

Singing, strutting and sweating

Mickey Trigiani

The *Petty Bourgeois Revue* is a whimsical farce poking fun at various aspects of middle-class society and transmitting its message via the talents of its two actors and the audience's imagination.

Currently playing until September 30 at the Adelaide Court Theater, the loosely constructed play relying on wordy and witty jabs, a few props and the magic of storytelling should appeal to those who appreciate liberal attacks on our conservative society.

Michael Glassbourg who performs solo in Part I of the Revue also wrote the majority of its songs and skits. Areas of investigation include pollution, violence, nuclear energy, our legal system, God and even John Denver. Glassbourg also presents a dark, off-beat interpretation of Dracula and saves a corner of his show for "poetry lovers all" (garbageman and the moo cow are featured).

Part I's most balanced offering is its "Apocalypso" ending. A musical poem spoofing various middle-class metiers, it is extended and completed by a rhythmic illustration (with piano accompaniment) of our fast-paced daily rituals.

Glassbourg speaks, sings, struts and sweats his material. This rapport is extended to his audience whose greatest challenge lies in trying to apply elements of common sense to such an abstract work.

The second part of the show is entitled "Tillie's Punctured Romance". Although written by musician—and convict—Charlie Leeds 20 years earlier, it is basically an extension of Part I's attack on God with a focus on the tribulations of Noah and his ark.

Although there are three characters in Part II, the versatile Simon Malgogot is the only actor who appears on stage. His mastery of the monologue and of storytelling allows this triple portrayal to work effectively. Leeds' poem is a bold portrayal of Noah's relationship with God. Noah's stories of booze and orgies and of his ordeal often reveal questions we may have at one time wanted to pose. "God's a junkie," he says at one point and finally, "He's flipped, that's all. He just sits around thinking up things to do."

Behind Noah's exaggerated and outrageous story lies a protest. The majority of the spectators indicated their comprehension of it by their laughter.

The *Petty Bourgeois Revue* runs 70 minutes with no intermission and as indicated by the areas attacked, it packs a wallop in that time-span. A viewing will cost you between \$4 and \$6 depending on which evening you attend. Of note to students is the "Pay What You Can", Sunday matinee.

Those of you who have never visited the Adelaide Court Theater should plan an outing there in the near future. Located on 57 Adelaide Street just west of Church, the Theater houses three resident companies: Le Theatre du P'tit Bonheur (all French theater), New Theater and the Open Circle Theater. Last year all three of the companies moved into the present building on Adelaide which used to be the old York County Courthouse (circa. 1853). The courthouse was restored at a cost of \$2.5 million and now contains two performing spaces: the Court Theater on the first floor and the larger Adelaide Theater upstairs. In addition to saving the building

from demolition, the restoration has given the companies a permanent home.

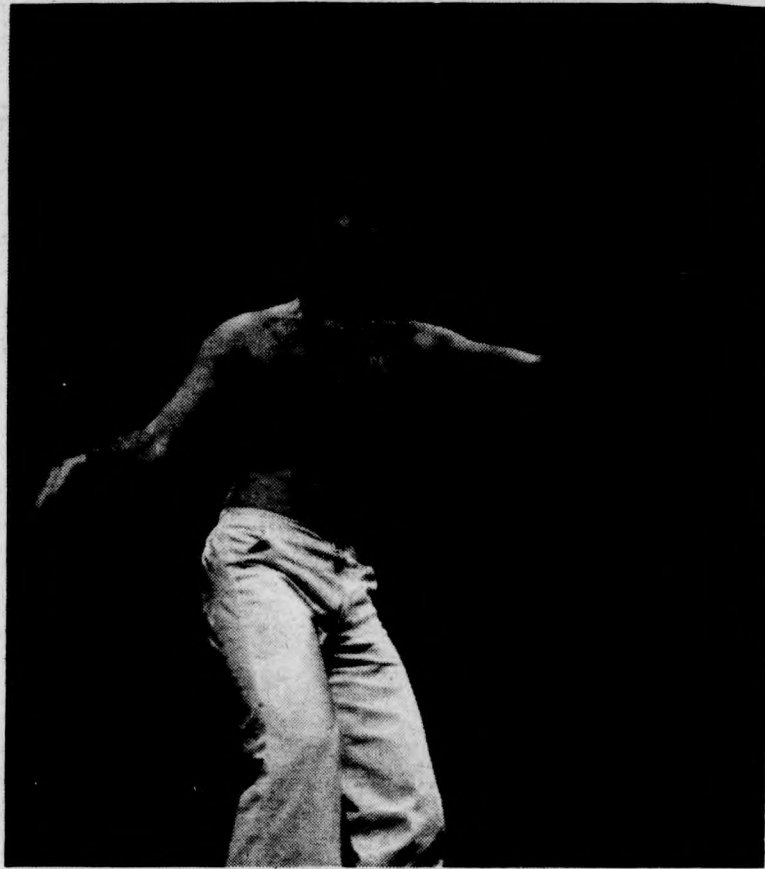
Two new additions to the theater complex are visible this year. Accessible from the lobby of the playhouse is Troopers, an authentic English pub with a beautiful mahogany bar. Located downstairs from the pub is the two-month-old Cafe des Beaux Arts. It features seven fixed price five course dinners costing between \$9.25 and \$15.25 (sans vin). Patrons of the intimate cellar-like restaurant have indicated the authenticity and quality of the French cuisine.

Highlights of this year's program at the ACT include *Maria Chapdelaine* (TBP), a French-Canadian classic adapted

by Armand Laroche opening September 20 in the Adelaide Theater followed by *American Buffalo* on October 4. This play will be staged by Errant Productions, the same group that brought *Anne of Green Gables* to the O'Keefe Center. *La Sagouine* (in English) should follow around November 8.

Le Theatre du P'tit Bonheur will also feature Moliere's *Les Femmes Savantes* and Thornton Wilder's *Notre Petite Ville* (Our Town), later in the season.

For further information contact the Adelaide Court Theater box office at 363-4977 or look for listings in the Toronto dailies. Any queries regarding Le Cafe des Beaux Arts may be directed at Jean-Paul, 868-1641.



Dancer Michael Glassbourg performs Kung Fu

SOME PRICKS, SOME KICKS

Stuart Ross

Beckett/Beckett by Vivian Mercier, Oxford University Press, 1979, 254 pp., \$4.70.

Samuel Beckett's work is difficult for the critics. It is ambiguous, abstract, and seemingly understated. There have been a few good books on his writings, though, and Vivian Mercier's is an admirable attempt which fails in many ways but contains some worthwhile bits. Discussing themes often previously explored (though not always worth exploring), Mercier uses a fresh approach, dealing with the "polar opposites" in Beckett's work, the dialectic that he sees emerging. And so we are presented with chapters such as "Thesis/Antithesis" and "Painting/Music". Most of which, unfortunately, is quite unreadable.

The books on Beckett that have succeeded are those which have captured the 'spirit' of his writing: the humor, the despair. Mercier's is dry, overly-academic, and humorless. My favorite book on the man is Michael Robinson's *The Long Sonata of the Dead*, written out of a real love for Beckett's works. Another book which remains highly intellectual, and yet doesn't ignore the excitement of Beckett's writings, is A. Alvarez's *Samuel Beckett*. These two studies send you back to Beckett with a real sense of adventure, and a fresh joy (that bizarre joy derived from total desolation).

Vivian Mercier continually reminds us of those four times that he spoke with Beckett. He

may be giving, as he states, a very personal view, but it is also pompous and self-indulgent (qualities better left in the hands of Peter O'Toole). Mercier begins to seem like a former Elvis Presley bodyguard finally revealing the Complete and True Story.

But *Beckett/Beckett* is not devoid of redeeming social significance. There is actually some good stuff if your machete doesn't become dulled before the fourth chapter, "Classicism/Absurdism". It's a fine discussion of Beckett's influences, from Sartre to Racine, who Mercier hails as Beckett's model. Also interesting is his explanation of the cyclical form of Beckett's novels and plays.

The chapter, "Artist/Philosopher", contains a beautiful extract from a 1961 interview in *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, in which Beckett explains that he never read philosophers because "I never understand anything they write." This chapter is great, or would have been, had Mercier not gotten so trivial and intensely serious about a subject which even Beckett seems to consider not worth discussing. Mercier tries too hard to make concrete the philosophical abstractions that Beckett works with.

If Vivian Mercer wakes up one morning, a roaming body from Beckett's *The Lost Ones*, inside "a flattened cylinder fifty metres round and eighteen high for the sake of harmony," I don't imagine he'll succeed in explaining himself out of it.



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