

Red Noses pushes the medium

by Mark Anderson

Peter Barnes' plays are like theatrical laboratories.

Red Noses by Peter Barnes
Dalhousie Theatre Department
Productions
Directed by Patrick Christopher

They constantly push the medium in new and strange directions, exploring the limits of the relationship between action and audience. But this experimentation is far from random; it is extremely pointed. Calling *Red Noses* a comedy is misleading; it is more of a comedic front for Barnes' philosophical commentary. Black humour is taken to an extreme — audiences are surprised at what they find themselves laughing at.

Barnes seems to have an undertone of "Where is your precious morality now?" as we laugh at the jokes told by Father Flote, standing beneath two recently hung individuals. *Red Noses* is designed to shake up our assumptions about our existence: Dalhousie's current production succeeds in having this effect.

The story is about the plague in Medieval Europe, and how in desperation, Father Flote creates a band of merry wanderers to fight the oncoming pestilence with mirth. He enlists, in mock-typical episodes, the help of some likely and unlikely characters (two soldiers who are arguing about

who gets to rape a nun first). The band comes into conflict with ravens that feed on the dead of the plague, and the religious powers that be.

But plot is significant only in how it is used to set up the jokes and more importantly, the ideas that underlie. Our human weaknesses are exposed and laughed at, as the audience is pulled in and out complete despair, consoling themselves in the meantime with the ridiculous carnival antics of the Red Noses.

This play can be darker than some of the darkest tragedy; its attacks are brutally direct. Barnes' scathing commentary on Catholicism is one of the cornerstones of the play, and its treatment probably has and will shock some of the more sensitive theatre-goers.

Dalhousie's production has many merits. The staging is appropriately dark, focusing most of its action on an inclined half circle that revolves for different uses and situations. This piece creates interesting blocking, and was well chosen and executed. The lighting and projected backdrop achieve their atmospheric purposes with the necessary subtlety.

And the actors. Adam Pettle as Sonnerie, a mute juggler who speaks solely through the jingling of the bells on his suit, brings a bit of enchantment to the Red Noses troupe, and is perhaps the most important contribution to the atmosphere of the play. One gets the sense that he could play this role with any company on any stage, and be a valuable addition.

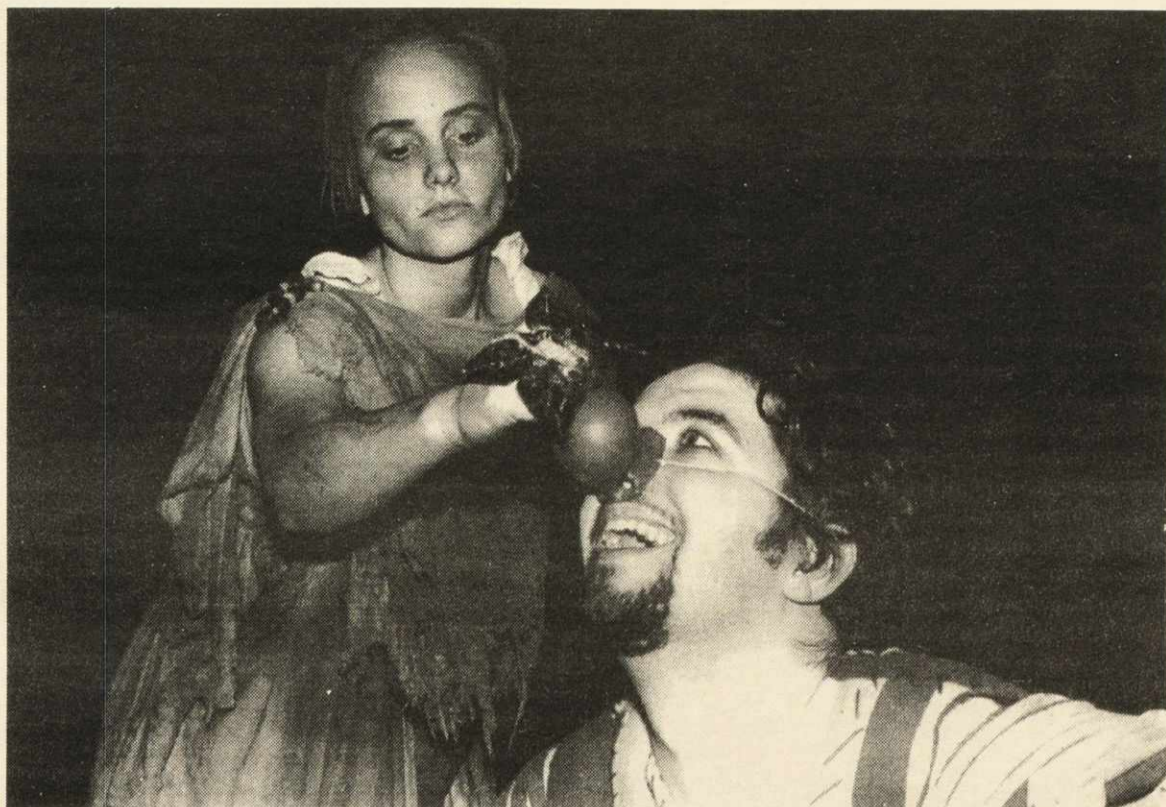


PHOTO: JAMES BEDDINGTON

Marcel Boulet, as Father Flote, showed a good understanding of the rather difficult role of a rather bizarre character, having to switch from cornball Vaudeville one-liners to sincere expressions of religious devotion at the turn of a sentence. He shows potential to become a very strong actor. There were certainly other actors and other good performances (although an unnamed indi-

vidual should stop trying to be Martin Short and develop his own style) but Boulet and Pettle stood out.

Sometimes the director seemed to have nailed what Barnes intended, other times the point may have been missed (e.g., the line "I don't have time to make any woman come" is not supposed to be played straight).

The play is as dark as it is funny, probably darker. For this reason I

have to question the tone of a few scenes, especially the joyful circular dance performed by the cast at the end of the play. Barnes' is just not this happy.

But now that I have thoroughly annoyed the director, I have to say that overall this was an good effort, a solid example of cutting edge theatre that everyone should be exposed to at some point.

film 101

by Alan Martin

Well, this is my last article of the school year and I have chosen the gritty tale of *Sid & Nancy*. I had intended to see this film for a while, Gary Oldman being one of the greatest talents of our time. And as expected, it was incredible!

Sid & Nancy is, of course, the story of the tragic fate of Sid Vicious, of the Sex Pistols, and his girlfriend Nancy. The movie begins close to the end, with Sid (Gary Oldman) staring blankly into space. He is in a police station being interrogated.

The officer's words are the first we hear, and they set the entire premise. "Who dialed 9-1-1?" His next question brings us to where it all started, "Where did you meet her?"

"I met her at Tina's" is Sid's reply. We then cut to our own introduction of Nancy, with her sitting on the couch smoking up with a friend. Her first words foreshadow the picture, as she says that hash is a waste of time, and are there any needles.

The film continues to show us the rise and fall of The Sex Pistols, coupled with Sid and Nancy's twisted, heroin-injected love affair. In past articles I have focused my attention on directing, writing and even editing — but in this feature the acting stood out.

In particular, Gary Oldman is priceless in this role. From his drunken stage antics, to his strung out, gritty heroin scenes, Gary truly embodied Sid!

It is not the acting alone, however, that made this film all that it was. The writing and directing of Alex Cox was also terrific, with incredible montage editing flipping from the drug scenes, to the calm of the morning and back again. All of this was topped off with the great soundtrack of the Sex Pistols and the Pogues.

An overall combination for a hundred and ten minutes of wild entertainment!

Gwen Noah dance benefit



by James Beddington

This evening, some of the most prominent members of the arts community in Nova Scotia will be flocking to the Birdland Cabaret. The event is being held in support of Gwen Noah Dance. Noah has assembled a wide variety of talent for

the evening, including Jest In Time and local band, Coyote.

The evening is being hosted by Ed Macdonald, writer for both CBC's "He'd Be Your Mother's Father's Cousin" and for "This Hour Has 22 Minutes." His Co-Host will be Carol Sinclair, who has just appeared in Neptune's "Safe Haven" and has

been involved in productions of numerous stage and radio plays.

Both Ian Makinnon and Brian Bourne of Rawlins Cross will be performing before they go on tour. Also appearing will be Cathy Jones, who is just back from the Juno's. Jones was one of the original members of "CODCO," and is now in "This Hour Has 22 Minutes."

In addition, there will be the comedic performance artist Renée Penney and guitarist Mark Macmillan, who has been playing to Halifax audiences since 1972. And there is more: saxophonist/composer Paul Cram of "Upstream Music" and "The Down There Quartet," Marguerite McNeil, a veteran of almost 40 years in all areas of theatre, and Bryden MacDonald, a writer, director and performer who has worked with Neptune Theatre and Jest In Time.

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