

arts & entertainment

Dal theatre alive, well and singing

by Tara Gibson

Jacques Brel is Alive and Well and Living In Paris is a slightly odd name for a slightly odd Dalhousie Theatre Production. It is, however, extremely entertaining, and though it was written over thirty years ago, the themes are timeless.

This is a musical evening at the theatre based on balladeer Jacques Brel's lyrics and commentary, a fascinating exploration of theme through infectious melodies and spirited exposés.

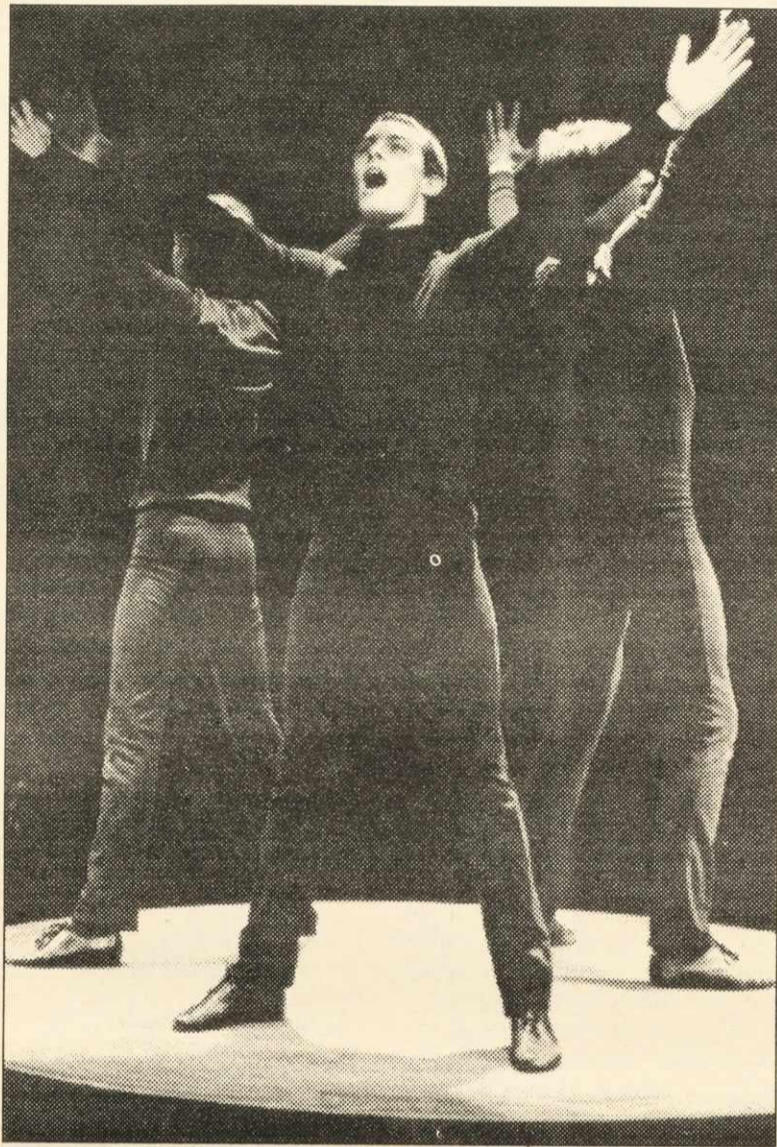
Though the piece has no cohesive point or purpose, each song has an individual, specific theme. Childhood is often addressed. "The angels and the devil would sing my childhood song to me," croons Mr. Fowler in the piece "Jackie". In the song "Mathilde", Mr. Church cries, "Mama, can you hear me yell? Your baby boy's gone back to hell".

Other major themes are death, despair, and loneliness, as well as physical gratification, hope, and good clean fun. Both the lyrics and the choreography go from chaos into structure and back again.

The choreography, set, costumes and order of the songs have been completely rearranged to suit the creativity of Dal Theatre. In the original production, the songs with similar themes were grouped together, while the Dal production switches them around to integrate different themes with each other.

The students first approached the text as actors rather than singers. The director, Patrick Christopher, believes this has made a considerable difference in the performance. "The real thrill is the text... They may not sing as beautifully as trained singers, but they understand it," he says.

The interpretation of each piece draws out timeless themes, and brings the listener to a certain height of awareness both lyrically and musi-



DALPHOTO: MIKE DEVONPORT

cally. As the students are primarily actors rather than singers, it is a real challenge for them to act and sing and dance. Christopher is impressed with the class and feels they understand the demands of the program. "Their ability to focus is amazing".

The set and costumes are simple and used to enhance the physical, emotional and vocal whirling. Originally the script called for many props. Although it made the production more challenging, Dal Theatre chose to perform without any of these ex-

tras, thinking they may stifle the lyrics and styles rather than enhance them.

The audience is on both sides of the stage, which Christopher feels is an added challenge. "360 degree consciousness," he said. "This is a good way to break the convention and say, 'This is our production'".

Jacque Brel's music and lyrics are both sweetly exquisite and desperately beautiful. The piano, cello and acoustic guitar blend to create an evocative sound and an extraordi-

nary dimension.

Another amendment to the original script is the audience interaction. Patrick loves when the audience is "momentarily forced to take responsibility for its actions". Most people go to a show to sit behind a glass wall and watch. When an actor sits on their knee, the barrier between script and reality is broken and they are forced into an awkward position.

Though the talent is well dispersed, some pieces stand out. "No Love, You're Not Alone", sung by Ms. Raymond, is a sweeping melody of desertion, while "The Funeral Tango", sung by Mr. Rogerson, which

brought the audience into hysterics, even made the musicians chuckle. The bleak chant "The Desperate Ones" steals the show.

There often seems to be nothing holding the show together. However, the entertaining music and movements do run constant through the entire production. In the program notes Christopher writes that it is his hope that "this production of *Jacques Brel is Alive and Well and Living in Paris* proves once and for all that the Department of Theatre is alive and well and living in the Arts Centre", and it does just that.

Jacques Brel is Alive and Well and Living in Paris runs this week through to Saturday.



ANOTHER GOOD HABIT
THACKERAY'S RESTAURANT
SPRING GARDEN ROAD 423-5995

MUSIC REVIEW

Oleta Adams
Evolution
Fontana

The best musicians usually assemble a half-decent band around themselves and make it big. The best performers assemble an array of dancers and effects and make it big. The best singers don't do quite as well.

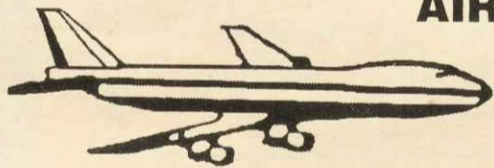
Sure, we've got Mariah Carey and Whitney Houston and other performers who are more than willing to sing ballads and torch songs with long drawn-out choruses and all sorts of ups and downs. However, not enough people have heard of Oleta Adams, and she is a singer, not a performer.

I admit it, this album is almost exclusively love songs. But with a voice like hers, the end result is not cloying sweetness, but rather, sentiment that is smooth and deep and full in songs like, "I Just Had to Hear Your Voice", "Hold Me for a While" and the Diane Warren-penned "The Day I Stop Loving You".

Oleta Adams has the kind of rich, emotive voice which works wonders in the darker half of the day. Imagine a light dinner for two with white candles and a slender vase of flowers. This is Oleta Adams territory. Gentle words that love and caress. And you can take the sound of her voice with you after dinner, if you want, just remember to draw the curtains.

Richard Lim

BURGESS TRAVEL AIRFARES



TORONTO	from 179	LONDON	from 499
VANCOUVER	from 578	AMSTERDAM	from 499
FLORIDA	from 479	AUSTRALIA	from 1699
NEW YORK	from 311	TOKYO	from 1299
OTTAWA	from 249	GREECE	from 974

The above fares are subject to availability and advance purchase rules. Fares are subject to change without notice.

EUROPE THIS SUMMER

New Summer Air, Rail
and tour information
now available.
Ask for details.

Halifax 425-6110

1505 Barrington St. Maritime Centre

New Toll Free In N.S. 1-800-421-1345

Liverpool 354-5400 Bridgetown 665-4812

OPEN SATURDAY 9-5

Those groups
or individuals
interested in
the

**CULTURAL
DIVERSITY
FESTIVAL**

There will be a planning
meeting Wednesday, Feb. 16
at 12:30pm. in room 302 in the
Dal S.U.B.

For more information contact
Scott MacIntyre,
Campus Activities
494 - 3774

