

## Black light theatre

Prague in the second half of the fifties had become a theatre laboratory watched with interest by artists and theatre goers from near and far. The traditional theatre, in a state of doldrums, had little to offer socially or artistically and many artists turned their thoughts to new forms of theatrical expression-forms and styles appealing to contemporary audiences where the more conventional presentations failed.

One of the ventures of these years was the Black Theatre, which established itself in 1959. The idea of creating a temporary or permanent illusion of invisibility on the stage is one of long standing. The invisible actor, clad in black and working floodlit against a black back-cloth while performing his spellbinding tricks, has, no doubt, thrilled and astounded generations of spectators. Remember the fascination, marvels and surprises of childhood watching conjurers

### Pork seminar

"Developing Production for Export Markets" is the theme of a pork seminar to be held in Banff, Alberta, January 23 to 26, 1974.

Senior instructor for the production sessions will be Dr. Emmett Stevermer, Associate Professor and livestock extension specialist at Iowa State University. His sessions will focus on such topics as factors influencing reproductive efficiency, baby pig mortality, gestating sow management, and various feeding systems.

Mr. Ray Day, General Manager of the Pigs and Bacon Commission of Ireland, will be leading the marketing sessions. These will cover the international outlook for pork, problems of stabilization, quality and quantity control, use of contracts, and role of producer organizations.

Both of these instructors will have a roster of other resource people from private industry, government and university to assist in the lecture and workshop-discussion sessions.

The seminar is designed for hog producers, agribusiness representatives, extension personnel and others involved in pork production. The program is jointly arranged by The University of Alberta, Western Hog Producers' Association and Alberta Hog Producers' Marketing Board.

For more details about this Pork Seminar and an application form, contact the Department of Extension, The University of Alberta, Ph. 432-3029.

performing at fairs and variety shows.

The "Black Cabinet" technique was not only used as a source of entertainment; it also served more serious purposes - that of increasing the simple folk's respect of authority. This almost fairy-tale advantage of permanent or temporary invisibility, which is the very core of The Black Theatre technique was in the past used exclusively as a trick, eliciting a gasp of admiration from the overawed and baffled audience. When used in the theatre it only served the same purpose. The idea was simply to achieve a special effect but not to carry it any further.

Later, puppet theatres, based in Prague, discovered the advantages of the extensive use of the 'Black Cabinet' theatrical effect. An interesting point here is that the group who created Prague's Black Theatre all came from the ranks of students at the Faculty of Puppetry, Academy of Drama and Musical Arts. Experimenting with and exploring all facets of the 'black cabinet' these artists have arrived at an entirely new conception of theatrical procedure.

Here the actor-dancer - that artist who at all times and in all genres was the mainstay of the performance making use of the 'black cabinet' principle - disappears right in front of us. The actor in the Black Theatre may be the invisible operator of other actors, this skill approaching closely that of a puppet operator. But this same artist uses his talents in the role of a legitimate theatre actor as well, though more frequently through pantomime and ballet and in the future even through a blend of operatic techniques.

Work in the Black Theatre differs basically from acting in legitimate theatre in that the actor can be operated by another invisible actor and through the magic of the 'Black Cabinet', the actor can use normal theatrical means in all manner of ways which in the legitimate theatre would be impossible. The wonderful possibilities of vanishing and reappearing, of being operated by unseen hands enable the actor to forget he has human limitations set by the laws of

nature; he is, in fact, free from the bonds of reality. So, amazing things can happen like an actor losing his head or suddenly acquiring three, like walking on air, ignoring the pull of gravity or turning into a fairy-tale giant and other weird and wonderful things. In short, these artists switch from puppet operators to human actors but in ways other companies would not dream of or, at the best, would find very difficult to achieve.

The company in a Black Theatre production is made up of human actors and objects that act, though sometimes those objects are simply objects - more often than not they are symbols and metaphors. Thus the animated object achieves an equal partnership with the actor. The forms these objects take vary from that of straightforward puppets to simple everyday things, say a chair, table, briefs, one dumbbell, a revolver or a fan - which in no way pretend to be animated human beings.

Operated by invisible actors, a number of these objects, whenever the story requires it, act and get involved in senses and situations together. The build up between actors and objects results in an interaction which would never be feasible in the conventional theatre. Action between actors and puppets is used in some puppet groups. This, to some degree, may seem similar but in fact, is only a nascent form of Black Theatre. The Black Theatre does not claim priority in handling themes and questions which would remain outside the scope of other types of theatre. Its strength lies in its ability to approach issues which in conventional productions would be overlooked.

And now, after just completing a highly successful year long run at the famous Sadler Wells Theatre in London, England, this same troupe is coming to Canada. Edmonton audiences will have the opportunity of viewing this famous Czech company on the evening of February 5, 1974 at 8:30 p.m. at the Jubilee Auditorium.

## DINING OUT

with  
Satya Das

I was tired of the same old food. Really couldn't afford to go out for dinner. And I wanted some good steak very badly.

Solution: Blackbeards for lunch.

This unique restaurant is located adjacent to the main floor of the Edmonton House apartment block and is one of the few places in town where a heavy emphasis on decor and atmosphere does not interfere with the quality of the kitchen.

As soon as you open the heavy wooden door, to be confronted by a gyroscope, barrels of rum, chains suspended from the ceiling, rope rigging around tables, and aquaria with exotic fish, you realize you are inside a pirate ship.

The waitresses or "wenches" are bedecked in the serving maid attire of 18th century Europe while the waiters wear striped shirts, long hair, and a loosely tied handkerchief about their heads.

The tables are actual hatchcovers from ships which sank in the Caribbean, sealed in a plasticized material, often decorated with pirate relics.

As far as the luncheon menu goes, Blackbeard's offers steak sandwiches, ground sirloin, and spareribs.

Included with every order is all the salad you can eat from their self-serve salad bar.

The salad bar starts off at one end with chunks of lettuce, then progresses to garbanzo beans, pinto beans, pickled carrot, beets, olives, croutons, pickles of various kinds and slices of french bread.

A variety of dressings complement the salad, including one teasingly titled 'sexy dressing.'

The wine list is of adequate length, and provides a good selection (for Edmonton winelists, at any rate) of Bordeaux and Burgundy.

We both had steak sandwiches (\$3.35 including salad) and asked for a bottle of Andre's Similkameen, an excellent Canadian Bordeaux at \$2.50.

The steaks were sirloin, approximately six ounces, and about an inch thick.

They were tender, and came as we asked for them (medium). They were served on a slice of garlic bread, and with addition of a baked potato (25 cents) made a rather agreeable lunch.

It went very nicely with the Similkameen.

It is a good idea to go for lunch rather than for dinner because inflation seems to set in between afternoon and evening.

For example, the price of the baked potato jumps from 25 cents in the afternoon to 75 cents in the evening.

The total tab came to less than \$10 for two, including wine. A nice way to enjoy a touch of dinner luxury at about half the cost.

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