

Arts page cultural review:

In a lesser state of egomania the arts page critics take a retrospect view of the year

On campus:

Terry Donnelly

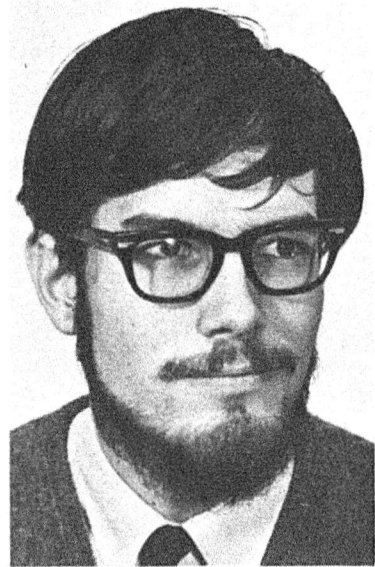
The new Students' Union Building, with its 750-seat theatre, provided new impetus this year to on-campus cultural activities, and some students rose to meet the challenge: hopefully, however, even greater use of the theatre will be made next year.

The newly-formed Theatre Committee, a group designed to bring entertainment to the theatre, brought in some outside entertainers, such as the mime Claude St.-Denis. Response to some of these events was poor, but in a year of experiment this was to be expected. Next year the Committee will undoubtedly have a better idea of what the student public wants.

It was a great disappointment that the planned production of Aristophanes' *The Frogs* had to be cancelled—this is the type of thing ideally suited to the theatre, to the potential audiences, and to the amateur student actors who can partake in such productions.

Only one major student-produced play was held in the theatre. This was John Osborne's *Luther*, presented by the Newman players. The production was horribly inconsistent and, despite some awfully good acting, altogether a painful experience. It should, however, teach future directors something about the use of the theatre: for example, the fact that the projected backdrops are completely ineffective when they look like projections and not like backdrops.

The other big theatrical event of the year was the Jubilaires' production of *Finian's Rainbow*, in the



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Jubilee Auditorium. It is unfortunate that audience sizes forbid the Jubilaires' moving into the SUB Theatre; an amateur group has a hard time being convincing in the cavernous proportions of the Auditorium.

Three student musical groups, the Mixed Chorus, the Male Chorus, and the Symphony, all had successful years. A number of musical programs were also presented by the Department of Music, all free of charge—these were certainly a valuable aspect of the entertainment scene on the campus.

Studio Theatre, the dramatical outlet of the Department of Drama, featured a varied program: Turgenev's *A Month in the Country*, Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, and Wilfred Watson's Centennial play

O Holy Ghost . . . Ben Johnson's *Volpone* is yet to come.

By way of signing off for the year, I'd like to tender my apologies to any groups which didn't get sufficient publicity on the Arts Pages this year. Much of this was due to lack of space, much to the fact that the pages are assembled almost a week before they appear.

On the other hand, I'd like to remind one or two groups that all Gateway critics are entitled to an honest critical opinion. If it's bad, then the critic has the right to say that it is bad, and he tends to be annoyed when some representative of a group whose work has been criticized goes into a rage. The Arts Page is not here to flatter anyone's ego (except perhaps the critic's), and it is not here to give an automatic laudation to any student production.

Drama and art:

Bill Pasnak

The drama this year has been a very mixed bag. This in itself is a very encouraging sign. It suggests that there is a large enough interest in the theatre to support more than one type of production.

There have been of course the usual productions by the Citadel and Studio Theatre, and numerous other productions by such groups as the Friendship Guild, the Newman Club, etc. Accordingly, there has been a wide range between bad and excellent commercial and experimental.

One curious fact is that we find this range in the productions of the Citadel alone. Their production of *Hedda Gabler* was an experimental and successful rendition of a rather conventional piece. *The Owl and the Pussycat* was both commercial and bad. *Tiny Alice*, although controversial in its meaning, was not very well produced.

The same diversity may be found in the Studio Theatre productions this year. *A Month in the Country* was conventional and not very good. *'Dip'* was experimental.

This diversity is a healthy one. Commercial theatre is not bad. It is necessary to preserve public interest. Its only danger is that companies who produce it often fall into tired clichés and give a bad performance.

Of course, experimental theatre has its own pitfalls. There is often a tendency for those who work in experimental theatre to be caught up in novelty, and forget their original artistic aims. Incidentally, for those who enjoyed *'Dip'*, they may expect something big from Wilfred Watson next fall.

The interest in theatre in Edmonton is rapidly expanding. In spite of the number of mediocre and bad productions this year, it is safe to say that the competence is increasing too. If this rate of growth continues for five years, I would not be surprised if Edmonton were supporting two professional groups.

Just before I leave theatre, I should like to mention the current productions of *Hamp* (Citadel) and *Volpone* (Studio Theatre), both of which should be very interesting.

On the art scene this year, one of the major events has been the SUB gallery. This gallery is possibly one of the best in town. It has good lighting facilities, and lots of wall space. It does lack a certain intimate quality, but it is especially good for showing the modern vogue of large paintings with intense colors. I think perhaps the showings of Stan Day's work used the gallery to its best advantage so far.

Otherwise, art in this city is not very exciting. There has been a similar surge of interest in art as there has been in drama, but it is not nearly as balanced or diversified. Artists who paint and are shown in this city are, by and large, slick and commercial. There are exceptions, but not enough.

The most interesting and enjoyable exhibit I attended this year was the showing of art from the Edmonton schools, in the Centennial Library. Although this art was by no means professional, it did at least invoke an exciting potential.

I wish I could give a better report of art, but unfortunately, I can't. It may be that Edmonton's artistic merit is merely in hiding. If it is, then I hope that gallery directors will recognize it, and give it some exposure.

Finally, I would like to recommend the up-coming show of Man-woman in the SUB gallery. From what I have seen, it will be well worth the trouble to see it.

Books:

John Makowichuk

The small magazine on campus was threatened by extinction early this year. Lack of interest on the part of student body, the students' council, and even the writers themselves resulted in the possibility of just one issue of the union sponsored *Pulpinside* being published. However, after some difficulty enough funds were obtained to bring out two issues. The fight for *Pulpinside* (now *Antennae*) may have motivated some people to start their own magazines; or they didn't approve with the quality of material that was being brought out in *Antennae* so that two more magazines appeared on the scene. The *Improved Closet* and *Pluck* showed that there was enough material and private funds to produce magazines other than those sponsored by the establishment.

The make-up in the magazines was different, and the quality of material and subject matter varied enough to partially cover the spectrum of creativity on campus. The fact that there is a creative writing course and a play writing course on campus indicates that there

must be some talented writers on campus; or rather technicians if you prefer.

All the publications came under harsh critical attack, but any writer who publishes on campus and does not expect criticism is undescribably naive. The criticism is one function of these magazines. Only when a writer's work comes under critical attack is its value revealed. The writer can use the criticism as a guide to the polishing and perfecting his writing technique. It may be that Edmonton writers are finally realizing that the way to promote their writing and to develop it, is to publish first in the local attempts at magazines.

The criticism directed at the editors of these magazines is also justified. However, what the critics fail to realize, is that the editor, like the critic is permitted mistakes, and that he learns his trade by his mistakes. For example, I don't think the editors of *Pluck* will publish any more of Irving Layton 'scraps', even to promote the magazine; Layton's verse was the worst in the magazine. They may however, publish more of Mrs. Foord's verse.

The evidence is clear that there are quality poets on campus, and we really don't need Irving Laytons to throw us their garbage. If the literary establishment in Canada weren't so strong the grade of Canadian literature might be raised from the level of mediocrity in which it now wallows. What we need is more magazines that have their own policy of publishing, and are not afraid to be new. Ezra Pound's phrase "make it new" is what young Canadian writers need to wipe the cobwebs from our literature; to destroy the established court of Canada tourers; faculty club tourers; and two hour speakers on mid-term vacations. I have yet to benefit from the tours of Beissel, Waddington, and Livesay. All I have seen is a mass of people mooning over a *real-live* poet, and not being critical about the poet's work. Desmond Pacey was the exception to the former group since he came here as a critic and collector of Canadian literature.

"Poetry Now" was of more benefit to writers than the touring poets. After it settled down profitable discussions of local poet's techniques and their approach to poetry was discussed and theories

formulated by the poets themselves. Better things may come in "Poetry Now" next year.

The touring poets could not define and explain their poetry in a manner that a local poet could benefit. I wonder just what is the function of the tours; maybe it's idol worship.

There are many negative aspects of modern poetry; a lack of direction, a lack of discipline, and maybe a lack of talent. The lack



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of direction and discipline are the faults of the writers; but the lack of talent is the fault of the reader. The poet should write for himself, and the public (the masses) can read it and try to understand it if they wish. The popularity of Rod McKuen indicates the lack of talent on the part of the mass culture. It is easy verse that the lazy man can groove in his leisure time, if he feels motivated. There are talented writers around, and they exist on campus. R. A. Kawalilak brought out his own volume of verse and bears some merit. Three magazines were filled with local poetry: some very good and some very bad. How many people in the English department attempt poetry? How many undergraduates attempt poetry? How many succeed?



FUNNY FELLOWS—These might have been the critics if critical ability was judged by dress. However, they are not the Arts Page critics. Instead, they are three of the cast of *Volpone* being produced by Studio Theatre this week.

—Peter Emery photo