Entertainment

Twilight play

Uneasy Pieces
Theatre Network

review by James MacDonald

Dodedodododododododododododododo... "You are about to enter another dimension, a dimension not only of sight and sound, but of mind. ..."

The Twilight Zone, right? Right. These immortal words, however, might well have served as the introduction for Uneasy Pieces, Rose Scollard's new trilogy which opened Theatre Network's "Season of Adventure" last week. This comparison is based solely on a general theme, however, for Scollard provides a fresh slant on this often overworked form. The result is a compelling, provocative, highly entertaining bit of theatre.

The three short plays that make up *Uneasy Pieces* are tale in the true sense of the word. They are stories sprung off paper and onto the stage, and each carries a powerful, but subtle, message. Scollard's main strength lies in the fact that she is a master storyteller, the freshness of her tales making them all the more gripping. There are three excellent stories in this show, and anyone who likes a good yarn should enjoy it.

The first piece, entitled Nosey Parkers, also played at the Fringe this past summer. It con-

cerns a high-priced prostitute with a very interested tale to tell her clients about why she took to the streets. The centre-piece of this show, the story itself, is extremely well written, and compellingly told by Judith Haynes. Her chauvinistic client is rather lifelessly played by William Davidson, with no great dislike being built up for his extremely dislikeable character. He has some good lines, however, guaranteed to make anyone but the most militant anti-feminist hate him. His come-uppance is perhaps a bit too underplayed, but it is a neat twist just the same

The second play, *The Swapper*, is the one most comparable to *The Twilight Zone*. A dissatisfied wife talks to her beautician about her unhappy life with her husband, and a septuagenarian eavesdropper offers to do away with him, but for a bizarre price. All three characters, are very well played, with Haynes as the beautician, Valerie Ann Pearson as the hit-woman with a deal with darkness, and Christine MacInnis as the contemporary Dr. Faustus.

Completing the trilogy is a modern update of a myth concerning a "hero" who battles the emanation of a goddess. This show aptly titled the Hero centers around the telling of a story, this one told by MacInnis as the modern goddess. Though at times the play is a

Uneasy Pieces: a fresh slant on an overworked them

little too melodramatic. Davidson stumbles through another chauvinist role, but Pearson is excellent as the woman's earthly cleaning lady.

Those of you who have been perusing late-night TV lately will have noticed that Serling's original cult classics are back. You may also have noticed that fact that Serling's stories rarely concern women. Scollard responds to this, creating what may be described as a feminist *Twilight Zone*. This is not

to say that feminism is shoved down the audience's throats, the plays merely provide a view of the other side of the Zone: the female side

Uneasy Pieces is a fantastic kick-off to Network's new season. It is, for the most part, engrossing, with an almost perfect atmosphere created for all three pieces. Above all, this show is extremely inventive, and thoroughly enjoyable and I highly recommended it

Wetherby: a dark look at Britain

Wetherby MGM/UA Westmount

review by John Charles

Wetherby opens with a Nixon story told by Jean Travers (Vanessa Redgrave), a Yorkshire schoolteacher.

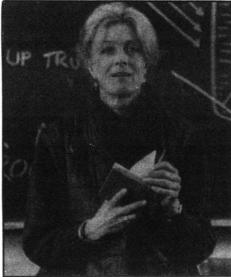
It's the one about how Nixon insisted on chauffering Pat on her dates, when she stopped dating him in high school

"What does that tell us about Nixon!" Jean

"What does tht tell us about Pat!" her friend Stanley (Ian Holm) responds.

Much later in the movie Stanley starts ranting about Margaret Thatcher and her childhood hang-ups, which are the source of her hostility to various governmental factions she's punishing. "She's fighting old battles," he suggests, "and these people don't know why she's against them."

Author David Hare expects you to connect those anecdotes as a commentary on the kind of world leaders we now have, but more importantly on the life buried within each of us which others can't fathom by our public actions. That's the central theme of this expertly made film, which Hare, a major English playwright (Knuckle, Plenty), wrote



Vanessa Redgrave

and directed as his film debut.

Although Jean and her circle in the small town of Wetherby are the main characters in this story, its starting point comes from outside. A young man Jean has only met once stops to visit her one morning, and violently kills himself as she looks on. The movie then unravels this man's obsessions through half-glimpsed incidents, a young woman he loved, a policeman's polite probing, and the

careful combing of Jean's brief conversations with him, while we're also taken backward 40 years to witness in detail Jean's first intense love-affair, with young Jean played by Redgrave's daughter Joely Richardson.

Wetherby appears to be the kind of movie where the "mystery of personality" will keep us from any satisfactory conclusion about the young man, but instead the final scenes lead us to a consider able understanding of him and the meaning of Jean's life as well. And we're forced to ask whether she really represents the positive forces of life which she seems to represent.

on one level Wetherby is another isn't-this-a-beastly-epoch? movie, a genre the British have stylishly perfected. Just observe the exquisite photography, the elaborate flashback sequences (which are present as much for haute style as for content), and the contradictory way it coldly fusses about the lack of warmth in the world, and you may be reminded of Lester's Petulia (1968) and Schlesinger's Sunday, Bloody Sunday (1971), two classic life-as-finger-nails-on-blackboard sagas which starred, respectively, Julie Christie and Glenda Jackson.

In Wetherby the young people are boring and empty, something we are told by the articulate adults, as well as shown. They watch telly all the time, and think education is only for "having a career," instead of enriching one's grasp of life generally. Many

lines and scenes demonstrate this, but at the same time Hare shows the articulate adults not dealing with realities much better.

Jean has doubts about her life and its implied sense of values, and can even question the practicality of teaching. "Is Shakespeare worth reading, even if these plays are only about kings?" she playfully asks her students.

But her final line in the movie is also to her students: "For those of us who remain, I suggest we keep trying."

So in spite of a certain self-consciousness throughout, Hare's struggle to find wholeness and hopefulness in the dark world he has painfully summoned up makes Wetherby an intelligent and provocative movie.

Redgrave gives a completely open, honest performance which ought to be the envy of actresses everywhere. And her colleagues, mostly celebrated theatre types like Ian Holm and Judi Dench, are splendid also.

The movie's only aberration is Nick Bicat's mostly tactful music score, which occasionally erupts in piano concerto hyperemotionalism that seems both bathetic and totally at odds with the movie's sensibility.

A final note: Hare's best-known play *Plenty* opens in Edmonton in the next few weeks as a film with Meryl Streep. A visit to *Wetherby* should make the second movie much more accessible, since the themes and style of the works are similar.

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