

Neptune presents "The Price"

Audience relates to play

by Emmi Duffy and Glenn Wanamaker

Arthur Miller's "The Price", the latest production at Neptune theatre, is an excellent play. Despite the fact there was no intermission, the drama captured the audience for the entire 130-minute performance with a good combination of serious dialogue and comedy.

The story takes place in the attic of an old brownstone mansion which is about to be demolished. A New York policeman, approaching retirement is making arrangements to dispose of some furniture, which belonged to his father. The room is full of heavy pieces reminiscent of the prosperous times before the 1929 stock market crash. Chairs, tables and urns are

piled up against the walls and dust-cloths are draped over the couch and armchairs.

The basic conflict arises out of the failure of Victor, the cop, to equal the success of his brother, Walter, the doctor.

That parent has a responsibility to his child is unquestionable. But how much if anything does a child owe his parents? This is one of several themes in the play that struck me.

The 1929 crash of the stock market left Victor's father bankrupt. Victor recalls his mother's reaction to the news was to vomit on his father's hand. Victor felt obliged to stay and look after him and thus joined the ranks of the down and out. He stopped his education

and joined the police force in order to pay the rent. Walter, on the other hand, continued his education, contributing a token \$5 a month support for his father. Victor is unable to forgive and forget the past for his resentment of Walter has built up over 28 years. Walter had returned home rarely and Victor views this as ingratitude.

After all these years Walter suddenly turns up and immediately starts to interfere in the bargaining between Victor and Solomon, the Furniture dealer. He reduces Victor to a rank amateur among businessmen in front of his wife, and he shows off about how he knows the ins and outs of wangling a better price to dodge the tax.

Walter accuses Victor of enjoying his role as a martyr, telling him flatly that he is a failure.

Victor's wife Esther vacillates between the two brothers. First she is angry at Victor's stubborn refusal to accept help from his brother and press for a better deal. She pleads with him to understand her need for money and her distress at the nature of their existence.

Later she becomes sympathetic to Victor and understands why he could not run out on his father. With all the tense emotional outbursts the play could conceivably become quite heavy. However, the old limping Jewish used-furniture dealer adds a comic element to the play. Solomon is funny without being unbearably cute.

The play's success is due not only to the talent of the actors and director but also to Arthur Miller's ability to successfully blend the serious and humorous aspects of the play.

The acting is quite good, though in Victor's case, played by Edward Binns, it took a good portion of the play for him to become involved in his part.

Esther succeeded in getting the audience to dislike her but one wonders whether this should have been so large. It seemed that she was holding Victor back in the first part of the play.

The stubbornness displayed by Victor in the scene with his brother was very frustrating for the audience. It created a surprisingly tense atmosphere, probably due to the similarity of experiences among the audience, and it was left to dear old Solomon to relax us.

"The Price" is extremely entertaining, and as with most of Miller's plays the audience can relate. It is certainly worth seeing and it continues through to March 25.

CINEMATTERS

by Stephen R. Mills

In this age of the mass media, communication has become an inhuman concept. Love was once a term used to describe the most intimate understanding and appreciation human beings could share. Now it almost describes the chilly barrier keeping us all apart.

This seems to be the theme of most of John Schlesinger's films and, particularly his latest "Sunday, Bloody, Sunday". (Oxford)

"Sunday" is concerned with the relationship between a young designer (Murray Head), a young woman in personnel work (Glenda Jackson) and a middle-aged Jewish doctor (Peter Finch). The woman and the doctor love the designer; he likes them both but will commit himself to neither.

It is a credible plot but the dialogue is a bit much, making Head's and Jackson's roles so sophisticated that they appear uncomfortable in them. Their acting is adequate, however, and Finch turns in a performance that is nothing less than extraordinary.

He plays the doctor, a gentle, intelligent, and cultured man, who is disturbed because his lover must be shared with another and who sincerely misses him when he goes away. Just right.

It's certainly the best performance of this picture and perhaps of any made so far this year.

As in all Schlesinger films, photography is a potent force but, as always, he has a tendency to beat his theme to death, this time with constant close-ups of telephones, televisions, stereos and his actors' faces. Costume, sets, lighting, and score all compliment the credible

plot.

All things considered, this is a fine film, a professional handling of an important theme, certainly welcome in these barren days.

Comment in passing: The new violence in motion pictures and other mediums requires a separation, for purposes of discussion, of technique and content. Artistically, of course, such a separation is all but impossible to make. Where technique ends and content begins — or whether they are, in fact, one and the same, is a matter of opinion.

However, it seems that many critics, confronted with violence, have focused exclusively on technique — photography, special effects, sound, etc. — at the expense of content — plot, screenplay, character, etc. The result is an almost unanimous praising of technically brilliant films but an ignoring of deplorable content. This is not artistically just. A work of art — or an attempt at art — must be judged as a whole. Technically brilliant films with no content must be condemned along with technically poor pictures with a point that doesn't come across.

Critics should perhaps stop watching films for a while and look at their own work. Motion picture criticism has certainly seen better days.

The National Film Board is putting on a series of full length films in their Barrington Street theatre, Wednesday nights from March 14 to April 12. Films featured include Proxy Hawks, Norman Jewison, Zero the Fool, and on April 12, Mon Oncle Antoine. Cost for the series is \$3.00.

Show stimulating

by Stephen R. Mills

Art is called realistic when it looks like something real but, upon contemplation, opens up into a whole lot more. Abstract art is almost the reverse — it is bizarre to begin with but folds into the familiar under study, but not before offering insight into the artist's personality and the world of Man.

Last week's show at the Dalhousie Art Gallery was abstract in nature but the number of mediums and the degree of abstraction varied, offering a stimulating and entertaining presentation.

There were four artists featured: a photographer, three painters, and a sculptress. If one toured the gallery beginning with the photographs, then going through the work by Carol Fraser, Dongkuk Ahn, and Mansaram Panchal, one experienced a progression of technique from black and white abstract of a relatively simple nature to a skillful use of colour and collage.

The photography — cluttered blacks and whites — images of natural structures; trees, stones, snowflake shapes — and man-made structures; cathedrals, cities, and one profile. All are sombre but not depressing; beautiful, strong, permanent. Haunting might be a word applied to them.

Carol Fraser's drawings are done in black, white, and brown with a bit of blue and red here and there. All are of natural things — flowers, trees, woods and done in intricate detail. There are inclusions of man, first grisly, then acceptable, then necessary; faces, arms, blood, bodies. They move from abstraction to brute reality but are buffered by kind detail — shielded by wonder; the simple drawings of the girl in the chair or the delightful tribute to an old teacher or friend.

From these works of intricate detail and muted shades, to screaming color and design with almost no detail at all. Dongkuk Ahn's "Ying Yang"

prints are pure color, shape, rhythm — reds, yellows, greens, blues in squares, circles, waves. Subtle in its simplicity, joyous colour, joyous rhythm but causing one to consider the preceding images in black and white. They are a personification of ideas; a representation of perfection.

Finally, the colour and ideas combine and explode. Collage! Panchal's work seems to have modern life as its theme — his clippings are from American and Indian newspapers, his pictures are obviously advertising shots. Most impressive is his use of colour — reds, greens, blues. And his use of fabric — that is, pictures of

fabric — tapestry, rugs, carpets — the weaving seems to add to the images, unifying and amplifying them.

One particularly captures the imagination — plastic riders on a carpet; an orange sky and a blue whirly sun. It sets you free.

The sculpture — in yarn — is all around and warms the mind because it hangs in comforting, elongated shapes. It is a good framing device as it has little to do with the other works.

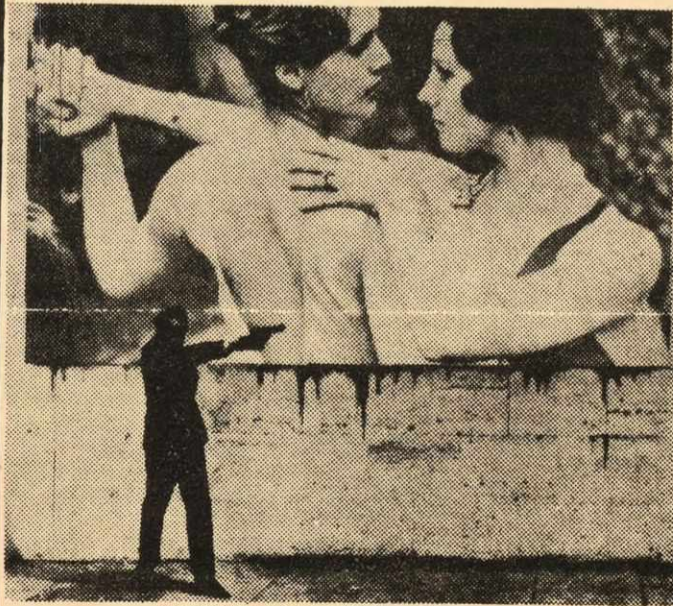
All in all, the show was a rewarding experience and a skillful presentation of works that are not apparently compatible on first examination.

Next at the gallery — sculptures by Rodin.

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