

ENTERTAINMENT

Earnest portrayals enliven show

**The importance of Being Earnest
Kaasa Theatre**

review by Brenda Waddle

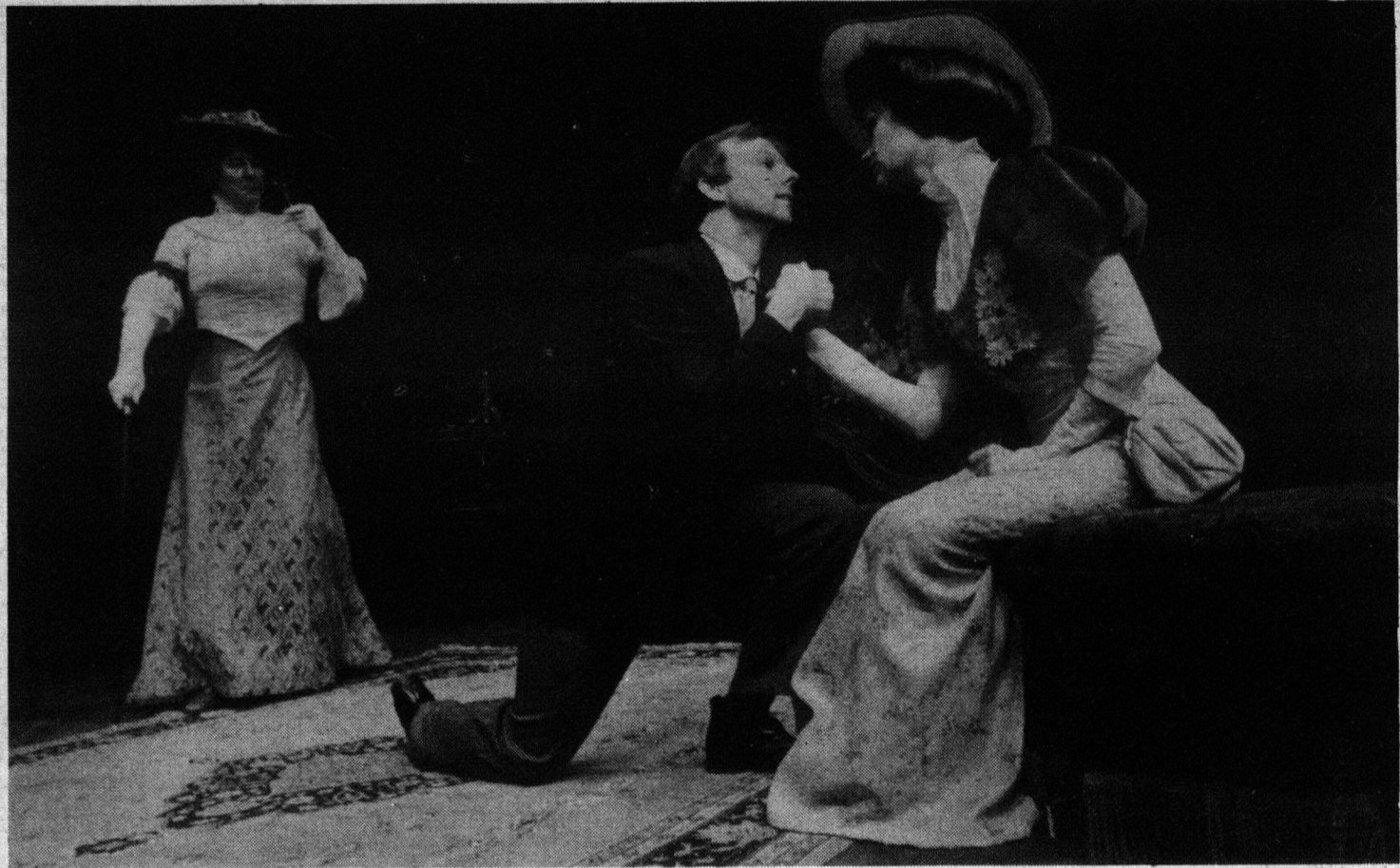
Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* was Walter Kaasa's first performance in the theatre that bears his name. It was an excellent vehicle for his premiere on his own stage.

The show went almost flawlessly, and the fact that it was basically an inane Victorian soap opera was of little consequence. It was fast-paced, and very funny, particularly the second act, and well-deserved the standing ovation it received at the end.

Kaasa, bizarrely cast as Lady Bracknell, an upper class Victorian matron, was superb. Lady Bracknell is a difficult role, as many of her lines depend on satire aimed at the social mores and politics of Oscar Wilde's time, and therefore make little sense to today's average theatre goer. Kaasa managed not only to make these lines comprehensible, but also to make them funny. The extreme precision and almost pickiness of his diction made the utter ridiculousness of his role all the more entertaining.

William Davidson's performance as Algernon the misanthropic playboy was very comical. He had just the right touch of conceited effeminacy to make him seem perfectly cast.

Christopher Gaze as Jack, aka Ernest Worthing, was not quite so entertaining. For a character who was supposed to be wicked and witty, he appeared more bumbling and foolish. Gaze was not the least powerful in his disgust with Algernon in Acts One and Two, and when he became forceful in Act Three, it was surprising and almost inappropriate.



Victorian comedy of manners brewing into a clash of moralities

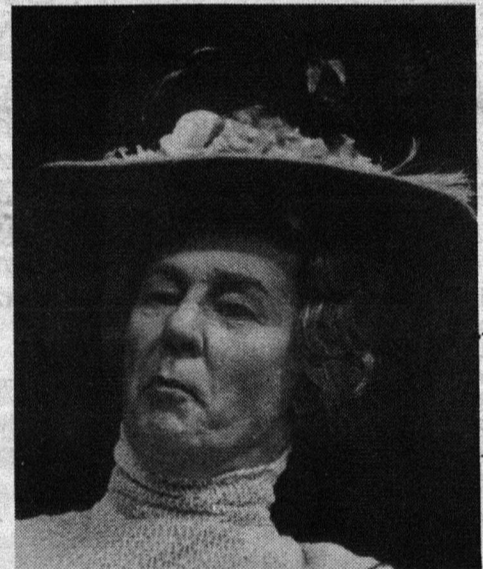
photo Angela Wheelock

Gillian Barber was Gwendolyn, Jack's love, and she was marvelous as a shallow, conniving lady of high society. Her transition from doting daughter to flirtatious romantic to sarcastic witch was very entertaining, and even believable.

Linda Polland's performance as Cecily, Jack's young ward and Algernon's love, was extremely tedious at the outset, as she was far too giggly and juvenile to be even remotely plausible as a romantic heroine. However, during the wonderful catfight in Act Two in which both Gwendolyn and Cecily claimed the same man, Polland rose above the ad nauseum childishness to prove she could be a first class comic actress. Unfortunately, in Act Three, she digressed back to her twittering ways and became obnoxious once again.

It was an extremely colourful performance, in terms of costumes and stage design. The costumes were bright and more than a little overdone, and Walter Kaasa's "bust" had a disconcerting habit of not moving, even when his neck, upper chest and arms were moving. The sets were of typical Victorian gaudiness, particularly the garden in Act Two. The performers used the thrust stage very imaginatively.

Edward Connell's melodramatic music fit the mood of the play perfectly, except that it was occasionally too loud and overpowered the lines. As well, I found

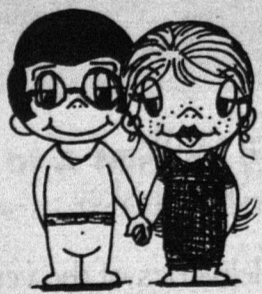


Lady Bracknell, also known as Walter Kaasa

myself listening to the musical cues to help me guess when Lady Bracknell was going to reappear (sort of like JAWS - you always knew when the shark was coming.)

photo Angela Wheelock

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EYE EXAMINATIONS ARRANGED

Elegance and beauty delight the eye in Canadian film

**Maria Chapdelaine
Cineplex, Downtown**

Review by Neil Fenna

Carole Laure is stunningly beautiful. But then so is the film she stars in, *Maria Chapdelaine*. The film is poetry on screen: an elegant, moving portrait of the struggle that was pioneer life in early Quebec. It is the story of a family living on the northern fringe of Quebec settlement where "on a winter night you can hear the wolves howl".

Maria, suited by a rich American, by a dependable local farmboy and by a mysterious and powerful woodsman, has dreams of escaping the lonely, hard rural life. Typical story of innocent, dreamy-eyed country girl swept away by tall, dark

stranger, right? Wrong. In *Maria Chapdelaine*, the evil spirits which abound make sure that not all live happily ever after. Faith - plus the will to continue the struggle - is all that is left of Maria's dreams.

Like that other Canadian film currently showing in Edmonton, *Never Cry Wolf*, *Maria Chapdelaine* is well acted and wonderfully photographed. Unlike *Never Cry Wolf*, this film is a realistic and valuable look at Canada and its cultural history.

Perhaps the only flaw of the film is that it is in English. *Maria Chapdelaine* has been released in both official languages, which was a mistake; English is a poor vehicle for the mood of this film. Nevertheless it is still an excellent piece of Canadian film-making which makes *Never Cry Wolf* look rather like Monty Python.

Join the Gateway. Staff meetings are held every Thursday at 4:00 PM in Room 282 SUB. Everyone is welcome.