

Salesman revived

Performing Theatre breathes life into Death

By BOB McBRIDE

For 25 years, *Death of a Salesman* has captured the imaginations of North American audiences, and in the process, Willy Loman has become a contemporary archetype.

The play's power lies in its ability to relate profoundly to the audience's experience. Everyone, it seems, feels a shock of recognition, or at least a deep pity, when confronted with Willy's plight.

In many ways it is an odd play. Speeches are often didactic and cliché-ridden, while posing under the guise of naturalistic conversation. The characters' emotional outbursts, particularly in the first act, are occasionally uncalled for in the context; they are not provoked by what T.S. Elliot has called an "objective correlative". Yet the final results in a capable production are heart-rending. The Performing Theatre Company has a finely-tuned sense of drama; every character is perfectly cast. George Touliatos, as Willy, breaks down and recovers in his dreams pitifully.

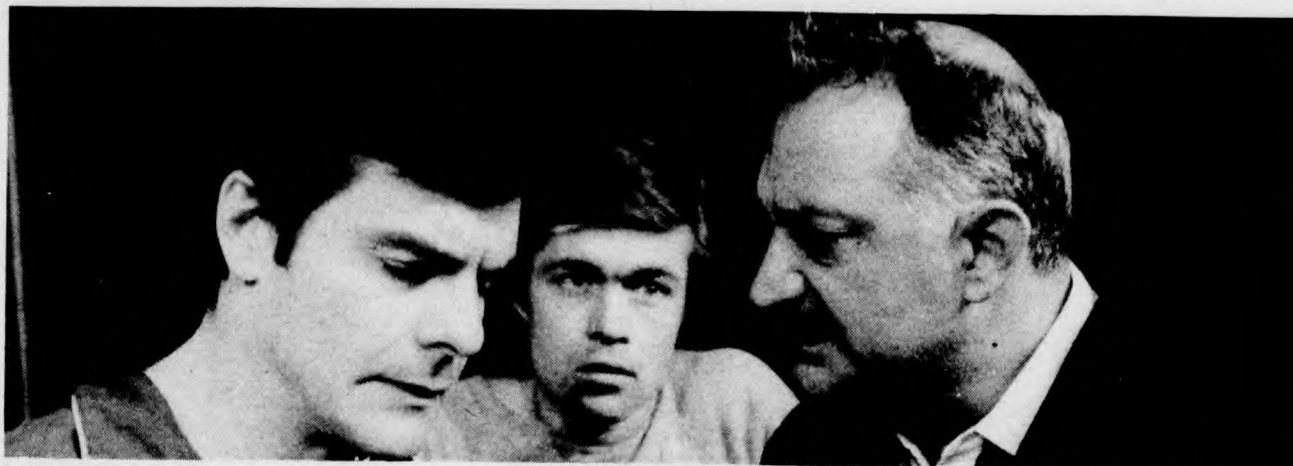
Irene Hogan, as his wife Linda, stands stoically by, exhibiting a deeper understanding of Willy's situation — until she too cracks at the play's conclusion. Ms Hogan's handling of Linda's last speech is numbingly despairing.

Peter McConnell as Biff and Art Hindle as Happy make it painfully obvious that they are the incarnations of two halves of the same American nightmare. Hindle's Happy is shallow

and amoral; McConnell's Biff, confused and embittered.

The Performing Theatre Company is a new and worthy Toronto theatrical enterprise. It is an actor-oriented company in which the individual performer chooses his or her own part. With *Death of a Salesman*, they have amply demonstrated that they deserve not only support (they are not government-funded) but recognition as a most capable and exciting theatre troupe.

The Palmerston Library Theatre is two blocks west of Bathurst just north of Bloor. Admission is \$3.50, but students pay \$2.50 on Thursday and Sunday.



Peter McConnell (left) and Art Hindle listen as George Touliatos recites the facts of life in *Death of a Salesman*.

Record Review

Enthusiastic mixture from Bette Midler

By KEVIN RICHER

Since Bette Midler has already attained a golden egg for this collection of all-sorts, it may seem a little late for the appearance of a review, but considering the material on this album, time does not seem to be of great importance. Bette Midler's repertoire seems to have no time limitations, since she derives her songs from as far back as the late '20s. Her most popular and most effective medium is the late '30s and early '60s.

Her success with *Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy* has no doubt brought about this preference, for in the competitive world of pop music, if one can cook up a bit of success with the right ingredients, why not ride on it?

Bette Midler is in my opinion a superior effort to *The Divine Miss M* (SD 7238) probably due to the apparent tendency of Bette Midler no longer to depend so much on her comic appeal as on her genuine vocal talents. The skills of the professional entertainer are starting to show.

The album begins with a romantic Carmichael-Mercer tune *Skylark*. Drinking Again is another Johnny Mercer song, this time on the melancholic side. Probably the most interesting band on the first side is not so much a song as a reading of the dramatic *Surabaya Johnny*, a Kurt Weill-Bert Brecht piece of music from one of Brecht's plays.

The second side of the album is an energetic mixture of dreamy, scattling, finger popping nostalgia. We enter the *Land of Oz* in *Optimistic Voices*, as Bette, not Garland is heralded by a group of angelic voices into her never-never land of Manhattan's *Lullaby of Broadway*. With the introduction of the big city *DOOT-DOOT-DOOT-DOOT*, we are now prepared for the great standard of the late '30s and '40s, *In the Mood*.

Additional lyrics were added by Bette on to what seems to have been an Andrews, Sisters arrangement, "you know ya got to do some dancin' to get in the mood."

Being a child of the '50s, Bette cannot forget her roots. We are treated to

a Crystals medley of *Uptown and Da Doo Ron Ron* (When He Walked Me Home). This should give Mr. Philly Sound (Phil Spector) a chuckle plus a few bucks.

Twisted is a comical interlude, as Midler has a somewhat nasal one-sided conversation with herself. To complete the album, *Higher and Higher* (Your Love Keeps Lifting Me) raises the tempo to a grand climax, drawing the memories of the original Jackie Wilson recording, and gaining strength from Bette's driving interpretation.

Steve Miller moves his band back into blues

By RICHARD GOULD

Steve Miller, born in Wisconsin, has been travelling and playing rock and roll since the age of 12. His real beginning was in the blues clubs of Chicago in the early sixties, and while there, he played with T-Bone Walker, Junior Wells, and the Muddy Waters band.

The personnel on *The Joker*, consisting of Gerald Johnson (bass), John King (drums), and Dickie Thompson (organ), have only been with Steve for about two years, or for the last four LPs. During this period the Miller band was in its free-form era. On *The Joker*, they are drawing from the early strength of Miller's blues period, and this change of style has helped *The Joker* sell more copies than any other Steve Miller album.

In the Nov. 20 issue of *The Drummer*, a U.S. pop magazine, Miller stated what he thought was the reason for the success of this album: "I think it must be a drag to be Pink Floyd or the Moody Blues and just be nothing but mysterious and very heavy all the time. I don't think they're bad bands, I think they're pretty good. But as far as I'm concerned, I'd get real tired of being heavy all the time."

"Now all the *Joker* is, is just a very simple, plain, good-feeling, nothing too heavy, nothing too out of it, record. We're going to take that base and we're gonna grow."

The first side of the record incorporates ballads, soul and rock with driving leads, and mellow acoustic passages. Side two is what really brings the album together. Starting with their hit song *The Joker*, the side goes into a folk blues number called *Lovin' Cup* with a sound that reminds one of Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee. The next two cuts are live blues songs with the typical (evil woman blues) lyrics.

The last song on the album, *Something to Believe In*, is a country blues cut, a perfect example of the fine mixture of electric and acoustic sounds found throughout the album.

Sight and Sound

Nanga and Zenga art in gallery

From now until Jan. 31, you can catch a display of Nanga and Zenga Japanese paintings in the Finlayson Collection, presented in the York Art Gallery, N145 Ross. The gallery is open Monday to Friday from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and Sunday from 2 to 5 p.m.

Conformist and If at the Roxy

Bernardo Bertolucci's *The Conformist* (with Jean-Louis Trintignant and Dominique Sanda) will be screened on a double bill with Lindsay Anderson's *If* (with Malcolm McDowell) this Tuesday and Wednesday, at the Roxy. Tomorrow night, *Live and Let Die* joins Roman Polanski's *Fearless Vampire Killers*. The Roxy, at Danforth at the Greenwood subway, charges 99 cents. Phone 461-2401 for times.

Singer paints in gala debut

Judy Singer, a 4th year visual arts student at York, is holding her first one-woman exhibit of paintings and watercolours this weekend. The Pollock Gallery at 356 Dundas West, normally closed Sunday and Monday, opens its doors Sunday at 2 p.m. for a preview. Go before the crowds and meet the artist. It's free.

Wait for Fixer with Bated breath

The *Fixer* comes to Curtis LH-I at 7 and 9:30 p.m. tonight, courtesy of the Environmental Studies film society. Alan Bates is the Jewish handyman Yakow, an ordinary man in anti-semitic Kiev, persecuted during the Czarist era in Russia. Winner of the National Society of Film Critics award, if that sort of thing impresses you. Dirk Bogarde is excellent in it. Admission is \$1.

Cheap Dirt and Brando's Burn

Marlon Brando scorches the screen in *Burn!* (the movie's exclamation point, not mine). Cheap Dirt Productions brings the political film to the Calumet Common Room in Atkinson, Sunday at 6:30 and 9 p.m. Admission is an economic 69 cents.

Groucho and tramp in Ross lounge

Chaplin's *City Lights* and the Marx Brothers' *Duck Soup* will enliven the 8th floor Faculty Lounge of the Ross building Saturday at 8:30 p.m. The Jewish Student Federation presents the double bill, and admission is free. Both comedies are worth catching.

Advance notice of hip Hamlet

A hip Hamlet? This is an early notice of an amazing four-hour film version of *Hamlet* coming to York next Thursday. Filmed by photographer Richard Leiterman and director Rene Bonniere over two years ago at the Bathurst Street United Church, the production is in blue jeans, and will be shown with a break for dinner. Further details in next week's entertainment section.

Canadian double bill at Revue

The Revue Repertory cinema, on Roncesvalles three blocks south of Bloor and Dundas, teams Bill Fruett's *Wedding in White* with Gilles Carle's *The True Nature of Bernadette*, tonight and tomorrow night. Saturday through Thursday, Jacques Tati's *Playtime*, a contemporary classic French comedy, will be shown. Single tickets are \$1.50, \$2 on weekends, but for \$10 you get to see 10 shows if you buy a three-month pass.

Pachter's Queen meets moose

The Glendon College art gallery is showing Toronto artist Charles Pachter's controversial show of 12 symbolist paintings, *Monarchs of the North*, at 2275 Bayview at Lawrence. See the Queen and the moose, in an original public show.

Sitarist Sambhu Das at Osgoode

Shambhu Das and party will present the final performance in York's Music of India and Iran series tomorrow at 8:30 p.m. in Osgoode's Moot Court. Das, an advanced disciple of Ravi Shankar, plays the sitar, a plucked lute with moveable frets, five playing strings and 13 sympathetic strings. (Haven't you always wondered?) He is accompanied by a pair of small hand drums known collectively as *tabla*. Student tickets are \$1.50, from Room 336 Stong or at the door.

Gynt has no Peer

By BOB McBRIDE

Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* is a fantasy which implicitly condemns a life of fantasy: a dream play which condemns the dreamer. The U of T Hart House production, playing through January 26, brings out the more disturbing and ironic aspects of the play in a hauntingly expressionistic production.

The play is *Peer's* life dream, the life of a man who avoids challenges by escaping into a world of imagination. We are led through the forest of his mind where thoughts, unfulfilled hopes and nagging guilts are externalized as hideous spirits called trolls.

Peer's very existence seems illusory, and he faces death as a piece of spiritual waste trembling at the brink of eternal nothingness.

The Hart House Production is ambitious and largely successful. Their interpretation of the play casts off any vestige of romanticism; by following the example of a Strindberg dream play in conveying a chaotic intensity, as well as a surreal sense of beauty, the play has a nightmarish effect. Both the original music composed by Edvard Grieg and the later score by Harald Saeverud define and enhance this mood.

As the lead character, *Peer Gynt*, Maarten van Dijk is winningly energetic. He delivers the play's poetic lines with a respect for their nuances of both beauty and irony.

The production is a tour de force offering a large cast playing several roles apiece. Of particular note is the interpretation of the Troll King by Ray Conologue, whose voice and movement fit well with the supernatural aspects of the part. Also of interest is Robertson Davies' cameo appearance as the voice of *The Great Boyg*.

To see *Peer Gynt* is to be initiated into the world of 19th century Norwegian mythology — a world of Spirits, dance, costumes and pageantry — and, at the same time, to be confronted with a contemporary existential theme.

Student rates are \$2. Phone 928-8668 for details.

On tap

Next week, we present the full run-down on the Jan. 31 hip *Hamlet*, and movie reviews of *El Topo* and *Serpico*. We also have a few niceties which were omitted this week, and a talk maybe with Wolfman Jack.

And in a splurge of glory, we will have the definitive wrap-up of this weekend's *Cosmic Convention* in Winters.

An addendum: The photo credit of Godfrey P. Jordan was unwittingly omitted last week from the photos of Masaki Kobayashi, Dieter Frosse and Bob Dylan.