

York grad Gilbert writes on power plays

By STEPHANIE GROSS

"Instead of writing about any particular man," says Sky Gilbert of his new play *The Dressing Gown*, "I've finally come to the conclusion that men are made differently, emotionally and physically, than women... and that's one of the things the play confronts: why do men act the way they do?" The question is underscored through Gilbert's portrayal of the homosexual underworld of Toronto, a world inhabited by people who offer a view of sexuality that is at once unique and universal.

Gilbert, a York graduate, does not attribute the differences between the sexes to either innate or learned behavior. Neither do the characters in the play, although they frequently confront the issue. Jim, a young sadomasochistic punk, claims, "It's part of the game, the S&M game. He's on the top and I'm on the bottom."

"S&M is a symbol," says Gilbert, "of men's anger and men's pain and men's hate." He believes that while S&M in heterosexual pornography reinforces accepted sexual roles, in gay pornography it challenges interpersonal power structures.

Elliot, a middle-aged homosexual who seems to be in touch with his emotions and sexuality moreso than any other character, says, "The world is a cruel place. Sometimes men are the cruelest thing in it. They don't know how to love."

The one woman in the play, Martha, is a symbol of hope, says Gilbert. "The men in the play are ripping themselves apart. Then the woman comes in, almost like a Florence Nightingale, like a nurse; she is the one who asks, 'Why are you hurting yourself?'"

While it may seem that Gilbert is representing the old stereotypical notion that women are emotional and men are indifferent, he is actually trying to look at those attributes in and of themselves. He acknowledges the reactions that he has seen in people and asks: why?

In the last scene in the play, Elliot's young lover, Tim, tells Elliott that he wants to end their sexual relationship in order to see other lovers. He does not want to hurt Elliot. Says Gilbert, "By the end of act one there is so much



Alan Powell and Joe-Norman Shaw in a scene from Sky Gilbert's *The Dressing Gown*.

lying and deceit" while the last scene "is about two people just being honest." This honesty comes about because of the nature of the two characters. Elliot was adjust to himself, someone who didn't have to lie, a positive image of an older gay man who is treating a younger man with kindness, says Gilbert.

The dressing gown in the play "is a symbol of male sexuality—male passion for another male. It has to do with roles, disguising oneself as characters—one in drag, one in leather—do. A lot of homosexuals have to disguise themselves in order to love each other." Gilbert expresses concern regarding the play's reception within the gay community. "I've been told that the gay community isn't going to like this play much. That doesn't matter. They don't really like me much lately because I have a tendency to sometimes represent sad or negative homosexuals and you're not supposed to do that."

The Dressing Gown, produced by Buddies in Bad Times, is on at the Theatre Centre until Oct. 21. Wed-Sat at 8:30, Sun at 2:30, 296 Brunswick Avenue for \$6.25 and \$8.25.

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Poetry, short fiction, short drama, and essays will be considered. Drop submissions off at 111 Central Square, Attention: Arts Editors. Or call Jason or Kevin at 667-3201.

MoreStuff

Oct. 15, 8 P.M.

□ Harbourfront kicks off its 1984 Festival of Authors tonight with Margaret Atwood, Lars Gustafsson, Franz Innerhofen and John Wain. Tomorrow, Gerard Bessette, Rodney Hall, Fay Weldon, and Yevgeny Yevtushenko. Wednesday features Tess Gallagher, Nadine Gordimer, Earl Lovelace and Yves Navarre. \$6-\$8. 207 Queen's Quay West. 869-8444.

□ *Repositioning the Familiar*, an exhibition of sculptures by Canadian artists Ian Carr-Harris, Jamelie Hassan, Spring Hurlbut, Liz Magor, and Judith Schwarz, will be presented at Glendon Gallery through Oct. 28. Free. Reviewed this issue.

Amadeus theatrics dull script's bite

By RICHARD GOTLIB

In the screen incarnation of Peter Schaffer's play, *Amadeus*, one member of Emperor Joseph II's court objected to Mozart's selection of Figaro as an operatic topic by saying "no one's questioning your talent Mozart, it's your choice of literature." Similarly the problem with the film could be summed by the comment "No one's questioning the talent of Mozart, it's the director's choice of exposition."

Amadeus is a fictionalized story surrounding two historical characters the child prodigy Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and the court composer of Austrian Emperor Joseph II, Antonio Salieri. The film focuses on the bitterness of Salieri as he begins to perceive his mediocrity in the face of the musical perfection being composed by Mozart. Tom Hice as the guffawing prodigy and F. Murray Abraham as Salieri provide excellent performances.

Director Milos Forman has lavished his screen attention on setting, theatrics and operatics to dull the incisive bite of Schaffer's play. Instead of concentrating on Salieri's excruciating conflict between his own mediocrity and God for giving him just enough talent to recognize Mozart's brilliance, we get Neville Martin and the Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields. No one is denigrating the superb rendering of the music and operatic sequences, but when it comes at the cost of dramatic pacing, the whole film suffers.

Peter Schaffer's thematically articulate script barely survives the application of Forman's Hollywood cultural glitz values. But the fact is that the substance does overcome a stodgy rendering of form.

Man With Bags not only one confused in Ionesco play

Man with Bags by Eugene Ionesco, Hart House Theatre, October 10-13.

By CHRIS KIRALY

Eugene Ionesco's surrealist comedy, *Man With Bags*, appeals to the audience on a number of levels, from the comic to the intellectual, none of which will necessarily make the play understandable.

The play is an interpretation of one man's return to his radically altered home town and his guilt over having left. This plot then brings out the age-old question of the meaning of one's life, with the central character asking,

"What is my life all about?" and asserting "I'm so confused" again and again.

Built upon this central theme is a structure containing a series of symbolic metaphors and complex analogies. Not the least of these is the man's missing third bag which contains his manuscripts which in turn carry his identity.

The seeming simplicity of the plot is further complemented by the basic checkerboard stage, minimal props and soft lighting. However, the fast-paced and highly complex script quickly offsets the simplicity as the ideas expressed become non-sequential. Nevertheless, the actors successfully convey the subtle elements of the play's ideas with carefully chosen intonations.

The acting is superb. Tom Melissis portrays the highly confused *Man With Bags* extremely well. Due to the fact that there are few actual movements involved in this part, it was very important for him to convey his many disturbed feelings through his speech and strong facial expressions. The many other characters were also well depicted and each reinforced the main themes of confusion and guilt.

The high quality of acting, the simple setting and complex structure produce a very balanced impression of the play.

It is, however, not a drama suitable for all. Those searching for entertainment that requires thought and analysis will find *Man With Bags* a highly rewarding play.

Forbidden Film festival latest local fling with censorship

By ADRIAN IWACHIW

Arts festivals and censorship—not exactly the best of bedfellows—have both been prominent in the media lately. In a characteristic contradiction, Toronto has recently been host to a wave of arts festivals (the Festival of Festivals, the current Anti-Racism Film Festival, the Music Gallery's Aggregates Festival, and the upcoming Harbourfront International Festival of Authors among others) while at the same time providing the gathering place for an international conference of censors. The contradiction becomes even more significant since most of these are film festivals, and film festivals are the ones most affected by the threat of censorship.

Forbidden Films, presented in aid of Amnesty International, will bring together 100 films from 25 countries, all of which have been banned, censored or suppressed in their countries of origin, or were made by filmmakers who suffered imprisonment, exile or execution. Behind this assemblage of controversial material is the non-profit Toronto Arts Group for Human Rights, which a couple of years ago brought us the Writer and Human Rights Conference. The Advisory Board of the festival includes prominent Canadians Margaret Atwood, Norman Jewison, George Woodcock and Czech emigré author Josef Skvorecky.

What is astonishing about the whole project is that it was pulled together on a shoestring budget amounting to about one twentieth that of the Festival of Festivals' budget. The total

paid staff through most of the past year's preparation was one (Gary Etcherman). And yet, the collection of films includes about 25 that are officially out-of-distribution, a few being the only prints available, all brought in after careful negotiations and some fortunate and lucky "connections."

Among the seven series to be featured will be the largest exhibition of unavailable Czechoslovakian "new wave" films to be shown anywhere.

The Czech "new wave" was a five-year period of free-spirited, innovative and exciting filmmaking that ended with the Russian tanks rolling in during the "Prague Spring" of 1968. Featured participants will include Jan Nemeč, the "enfant terrible" of Czech filmmaking, who is now at work on an Amnesty International film dealing with torture victims. Five of Nemeč's films will be shown, along with others by Milos Forman and Ivan Passer, both currently pursuing successful American film careers. Vera Chytilova, Jaroslav Papousek and York professor Victor Taborsky (all to be screened at the Art Gallery of Ontario) will also be featured.

Somewhat more overtly political and rather clandestine in origin will be the films screened in the Latin American series at OISE Auditorium. This will highlight Brazil's "Cinema Novo," which became prominent during the 1960s and includes the rich allegories and lush tropical surrealist pieces of Glauber Rocha and Ruy Guerra, as well as the later "Third

Cinema" of Argentina, Chile and Bolivia.

Gala evening events at the Danforth Music Hall will include the Canadian premiere of *The Men I Loved*, a Brazilian film banned for its suggestion that women can operate under the same moral code as men, and the Israeli comedy *The Black Banana*, in addition to an evening with American political filmmaker Emile De Antonio. De Antonio's films are highly subjective and controversial collages that have dealt with subjects like Vietnam, Watergate, the McCarthy trials and the trial of the anti-nuclear "Ploughshares Eight."

The International Series at the Bloor Cinema will include films by the two giants of contemporary Soviet cinema—recently-exiled Andrei Tarkovsky (*Andrei Rublev*) and still-imprisoned Armenian Sergei Parajanov (*The Colour of Pomegranates*). Also featured will be films from France (by "new wave" filmmakers Godard, Rivette, Resnais and Marker), Turkey, Africa and the Far East.

Canada, not too surprisingly, also has its share of censored, banned and politically hampered films. Those to be shown at U of T's St. Michael's College include National Film Board films that exuded sympathy towards Maoist China, Quebecois films that reflected a strong pro-independence stance, and experimental films by Michael Snow and Bruce Elder (which will be screened separately at the Funnel, together with other avant garde films by Luis Bunuel, Eisenstein, Godard, Jean Genet and Jack Smith).

Together, the *Forbidden Films* festival offers a healthy and extensive dose of the kind of brutal reality conscientious filmmakers must often contend with. Here in Ontario, however, the festival might serve another important educational function, that of initiating a discussion of censorship from the perspective of human rights. For that reason, it will be extremely interesting to see what the Ontario Censor Board will do with it—several previously "unacceptable" films, including Dusan Makavejev's *Sweet Movie*, banned by the Board at this year's Festival of Festivals, are scheduled to be shown.

There are other methods of censorship than banning and making cuts, however. Two of the more subtle ones are the impairment of distribution, and plain poverty—the poverty of the filmmakers themselves.

The organizers of *Forbidden Films* seem to have gotten around the first of these obstacles surprisingly well, while the second was avoided somewhat by grants from the Canada Council, the Ontario Arts Council and the City of Toronto.

One wonders, though, if poverty won't remain a way of life for some of the dedicated few that gave their time and energy to make this festival happen.

Forbidden Films will be screened Oct. 18-28. Box office: 659 Yonge Street, 2nd floor. 862-7007.