a simpleton and the audience laughs. But in the midst of the jokes grains of truth slowly emerge. "My life is shattered and no one sheds a tear," he cries at one point.

Kalabushkin (Myron Dearden) is a neighbor intent on profiting on the rumour of Semyon's impending suicide. He sponsors a secret lottery and the winner will use Semyon's suicide on behalf of his cause.

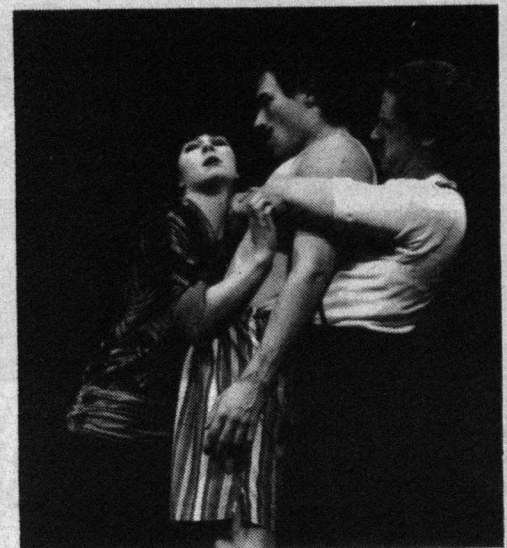
Golashchapov (Kent Gallie) is a member of the intelligensia who desired to become a great writer. However, he fears the labour camps and lacks the courage to speak for himself. He requires a spokesman — Semyon. One of Golashchapov's most memorable lines is "nowadays only the dead may say what the living think."

The church also buys a ticket to the lottery. Father Elpidi (Arne MacPherson) is more than willing to let Semyon commit the sin of killing himself so a martyr can be resurrected to attract young people to the Church.

Russian theatre has always demanded ensemble acting and the Studio actors work very hard to create this. They are constantly reaching out to audience. At times it is obvious that they are Canadian actors wearing Russian skins, but their energy level is high and knowing that they're doing their best is all that anyone can ask.

But a special accolade goes to director Michael Murdock for bringing to Studio a different genre of Russian theatre — a theatre that is commonly not played on the Edmonton stages.

The Suicide will be seen on selected nights up until March 30. Tickets are available in Rm. 3-146 of the Fine Arts Centre.



Photos Dan Watson



The Album Playlist is based on Airplay — a combination of programmer preference and listeners' requests. Tune in every Sunday at 12:00 for the Alternative Countdown — the favorite albums, EP's singles and tapes.

TOP 10 ALBUMS

1. **Del-Lords** — Frontiers Days (EMI)
2. **David Hykes & The Harmonic Choir** — Current Circulation (Celestial Harmonies US)
3. **Psyche** — Insomnia Theatre (Malignant (Canada))
4. **Jason & the Scorchers** — Lost and Found (EMI)
5. **Michael Doucet with Beausoleil** — Parlez-nous a Boire (Arhoolie (US))
6. **Hugh Marsh** — The Bear Walks (Duke Street/WEA)
7. **The Smiths** — Meat is murder (Sire/WEA)
8. **Darkroom** — A Test of Time (WEA)
9. **The Pool** — 333 (Enigma (US))
10. **Various Artists** — Rhythm of Resistance (Shanachie/Boot)

Singles, EP's & Tapes

1. **This Fear** — Soldier of This Fashion (Tape)
2. **The Dusty Chaps** — Yukon Buddy (Tape)
3. **Moral Support** — Strange Day for Dancing (TGO/RCA)
4. **Third World** — Sense of Purpose (Columbia/CBS)
5. **James King & The Lonewolves** — The Angels Know (Swamplands (UK))
6. **Jerry Jerry & The Sons of Rhythm Orchestra** — Gospel Walker (Tape)
7. **Simple Minds** — Don't You (Forget Me) (Virgin/Polygram)
8. **Junior Gons Wild** — Down & Out (Tape)
9. **Mary Jane Girls** — In My House (Motown/Quality)
10. **Various Artists** — Starvation (Jazz (UK))

WAVE INVOLVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Spring & Summer Session Students' Board

Requires: 4 student members registered in either Spring or Summer Session.

Duties of the Board:

- Coordinating extracurricular activities for Spring & Summer Sessions.
- Selection of an editor for a summer news publication
- ensure student representation on the Special Sessions Committee of the General Faculties Council
- Meetings at the call of the chair

Long-Range Planning Committee

Requires: — 3 students-at-large

- Duties:**
- prepare recommendations on more efficient use of space in the Students' Union Building.
 - prepare recommendations on long-range development of Students' Union Services.
 - other duties as assigned by the Building Services' Board

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