Dr. John Ripley: Drama Workshop

Students offered training in drama, practical theatre

By LINDA GILLINGWATER of The Gazette Staff

"Drama taught apart from practical theatre orientation is inadequately taught." The Dalhousie Drama Workshop, available to any full or parttime student is designed to allow the average student in any faculty to develop his personality through theatre study, to enable him to participate in dramatic productions of good standard, and to encourage a greater appreciation for and participation in Community and Professional Theatre."

Briefly stated this sums up the raison d'etre of the Dalhousie Drama Workshop.

When Dr. John Ripley, director Miss Vallance. An experiment of the workshop first came in 1961 was set up in which about 100 he saw a very real demand for city school children took part. such a venture.

Room at King's. Their only per- ive participation. formance was one at the Jazz

Club, - improvization Jazz and Jazz mime.

In the spring of '64 the Uni- of an Elizanethan stage was partments.

of the instruction offered a mini-mum of three studios was requir-years. ed. In 1964 a building on South

Street was provided to house the movement and history of dance sented in the Basilica 17 Decemfour.

Thus, in 1964 the Workshop provided instruction in speech, movement, acting, fencing, and history of dance. Also for the first time members of city amateur companies were accepted. Since there is no formal training available east of Montreal "we simply had to create the places." Dr. Ripley felt that the University had a responsibility to co-operate assist the cultural development ages and interests and attracted of the community.

This was Not a children's theatre; The workshop was born in 1963 no parts were memorized; no as an adjunct to the English 9 scripts were used. Rather it was course (History of Drama). Be- an experiment in developing the fore long a number of students creative part in the child's perother than those in English 9 were sonality, imaginative thinking, seeking admission. At the end of and movement. In order to countthe first year, twenty students eract the passive effects of T.V., were working in the Haliburton encouragement was given to act-Nov. 18, 1964 marked the first

big undertaking for the Workshop - Romeo and Juliet. A replica

Priestley. versity officially recognized the erected in the gym. Dr. Ripley need for such a programme and felt it imperative that students in appointed Miss Susan Vallance as the area see Shakespeare on the an assistant, working jointly for kind of stage for which he wrote. the Education and English De- In terms of box office it was a artments. great success and represented sic radio acting. Two closed cir-Because of the intensive nature the first performance of Shake- cuit radio plays will be present-

> Because students were unlikely mouth area. courses.

Throughout the winter the Workshop lent assistance to it (i.e. lectures, demonstrations, production assistance, etc.)

In July 1965, the university, and Neptune theatre in co-operation with the Canada Council rence. sponsored a theatre conference and workshop. It was open to all

Attendance was limited to 50 in In Sept. of 64 a credit course order that a personal contact with in Child Drama was offered by the leaders could be maintained.



tration, and film-making" will teach speech and child drama.

This year's first production, Julius Caesar, has already been cast, and rehearsals are now underway. To be staged in the university gymnasium, the play will run from Nov. 9 to 13 inclusive.

Once Professor Lawrence has oriented himself to the campus and its possibilities he will choose and direct the second production of the Workshop to be presented in the spring.

When asked about the future Dr. Ripley said: "We are going to grow and have to grow." Drama programmes in the Maritimes are lagging far behind those of

background which is essential to

the University-educated person.

However, the training now offered

in the Workshop will be of con-

siderable help to those going on

to professional schools or those engaged in High School drama

Drama is as legitimate a sub-

However, if and when degree

programmes are implement-

ed those who are unable to take

the credit programme should be

kept in mind; they should have

work.

Formal lectures and attendance A number of universities recognized some years agothe importat performances were balanced ance of a theatre in the cultural by coffee discussion groups and life of their respective areas and workshops in the afternoon. Featured lecturer was internation- set up a degree programme in Drama. The University of British els. ally famous playwright, J.B.

the field. This year the staff is composed of eight members. Peter Donkin, Radio Drama Director of the C.B.C. will offer training in ba-

DR. JOHN RIPLEY

Professor Lionel Lawrence, a doctoral candidate from the Uni-Drama Workshop activities. At to see performance of the Covent- versity of Illinois, will teach actthis time Mrs. Dorothy Dickson ry Nativity Playelsewhere, it was ing. Having obtained his underwas added to the staff teaching organized by Dr. Ripley and pre- graduate training from Queens he went to Illinois. While there he on a purely voluntary basis. Prof- ber as part of the Basilica Con- directed, acted, and taught verbessor Dawson took over fencing cert Series and played for a week al communications as well as bringing a staff strength up to in Churches in the Halifax-Dart- pursuing extensive academic

> One of his more ambitious groups in the area who asked for projects was the direction of Un- ject for credit courses as any derworld, in New York, the score of the traditional disciplines Ripof which was written by "one of ley said. Within the next few years the most promising young com- demand for drama credit courses posers in North America today" will grow Dr. Ripley feels. according to Professor Law-

> > to compare it."

The entire play covered a period of only 14 minutes. Because people as far away as Quebec. of the short time span every movement and sound was divided some contact with theatre arts on into seconds. The script consist- a non-credit basis if they wish. ed of monosylables, each of which

was presented by the four actors in groups covering a specific number of seconds. The varying intonations of the basic monosyllables, combined with music composed partly by computers, and the choreography were designed to give the play its meaning.

Its reception? Professor Law-

SACK RACE AT FALL FESTIVAL the rest of Canada and the U.S.

He felt expansion should take place in two directions: 1) toward credit courses at both undergraduate and graduate lev-Columbia and the University of 2) increasing involvement in

Alberta were among the first in community theatre projects. Professor Lionel Lawrence, a

newcomer to the Workshop said Given the present framework that Dr. Ripley "has laid the of the Workshop it is absolutely foundations for what promises to impossible according to Dr. Rip- be an exciting programme." You ley to implement professional the student, are invited to visit drama courses. To attain a stand- the Drama Workshop, 6188 South ard of competence a minimum of Street, (opposite the Dal Rink)Dr. three years intensive technical Ripley will discuss drama partictraining is required. This would ipation with all interested stupreclude the broad humanities dents.



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Take an umbrella, they said, they being my mother and friends. And rubber boots. It rains all the time in Halifax.

I scorned their warnings as being an unworthy manifestation of the inate Western suspicion and discrediting on principle of anything east of Winnipeg.

They clucked over my refusal to take them seriously, I did agree that some rain and fog might appear but that the quantity would probably not be as great as rumours suggested.

What I didn't know, definitely hurt me.

It's not that I dislike fog or rain. The misty, white mornings give one the feeling of infiniteness even in the confinement of strange, inpenetrable walls.

However, I hadn't counted on wet shoes that don't dry overnight, on frizzy hair that straggles limply over one's eyes, or on torrents of bullet-sized raindrops that make you feel as if your're under a shower with a small tornado stirring things up to make life interesting.

The cold settles into your bones, defying the comfort of warm slippers and three sweaters.

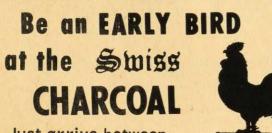
Oh, how I long for the dry air of Edmonton where it rains and then stops and then the sun shines for a few more weeks. Oh, for the comparatively flat campus where you don't have to trudge up and down hills just to get to class and you don't have to walk miles to the Forrest building when you've only got one hour to get through that phenomenal lunch line-up at Shirreff Hall.

But please don't misunderstand me. Dalhousie is a wonderful university, despite its rather unfortunate climatic situation.

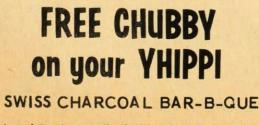
The courses I'm taking are absorbing and challenging, the girls in residence and other students on campus have been very friendly and kind. The campus itself is probably one of the most beautiful and impressive in Canada, due mostly to the uniform building materials and the lovely trees.

And the Nova Scotia names are fascinating - Antigonish or Halifax itself are good examples. But perhaps Edmonton and Inuvik sound equally strange to the Eastern ear.

Three weeks at Dal have really made me a Dalhousie student, although of course I still use the University of Alberta for purposes of identification. And when I return to convocate at U of A this spring, I'll probably be nauseatingly full of anecdotes about that Eastern Utopia where I spent a glorious year.



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head of the Drama Dept. at City of Birmingham Training College, DIAL DAILY 454-5858 who is described by Dr. Ripley as "one of the very best qualified and listen C.J.C.H. SUNDAYS - 10 a.m. theatre people in the East, having had wide experience in Great Britain acting, theatre adminis-

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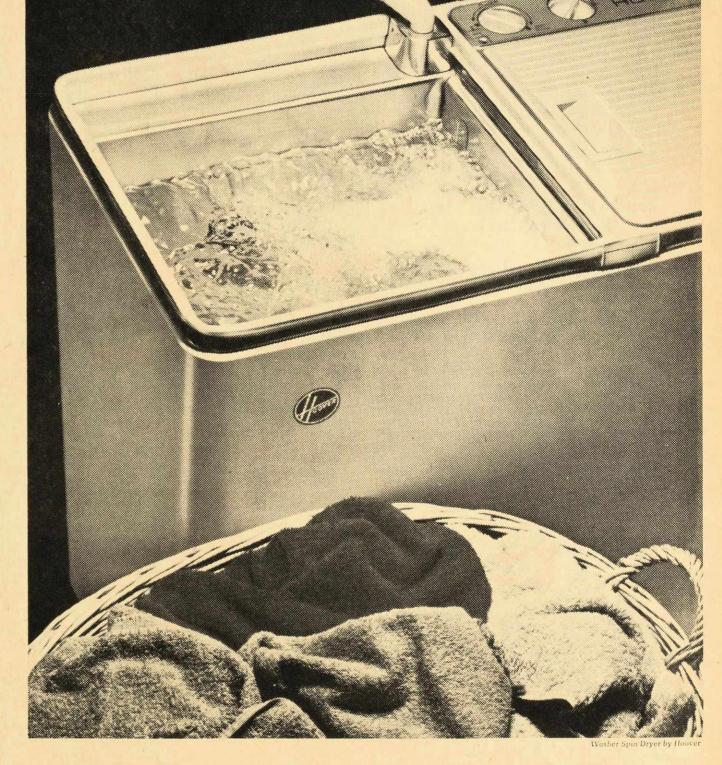
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