

Beckett live at Arts Centre

by Allison Johnston

The Dalhousie Theatre Department and the Dalhousie Art Gallery have joined forces to present live readings of Samuel Beckett's work.

The Art Gallery has an exhibition entitled *Samuel Beckett: Teleplays*, a series of television and video productions written for these mediums. The Theatre Department has set up a chair down stairs in the Dalhousie Art Centre next to the Art exhibition where live readings are taking place.

The project was initiated by a theatre professor, Patrick Christopher, who talked to several students. Steven Manuel and Jean Wright took it upon themselves to organize this activity. "It was stu-

dent generated," said Manuel. After the suggestion had been mentioned, Wright wrote up a notice that explained the idea and posted it around campus. It was also announced in several classes.

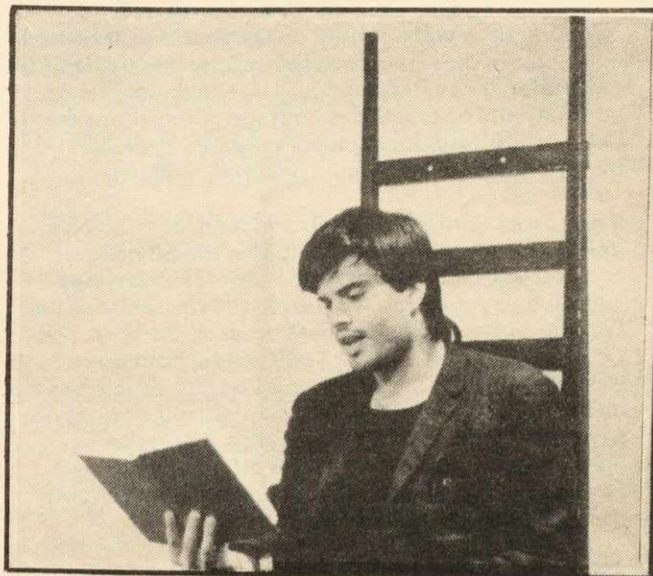
The readings are "not necessarily a theatre thing," Manuel insists. There are acting students, theatre studies students, and music students participating downstairs in the gallery as performers, readers, and even audience members. Manuel tried to encourage people from the English and French Departments to join in because Beckett wrote in both those languages, but he has not received any response.

Samuel Beckett was an Irish writer. He taught English in Paris, France and French in Dublin, Ire-

land. He worked with the French resistance in France during the second World War. His work encompasses plays, novels, poetry, etc. His most known work is *Waiting for Godot*.

The readings come from a wide variety of his work. The choice is up to the reader. The readings range from 15 minutes to an hour. They are scheduled Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:30 to 1:30, and weekends 2:00 to 3:00. This project began on the 13 of September and will be continuing until the 21 of October.

If you are interested in participating call the theatre department at 494-2255 and leave a message for either Steve Manuel or Jean Wright.



James DeGazio reading from Beckett.

Photo: Maria Patriquin

Not wild about...

Wild At Heart

by Gurn Blansen

This year certainly is the year of David Lynch. For those of you who have been hibernating since last April, David Lynch is the unusual auteur of such cult classics as *Eraserhead*, *Blue Velvet*, and last year's most intriguing T.V. offering *Twin Peaks*. Now yet another example of his unique oeuvre is on display in theatres. The movie is called *Wild At Heart* and it has already enjoyed voluminous praise from international critics and was the recipient of the Palme D'Or at this year's Cannes Film Festival.

Unfortunately *Wild At Heart*, is not nearly as good as the above would indicate. The film is generally a by-the-numbers Lynch exercise. All of the subtlety, originality, and intelligence of *Blue Velvet* and *Twin Peaks* is completely absent here. In its place we have a cluttered self-indulgent heretofore unseen in Lynch's previous work. This time his trademark weird characters and subplots only serve to trivialize the charming love story of the two main characters played humorously by Nicholas Cage and Laura Dern. These two love birds have a truly infectious sweetness of spirit about them that gives the film its core. Dern and Cage manage to completely inhabit these characters making them seem totally believable in the depraved, and demented world that Lynch creates around them.

Regrettably, Lynch piles on numerous strange and obscure cameos by members of his ever-grow-

ing company of actors. Everyone from Jack Nance (*Eraserhead*), to Sheryl Lee (Laura Palmer from *Twin Peaks*) turn up in what seems to like a forced obligatory appearance. There are so many cameos that one begins to even question the legitimacy of casting the "beautiful and talented" Isabella Rosselini in a minor role, especially when one knows that she is the real-life girlfriend of director Lynch.

In fact the only actors to distinguish themselves other than the two leads are Dianne Ladd and Willem Dafoe. Both deliver juicy over the top performances. Dafoe especially gives a deliciously reptilian interpretation of the villainous Bobby Peru. His profoundly astonishing abilities are heart stopping in a scene involving his character and Dern's. It is the best scene in the film and one that only Lynch could pull off.

Ladd, the real-life mother of Dern, is equally impressive in her role as Dern's domineering mother. Her performance is a masterpiece of delicate shading. Ladd deftly creates a character that is one part Blanche Dubois and one part Wicked Witch Of The West.

The Wizard of Oz similarities are in fact completely intended, unfortunately the audience has been already inundated with so many bizarre, extraneous characters and scenes, that it becomes no surprise at the end when Lynch makes these references integral to the plot.

In retrospect it is a shame that

Wild At Heart is not successful. It is after all a uniquely Lynchian vision. The problem is that Lynch himself has become too undisciplined. He has let his obsessive eccentricities on to the screen with complete abandon. Not only does this reflect his own loss of the restrained genius of *Blue Velvet*, but it also has buried a truly charming love story in a mire of self-indulgence.



Raquel Duffy in *The Room at the Back*.

Halifax-based film

by Tanya Naylor

The Room in the Back is a short, sweet story that takes place in a city that is familiar to us all - Halifax, N.S. The film, according to writer and director Glenn Walton, deals with many topics but is essentially about "taking something from the past and carrying it on into the future." It is also said to touch on our appreciation of the past, our present and past cultures, the connection and communication between old and young, and lastly a statement about preserving our neighborhoods in an architectural sense.

After Mr Walton pointed out this plethora of themes I could

mentally go back and find reference to them in the film. To try and deal with so many ideas in such a short film (approximately 32 minutes), in my opinion was a mistake. I found the story enjoyable enough. However, I think it was appreciated much more by the viewers who knew a large portion of the cast, many of whom are now Dal students.

The casting was excellent. Ed McCurdy was perfect in his role as an older gentleman, Stanley, who has befriended a young QEH girl, Jennifer. Jennifer is played by a Dal student Raquel Duffy. I found several of Ms. Duffy's lines slightly awkward and fairly weak. There are also some touching moments that could have been more so if the timing had been right.

The photography was quite good. There were several shots that will strike you - if you happen to catch the film. *The Room In The Back* is playing along with Mr. Walton's video on AIDS - *Life After Diagnosis*, during the Atlantic Film Festival.

I won't get too deep into the storyline. A young neighborhood girl, Jennifer, is friends with an older man, Stanley. They share tea and good memories of times and friends of yesteryear. The plot thickens as Stanley becomes ill due to an upheaval in his life. Jennifer tries to help and is unhappy in life and at school. If I tell you more then you won't have to see the film. The plot struck me as somewhat trite, as if I had seen the story line before, perhaps in a Disney Sunday Night Movie. Being Mr. Walton's first drama effort, it is a nice little film that is worth seeing if you know some of the cast or if you think you would enjoy seeing scenic Halifax on film.

Photo: Mary Simkins