

# Mime — the art of movement

by donalee moulton

The art of mime has become the theatre of mime, and one of its foremost exponents is Claude Kipnis. Kipnis, a student of probably the world's most renowned mime artist, Marcel Marceau, recently performed in Halifax giving the metro area one of its few glimpses of professionally-performed and internationally-acclaimed mime.

In a manner of speaking the show resembled its performers in that it was flexible, yet always perfectly controlled. The first half of the program consisted of a series of short comedy sketches. In two of these Kipnis was the prime element, playing at one time a visitor to a party, at another a drunk. Yet he was not the whole show as ample opportunity was given the rest of the company to display effectively their individual and group abilities.

The second half of the show entered the realm of the dramatic, bordering simultaneously (or so it seemed) on the tragic and the surrealistic. Kipnis portrayed a cool Arthur Fonzerelli-type character on a trip through an art museum. During the journey various portraits came alive and certain incidents occurred. Embodied in much of this skit were elements of humour and light comedy, but the essence of the act lay in another dimension.

Mime is a basic form of communication that has become an art. The performer of mime has a dual task: he must make the emotional, or the non-physical, aspect of the work explicit through facial expressions and gestures; but even more, a mimier must make material objects appear to exist by use of gesture and symbolic expression. To do this he must be both an actor and a magician, making the invisible visible.

Kipnis, and those of his profession like him who represent perfection in pantomime, are in complete control of the roles they play as much mentally as they are physically. There is no doubt when they portray a circus performance, for example, that the audience can visualize the circus with all its props and its collection of human oddities. And herein lies the excitement inherent in mime. The audience must use their imagination, guided by the imagination of the performers. But, as more is left up to the imagination, it is only the most highly-talented artists who can skillfully guide the imagination of their viewers. Kipnis and his group, however, have gone beyond this for the audience is never aware of any guidance or control on the part of the players—they are merely aware that they are entertaining themselves as they are being entertained.



Claude Kipnis Mime Theatre perform "The Crowd" to the music of Ben Johnston at last week's performance in the Cohn.

## The Roost is different

by Cheryl Downton

Soft light from flickering candles casts a warm glow about the room; a comfy couch and cushions atop boxes surround colourfully-painted tables constructed from telephone company cable rolls; a single toned light illuminates the slightly raised stage where artists share their music with those gathered 'round; there is a faint smell of coffee and a young artist sketches performers upon the stage. Best of all, anyone can be a part of it every Saturday night beginning at eight o'clock.

**The Roost** is Halifax's newest coffee house to open this fall, and if its Saturday night opening is any indication, it will be an ideal place to go and just listen to the music, or one can just as easily be a performer.

The first night's entertainment was as varied as it was enjoyable: the trio of Brian MacKenzie, Kathy Keating and David Rockwell were well received. Kathy has a beautiful, strong voice and Brian and David

play excellent guitar. Al Chaddick arrived from a sail around Chester and played several of his original works, including a song about

national unity with a twist, entitled **Farewell Canada**. Dennis Brown and Kenny Patterson entertained with banjo and guitar.

The atmosphere is relaxed and one can enjoy an evening out where

liquor is not served and not missed. It's encouragingly inexpensive—only 50c—and well worth checking into. Located in the youth centre (basement) of the YMCA on South Park Street, it is the means to fulfill an ambition for the five young

people who do the organizing for **The Roost**; an ambition well deserving of accolades.

## Hummingbirds to sing

America's foremost gospel singers, **The Dixie Hummingbirds** appear at the Rebecca Cohn Auditorium, Thursday, October 27 at 8:30 p.m.

Sly Stone and Stevie Wonder have composed songs for the Group. Paul Simon selected them to back his hit single "Loves Me Like A Rock". The National Association of Television and Recording Artists has named them Best Gospel Group. The earthy fervour of their music all but invites you up onstage, and critics report that their version of "Loves Me Like A Rock" is richer than the original.

The group that was later to become the **Dixie Hummingbirds** was organized by James David in 1928. "In the beginning we used to sing the old Negro spirituals. They have a lot of soul and they make you feel good, but they didn't make you want to get up and stomp your foot and shout".

Although **The Hummingbirds** date back 45 years, they are new to the rock cafe crowd. Their music

always follows the spiritual vein; but in speaking about other gospel singers who have drifted into rock and roll, Davis says, "They didn't try to change the way they were singing. The only thing was, instead of saying 'Jesus' they said 'My Baby'. The two are interchangeable—they are both about love".

James Davis, tenor Bachee Thomas and lead singer Ira Tucker (whose daughter was with the Supremes and whose son is now managing Stevie Wonder's career)

are the original Hummingbirds. Bass William Bobo ("God planted a tuba in this throat"); the finest guitarist this side of B.B. King, Harold Carroll; and James Walker, who writes a lot of the group's song material, are the "Newcomers" having joined since 1952.

As James Davis puts it, "The first 40 years were a warm-up. Now we're really good".

For ticket information, call the Arts Centre Box Office at 424-2298.



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