

Inspiring performance by Maritime Contemporary Dance Company

By VAUGHN FULFORD

Last Friday, March 21, the audience at Memorial Hall on the UNB campus was treated to a very enjoyable performance by the Maritime Contemporary Dance Company. Although the company is new and rather small (the present company was formed in Sept of 79 and consists of Kathleen Driscoll, Vicki Forrester, Leslee McGee, Janice Richard, Shawn Stubbart and Zsuzsa Szabo) the dance rose above the obstacles.

The performance was never overpowering. The company did not intrude nor did they compel the audience to watch. The movements and themes themselves and the portrayal maintained the interest.

The first number 'Waiting' seemed to set the scene for the rest of the night. Choreographed by Zsuzsa Szabo to Mike Oldfield's Tubular Bells it covered a wide range of feeling and mood and most importantly allowed for individual expression and innovation. (The company seems to work well together). The dance moved from

surrealistic beginning through fiery powerful images danced very well by Shawn Stubbart, and gentle soft-spoken moments. The stage became a painting; a living tapestry or transformed landscape. Especially evocative was the idea of a chorus in the background and a soloist playing off their actions. The dancers emerged and receded. The eye of the viewer moved from dancer to dancer, witnessing the various interactions, almost becoming part of the abstract story being danced on stage. Through all of this the eye had no feeling of confusion or desire to wander. Rather, we felt a sense of controlled business, of action.

This was followed by a solo effort by Kathleen Driscoll entitled "Witchdance": a moody piece involving frenzied movement colourful costuming and make-up and dramatic lighting. The dancer was followed by spots from either side which was very effective but which lost something with the stark reality of the two light

operators visible to the audience. I wondered why a form of blind couldn't have been constructed.

It's interesting that the first piece should be followed by a dance by an individual. The sequence seemed to fit both the evening and possibly indicates a direction the company is taking towards individual interpretation.

Paperbird was an oriental piece danced by Zsuzsa Szabo. It was an effective yet short dance. The influence of Kathleen and Zsuzsa, the artistic directors, could be seen throughout most of the performance. Szabo has an interesting affinity towards oriental leg & arm movements which adds interesting variety to the dance.

Also, a company like this can incorporate natural movements and explore a wider realm of expression than traditional dancers. Driscoll on the other hand seems to be striving for a soul-searching expression; wit-

ness in her dances, the repeated extension of the arms, at times overdone but nonetheless effective in evoking a mood of striving, of reaching, of the arts.

Islands involved almost all of the dancers and was greatly enhanced by the lighting (designed by Mark Kristmanson) and the costuming (Charlotte Glencross) as were all the other dances. Kathleen Irwin and Laurie Laman were responsible for the design and realization of most of the costumes.

Perhaps the themes of interaction, of fun, of exploration and individual interpretation in a group were best realized in the final three dances. Conversations with Szabo and Driscoll lived up to its name. Varsity Drag choreographed by Vicki Forrester was a fun-loving 1920's vaudeville number. The company wasn't quite as smooth or dramatic for this type of number which demanded a bit of hamming it up. To me the

culmination of the night came appropriately in the last dance "Sneaking Around." In a joyful interpretation of music by Charles Mingus the company delighted the audience through forms created not only with their bodies but with a large silk sheet under which they crawled and danced and around which they interacted with childlike mischievousness.

Although the company suffered from the physical limitations of Mem Hall, especially since we could hear their feet on the stage floor, it was the comfortable intimate atmosphere of Mem Hall which added in many respects to the performance. Whether or not it is good to be so close to the performers I don't know. An indication of the quality of the performance was my feelings afterwards. I felt a sense of longing to dance or sing or paint; to at least accept a challenge and successfully complete it.

Annual Gilbert and Sullivan production nears

Twelfth Night comes to TNB

Twelfth Night, Shakespeare's most popular comedy is the definitive confection for laughter, with such ingredients as mistaken identities, disguise, tomfoolery and romance. Like all great comedies it has its darker side. The hilarious mix-ups and rambunctious carryings-on are offset by the pangs of unrequited love and humiliation of the absurd Malvolio.

Twelfth Night is TNB's 1980 offering for its Shakespeare In Performance Program. This program which was inaugurated last year, makes a Shakespearean play annually accessible to the province's students. Arrangement is made with the Department of Education for the schools to study *Twelfth Night*. A special guide to

the production has been prepared by two New Brunswick teachers and sent by TNB to each student and teacher attending a performance.

The all-star cast is directed by Malcolm Black, who staged *Twelfth Night* to critics acclaim at the Bastion Theatre in Victoria last year, with set design by Phillip Silver, costume design by Jack Simon, and lighting design by Geoff George.

Twelfth Night opens at The Playhouse in Fredericton on March 29. After a week's run there, the show will start its two-week tour of the province. Several matinee performances are planned before the play closes in Saint John on April 19.

Lecture on folk songs given

Those of you who didn't happen to be at Memorial Hall on March 19th missed one of UNB's most extraordinary lectures. Dr. Sandy Ives, of the University of Maine, delivered a lecture on the creation and existence of folksongs in the New England States and Maritime Provinces.

Mr. Ives who has researched extensively into the lives of several prominent folksingers in Maine and New Brunswick, makes it his practice to delve into the history and musical quality of the folksongs. In his lecture, he gave the audience a rundown on "The Ballad of John Stubbs." Created in the lumber camps of Maine, the song titles of the death of a young lumberman and of the care which he received from his comrades during his brief illness. Professor Ives research is very thorough. After quoting the line "They

moved him from the lower bed into the upper berth," he interpreted it as being an act of kindness - the upper berth being warmer because of its elevation.

Prof. Ives also discussed the musical quality of the song, noting that each verse consisted of two sections, one needing a fairly high voice range, the other requiring a low range. The span of the tone makes it difficult for a singer with a limited range or a limited determination. Mr. Ives punctuated his lecture with brief examples of the music he has researched ending with a brief question and answer period.

The talk clearly demonstrated something which Prof. Ives has known for a long time - that folksongs are a necessary and sincere form of artistic self-expression, which honours the language and music of the common man.

On April 10th the audience at the Playhouse will be transported to far away Japan when the curtain goes up on *The Mikado* the fifth annual production of the Gilbert and Sullivan Society of Fredericton.

There is no question that *The Mikado* is the best known and perhaps, the most popular of all the Gilbert & Sullivan Comic Operas. Set in the fictional Japanese town of Titipu, it features the usual set of Gilbertian characters: the star crossed lovers, Nanki Poo and Yum Yum-played by Kevin Patterson and Pat Hrynkiw (Pat is a talented newcomer to the Society); the pompous civil servant, Pooh-Bah - played by the society stalwart Frank Good; the aging spinster who badly wants a man, any man, Katisha - played by Constance Atherton; the inept anti-hero (Gilbert's forerunner to Woody Allen) Ko Ko, played by Richard Scott and the powerful emperor himself, *The Mikado* who would like to be nasty but doesn't somehow make it - played by Patrick Thompson.

The antics of all these characters are backed up by a chorus of giggling Japanese maidens and inscrutable Oriental gentlemen. This chorus is proud to boast many faculty members and former UNB students among its ranks.

All these people have been rehearsing feverishly under the guidance of Director Micki Bauman and Musical Directors Joyce Watling and Sue Doak, with their stylized Japanese movements choreographed by Psychology Grad student Vivienne Anderson. Trying to get over fifty chorus members (some with two left feet) to learn the dances and then move in unison has been no mean feat for Anderson, especially when everyone has also to flutter their fans at the same time. But the job

has been well done and the final effect is impressive.

Costumes for the production were designed by the N.B. Craft School Director George Fry and executed by Costume Mistresses Ann Cameron and Props Mistress, Ramona Francis.

Sets for the show have been made by a team of carpenters and painters, who included two university administrators, a local doctor and an army major.

The Mikado promises to live up to the tradition established in five

short years by the Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Fredericton, in offering a splendid evening of musical comedy and entertainment.

Tickets are \$5 for adults and \$3 for students and children. The Dress Rehearsal on Wednesday April 9th will be Buck Night.

Tickets are now on sale at UNB Bookstore, Harmony Earth Stores, Towers Jewellers, Westminster Books, The Deli and the Panhandler.



JUDY KAVANAGH Photo

Richard Scott and Alexis Erwin prepare for the *Mikado*, appearing April 10, 11 and 12 at the Playhouse.