

Funny, overdone, underdone . . .

Neptune's "Loot" — a Hydian mirror

by R.W. and M.W.

"Crime does not pay" is an old adage, but how do you apply this to a society of criminals? Held together by their varying bonds and relationships, they form their own code of justice.

Neptune's production of "Loot" shows what can happen when such a world is invaded, particularly if the invader happens to be a police inspector.

Since our society demands that police possess a search warrant, the inspector poses as a water inspector, thus gaining access to their home. The resulting invasion of privacy becomes terrifying at times. Although criminals are often protected from the police, they are defenceless against the government-employed water inspector.

With an unburied corpse and a stash of bank loot concealed in the room, the problem of removing the inspector becomes even more ticklish. The solution is to either eliminate this invader or to invite him to join the society of crime.

There are two non-members of the society, the inspector and the honourable old father. The inspector accepts a bribe and joins. The father, however, is temporarily muted by family honour and blood ties with his son, the bank robber. Finally, he can stand the affront to his scruples no longer, and leaves to go to confession.

The father then becomes a threat to the society. They assert their powers and frame him. He, the innocent, becomes the scapegoat and victim. The

father is punished the same way in which a criminal is punished in a non-criminal society — with loss of liberty.

Joe Orton's "Loot" looks at society, religion, death, bureaucracy and justice, and provides a solution to these problems both humorous and bitterly tragic. Crime does not pay unless society becomes totally criminal, at which point honesty becomes a crime.

Neptune's production at times failed to convey the necessary reality that this play should be viewed in. It is through this reality that the ironies and absurdities of the characters' actions become strongest.

David Renton's burlesque interpretation of the inspector weakened his impact. His exaggerated gestures, over-long pauses and unnecessary volume, while obtaining laughs, left one wondering why the other characters took so long to see through him or to take counteraction.

Patricia Ludwick as the nurse was overly flippant and a little too slick as first. She assumed a more natural attitude, however, along with her change of costume.

Dean Harris' performance was commendable as the bank-robbing son, burdened with an inescapable flaw — the compulsion to tell the truth (a remnant of his Catholic upbringing).

The father, Bob Cartland, and the second bank robber, John Carew, were adequate, though a trifle cool. It is hoped that they will warm up for subsequent performances.

The corpse's performance

was truly amazing. She managed to change weight throughout the play, sometimes being flung around with one hand, at other times barely being able to be carried by two men.

The set was excellent, contrasting an aura of faded grandeur with slightly garish modernizing. The rather unreal quality of the scene through the window strengthened the separateness between the room and whatever existed outside. Each time an outsider entered, there was a sense of privacy being invaded.

Comedy often comes with a tragic bite to it, and the most heartbreaking incidences can sometimes be viewed with laughter. Joe Orton's "Loot" is a very funny play.



(Lionel Simmons Photo)

Mr. Truscott (David Renton) and Nurse Fay (Patricia Ludwick) in a scene from Joe Orton's "Loot."

"Foursome" is tiresome

by Mary Vingoe

IF THIS HAD BEEN A MOVIE, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN X-RATED.

No doubt this may be true but "The Foursome", which played at Second Stage, January 31 to February 11, hadn't even the cheap thrills of a dirty movie to recommend it.

The story of two young male Liverpoolians who bring last night's trash out to the beach, their minds set on screwing, is, in the first act a delightful enough novelty to keep the audience amused. It can hardly help but strike a few painful chords of familiarity.

The cast make an admirable effort to ride it through, but the script seems to give way under them.

What is at first "so true" becomes tediously predictable

and finally boring.

As long as the atmosphere remained light, the play carried as when the girls, feeling rejected after a cold swim (the male passions being somewhat subdued) become as aggressive as their male counterparts had been.

However, when the men begin to revile all the cheap femininity they themselves have encouraged, it touches upon too sad and relevant a note in human nature not to be in some way satisfactorily resolved.

The play might have ended with an ironic twang, the men running from their own folly. Instead, it seems the girls must be "cleansed", their muck washed off in the sea, and the audience dragged through several hokey and sentimental

soliloquies during which one almost expects to hear church music in the background. Very cliché if it were the ending; unfortunately the play continues.

It goes on until the incongruities get so enormous and the audience so restless, that one is as relieved as the characters that the pubs are open and everyone can leave.

There is even an attempt to wind up on the note of male chauvinism (better noticed half hour earlier) which becomes the ultimate frustration of an already disconsolate audience.

If "The Foursome" makes no social or ethical statement, (although it may have tried), it perhaps unwittingly makes a philosophical one: that human nature is ineluctable and contradictory. One does leave the theatre feeling at least a notch lower in self-esteem, only because it is impossible to remain totally detached from the unhappy humanity in the sawdust, a few feet away.

However laborious the script, this identification must compliment the production.

In part, audience identity might also be attributed to the initial frankness of the changing scene. By overstepping a few conventional "niceties" the production took on a reality which was hard to escape.

These were the only points that at least partly forgave the rather flat and trying script.

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