



Neptune's production of Hugh Leonard's *The Au Pair Man*

Hilarious play poorly presented

by donalee moulton

Neptune's second performance of the season, *The Au Pair Man* is, unlike the first, a comedy, and, unlike the first, stilted, poorly directed and poorly acted.

The play consists of two characters, an upper class eccentric-school educated, boorish woman and her lower class, uneducated, unrefined au pair man.

The play itself is hilarious. The female reigns supreme over the male and is said to be symbolic of England and Ireland. Flo Patterson, a familiar face at Neptune, plays the female while David Schurman, a face which must soon become familiar, plays the au pair man.

Paterson is atrocious, not only does she fumble lines, her gestures are awkward and her movements uncoordinated, resulting in mistakes which neither adlibbing or "fast moving" can correct. She at no time throughout the performance appears at ease, the audience is well aware that she is acting, an awareness that is not usually present when Ms. Paterson performs. One is left with the distinct impression that Ms. Paterson has not rehearsed properly.

Schurman, by comparison, can only come out looking good, but because the play has already been jeopardized, not

exceedingly good. The only dark shadow in "Othello", Schurman is the only light in *The Au Pair Man*. He too was obviously role playing in Act I, but in Act II he is easy, natural and endearing. He is truly *The Au Pair Man*. This naturalness and ease is in part due to the literary tactics of the playwright and perhaps somewhat to the director (although this seems most improbable) but credit must be given to Schurman. At last we see Schurman as a fine performer (although Shakespeare is definitely not his forte). With such a performance as Schurman gives, one can forget, at least temporarily, the uncomfortableness Paterson has created and enjoy the play. And it is meant to be enjoyed.

As with the former Neptune production, lavish praise must be given to the set designer and the costume designer.

There is, however, hope for *The Au Pair Man*. The play is not difficult and it is entertaining. While the directing is pitiful, half the acting is commendable and the other half could be. Ms. Paterson is a first rate performer. She just literally, on opening night, did not know what she was saying. With increased effort and rehearsing, *The Au Pair Man* can become a close second to Neville's "Othello".

Midday love a success

Neptune Theatre has just finished their second successful showing of Harold Pinter's *The Lover*. *The Lover* is not only a well-performed play, it is also the company's first attempt at noon time theatre.

From noon until 12:45 *The Lover* is performed in an informal atmosphere. The audience is encouraged to bring a lunch or buy it in the lobby from *The Bean Sprout*. Tickets, in accordance with this informality, can be purchased at a reasonable price of \$2.00.

The Lover itself is a one act play which centers on the relationship between Sarah (Susan Wright) and her husband Richard (Keith Dinicol). Sarah's life with Richard is basically boring, mundane, and ritualized. There is, however, one unique feature in their relationship—total honesty. And because of this

Sarah has told Richard she has a lover; indeed Richard stays away so Sarah can entertain him! Richard, less involved than Sarah, does keep a mistress for those times when he needs amusement and "pleasure".

There is another interesting aspect to Sarah and Richard, their respective lovers are themselves (in true Pinter fashion). This rather bizarre relationship exists because Sarah cannot act out her sexual fantasies with her husband—that is not the purpose of a steady, dependable man. Therefore she must create a lover, and Richard in turn must have a mistress. (A wife cannot indulge in sexual activity and enjoy it, or she is not a "good" wife).

Although rather heavy fare for a relaxing noon, the play is well acted, fast moving and entertaining. Sometimes the

play becomes a little suffocating but this is Pinter and not a reflection of the Neptune production. A more family-oriented plot would have been appropriate.

As the two year old in the back said during the "tea" scene, "Now what's going on Mommy?" I think she may have spoken for all of us.

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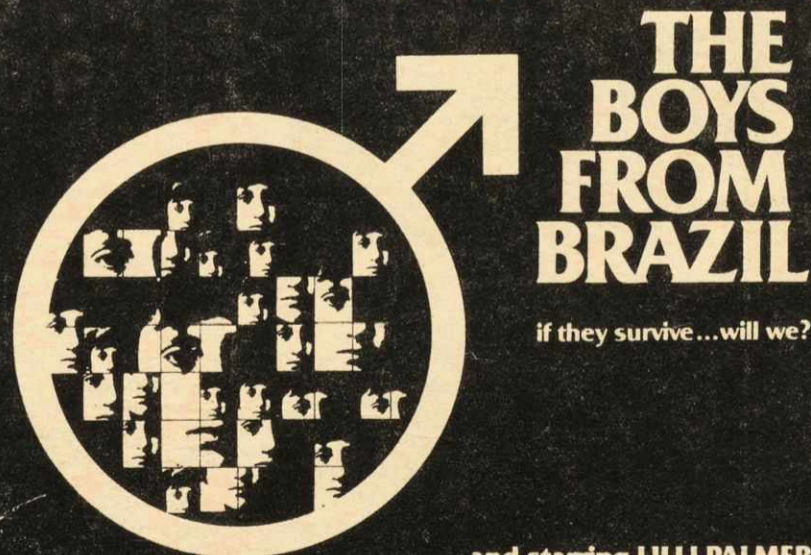
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