

# Life finds it tough on stage

Theatre review by Lasha Seniuk

One of the most pursued and unsatisfying tasks of the modern theater is to represent real life on stage. It can't be done; life is too rich, too disjointed and far too ironic. The stage, even in its finest moment, can only hope to mimic life and parody the bizarre characters that one finds in every day situations.

And so, with just such a play, Theatre 3 opens its new season.

*The Philanthropist*, which runs from October 24 to November 10, is written by Christopher Hampton and directed by Keith Digby. It is a high grade English comedy that lacks the traditional quick moving jokes that are so closely related to British stage humor. It is about a meager, awkward English professor named Philip . . . and that's all! There isn't much of a story, only a shadow of one.

Philip is a character that spends his entire life trying to please his friends and his friends spend their entire lives trying to please themselves. The only story action is in the second act where Philip tries to maintain his relationship with his fiancee and, of course, tragedy prevails.

The play is meant to be a "slice of life", as it were, with a strong underlying theme. The theme, that women need to be dominated by men, somehow doesn't connect with the action. There's no real statement made about it, no conclusions drawn, only the representation of the situation. Then, out of the blue, another theme is introduced. This one is about the need of human beings to lie to each other, to convince each other that they are living life and not just discussing it coyly at a dinner party.

The result of all this is a muddle. One leaves the

theatre not really understanding what has just taken place. The action moved so quickly from comedy to tragedy that at times it seemed unrealistic.

This is probably the result of a poor interpretation. If the play had been directed towards developing the themes rather than punching up the humourous lines and shocking the audience with profanity, the play would have been more successful. The whole point of the play was difficult to determine.

Trying to define the category of *The Philanthropist* was also difficult. It wavered between comedy and tragedy. It had no sanction at the end as all comedies do and it had no rising action as all tragedies do. The ending was merely a re-enactment of the opening scene, symbolizing the continuing renewal of the life process. The author was playing with this idea and it all boiled down to a line by Philip — "try to imagine the theatre as real". However, this particular production of *The Philanthropist* totally missed that point.

The actors, given merely what they were given, came through in the crunch. Roger Allen, as Philip, was undeniably excellent. His characterization was an experience in itself. Obviously, he is a very disciplined actor and he dealt with his stereotyped role with great insight. There were, of course, the traditional opening night jitters, but the cast soon soared with strong theatrical talent.

The play is worth seeing, if not for the strange twist ending, then to find out what Philip does when his favorite Picasso is covered in his friend's brains. It was one of the strangest plays I have ever seen and I still find myself pondering it. However, I will always hold to the conviction that life cannot be put on stage — the human race simply doesn't like looking in the mirror!

# Thursday Thursday

## MUSIC

### Jubilee Auditorium

Nov. 2 - 3, 8:30 p.m. Guest pianist Alicia De Larrocha and the Edmonton Symphony play "George III His Lament" by Ridout; Concerto No. 4, G major, Op. 58 by Beethoven, and Symphony No. 5, D major by Vaughan Williams. This is the first concert in the Master Series 3, and students can receive 50% discounts on subscription tickets.

Nov. 7, 8:30 p.m. Flautist Robert Aitkin is the guest artist in the second concert of the Mozart Series. Pierre Hetu conducts the ESO through the *Diver-timento* F major; Concerto for flute No. 1, G major 313; and *Serenade* No. 4, D major.

Latitude 53, 10048 - 101A Ave, #1, 423-3126

Nov. 3, 8 p.m. "Chamber Music for Harp." The ensemble consists of David Humphreys, harp, and Rickman Lilienthal, flute. They will be playing music by J.S. Bach, Faure, Perisichetti, Ibert, Spohr, Britten, Pierre, Nielsen and Hovhanas. Tickets are by subscription or are \$5 at the door. For more ticket information call 466-9596 or 484-8098.

Palms Cafe, 10010 - 102 St.

Oct. 30 - Nov. 3, 8:30 p.m. The Edmonton Jazz Society and the Palms Cafe present Trumpeter Woody Shaw and his quintet, featuring Carter Jefferson, saxes; Larry Willis, piano; Stafford James, bass and Victor Lewis, drums.

Riviera Rock Room, Riviera Hotel, 5359 Calgary Trail, 434-3431.

Oct. 31 - Nov. 3, 8 p.m. The Wives (formerly battered) are in town from Toronto.

Humanities Building, HCL-1

Nov. 5, 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. Flautist Robert Aitkin gives a free performance. For more information phone 476-4197 or 432-3263.

## CINEMA

### SUB Theatre

Nov. 3, 7 - 9:30 p.m. "8½", a Fellini film.

Nov. 4, 7 - 9:30 p.m., *Five Easy Pieces* from 1970.

Provincial Museum, 12845 - 102 Ave.

Nov. 4, 4 - 7 p.m. James Garner, Walter Brennan and Joan Hackett star in the western parody, *Support Your Local Sheriff*. Admission is free.

Nov. 7, 7 p.m. Humphrey Bogart stars as a convict on the run from San Quentin in the movie *Dark Passage*, also starring Lauren Bacall. Admission to this is also free.

Edmonton Public Library, 7 Sir Winston Churchill Square, 423-2331

Nov. 3 - 4, 2 p.m., *The Day the Earth Stood Still*.

This is the second movie in the EPL's "Science Fiction Film" series. Admission is free.

### Tory Lecture Theatre

Nov. 7, 8 p.m. The Edmonton Film Society begins its "Foreign Classics" series with Jean Cocteau's *Orpheus*. It is the story of a poet in love with a princess who is one of the functionaries of death: a unique version of the Greek myth. Subscription tickets to the six film series are only \$12.00 and are available at the door, at HUB Box Office and at Woodward's.

## THEATER

Northern Light Theatre, 10189 - 99 St.

Oct. 31 - Nov. 18. *Northern Light Theatre's* 1979-80 season opens with the Canadian premiere of *Wings* by Arthur Kopit. Ann Casson plays Emily Stilson, a wing-walker piecing her world back together after a shattering stroke. Scott Swan directs. Lunch hour performances are Tuesday through Friday at 12:10, \$2 for students and senior citizens, \$3 for adults. Evening performances are Thursday, Saturday and Sunday at 8 p.m. \$4 for students and senior citizens, \$5 for adults. All performances are in the Art Gallery Theatre, #2 Sir. Winston Churchill Square. For tickets and information phone 429-3110.

Theatre 3, 10426 - 95 St., 426-3394.

Oct. 25 - Nov. 10, 8 p.m., Christopher Hampton's *The Philanthropist*. This comedy is about Phil, a young professor who wrestles with the problem of "loving" people and dealing with "persons". He takes refuge in arson and anagrams which results in deadly and hilarious solutions. Tickets are available at BASS outlets and at the door, or by phoning 426-6870.

## DANCE

### SUB Theatre

Nov. 1 - 2, 8 p.m. The Brian Webb Dance Company, Edmonton's only professional dance group, opens its new season with a program of five works choreographed by founder and Artistic Director Brian Webb. The music for the program has been commissioned from local composers Wendy Albrecht and Robert Meyers.

## LECTURES

### Provincial Museum

Nov. 1, 8 p.m. The Amisk Waskahagan Chapter of the Historical Society of Alberta is presenting a lecture entitled "Cree: The Forgotten Language." The lecturer is Dr. Anne Anderson, a teacher of the Cree language. For more information call Mrs. J. Honey at 479-2069.

# Rough Cuts

by Diane Young

This is a column about a pimp.

His name was Anthony Calabrette; he had auburn hair, hazel eyes, and dimples, and I didn't know he was a pimp until we were half-way to Florida. He looked a lot like Prince Valiant.

To understand my attachment to Anthony, you'll need some background detail. New Orleans is a city full of people living out their movies. I know that could be said about all cities, but San Francisco, New York and New Orleans are where the movies are played right out in the open. New Orleans is at the bottom of the Deep South, so Anthony was raised on grits and cornbread and the certain knowledge that women were fine, as long as they could cook this stuff and did not "presume".

Although I did "presume", I was from the North, and couldn't be expected to know any better. He treated me with a kind of tolerance mixed with pity, like the way my kindergarten teacher talked to the kid who always ended up with a pile of shredded newsprint when the rest of us sat gloating happily over our paper baskets.

The funny thing was that I began to feel like that kid. Although usually possessed of a modicum of poise and even flashes of what some people have called intelligence, somewhere during that eight-hour bus ride to Alabama, I began to feel as though the effort to keep from drooling on my collar was beyond me. I was confronted, quite literally, with a Whole New World, one in which I obviously was not going to succeed using the patterns of behavior my parents spent so long instilling.

It's funny; on long nighttime bus rides, sharing cigarettes and staring out at the lights of tiny towns and ARNOLD'S EATS signs, people say things that they normally wouldn't confide to their best friends. We both looked slightly ill; neither of us had slept for a day, and the sickly green cast from the tinted windows added to the movie-like atmosphere.

Anthony told me about how to shoot doors off walls, and how a pimp kept people's respect, and how he could not teach anyone to be a pimp.

"Ya hafta be born with it, ya gotta know wheelin' and dealin'. My family's been doin' it for five generations... Ya wan another cigarette?"

In turn, I told him what it was like to be a university student. He thought this was highly amusing. It was about then that my self-possession deserted me. The patterns I had learned suddenly didn't apply. Not only did they not apply, they were laughable.

To paraphrase Joan Didion, merely being polite, and having white teeth and proven competence on the Stanford-Binet scale didn't matter; if I was to enter Anthony's hierarchy of power, I would need Anthony.

Floundering, trying to explain why literature was important, I kept saying to myself: In three more hours I'll be in Alabama. He is a pimp. In three more hours I'll be in Alabama and the people there understand and I understand them.

Putting a label on Anthony that only said PIMP made me feel better, but the talk went on. I was saying how travelling alone meant that I could try on different reactions, perhaps reactions far outside my normal sphere of response because no-one was around

who knew me well enough to remind me of the usual, expected Diane.

Anthony looked down at his cigarette for a moment, and said "You talkin' about lyin'?" I tried to explain what I thought the subtle distinction was between lying and experimenting with *personnae*, but he would have none of it. I finally just protested that I didn't mean out and out lying, that when someone lied to me I could never trust him completely again.

Again he wouldn't have it. "Nope," he drawled, "When someone tells me somethin', and later I find out that it wasn't true, I don't hold it against them forever. There are lots of reasons for lyin'? Maybe he's hurtin'... Maybe he's hidin'... You don't know that much about people to be able to say."

I was outraged, and chastened, and awed, and humiliated. That a Louisiana pimp could suddenly exhibit beliefs that mark a gentleman WITH NO WARNING was totally unfair.

Admittedly, it was simplistic of me to categorize him so neatly, but when told by a member of society who is usually considered less than admirable - that you have made it to the hoary age of twenty-three only because of *sheer luck* (bearing in mind your complete ignorance of life and all) it helps you survive the ride.

I did survive the bus ride, but I'm still, in someways, on the bus, and the movie is still playing. Wasn't it Plato who said that everything important happens by chance?

Anthony wore a gold ring with a black stone and when I asked him if it was onyx, a baffled look crossed his face. But he laughed, and said, "Shoot, I dunno. It's just as black as my heart. That's why I wear it.")

# English Prof. wins

by Allen Young

A U of A professor has won a major author's award for a short story published this year.

Rudy Wiebe, who teaches creative writing for the department of English, has been awarded first prize for outstanding Canadian short fiction in English language mass market magazines by Author's Awards of Canada. The \$400 prize was announced October 15 in Montreal.

Author's Awards of Canada, presented annually in eight categories, are sponsored by the Federation for the Advancement of Canadian Arts and Letters in conjunction with Periodical Distributors of Canada.

Wiebe's story, *After Thirty Years of Marriage*, first appeared in the 1979 edition of *The Canadian Forum*. Through the stoic reminiscences of a woman's first year on the prairies, it openly and directly presents a union of individual strengths which form the frontier spirit of a pioneer Alberta family.

The award winning story has been reprinted in *Alberta: A Celebration*, a collection of color photographs and 14 short stories by Wiebe, just released from Hurtig Publishers under the editorship of Tom Radford.

Wiebe has written and edited almost a dozen books including *Peace Shall Destroy Many*, *The Temptations of Big Bear*, and *The Scorched Wood People*.