

# "Exercise" fine and pleasant effort

by Krista Taylor

The Crypt Theatre is a tiny, rustic theatre with a sitting capacity of fifty people. There is no defined stage; the audience seemingly blends in with the set and actors. The diminutive size and informality of the theatre produces a quaint, intimate atmosphere. The Crypt is the home of the Halifax Independent Theatre which gave a performance of Peter Shaffer's "Five Finger Exercise" last Saturday night.

Shaffer's first play is an intense psychological drama. It certainly is not an evening of light entertainment. Shaffer probes the complexity of man's spirit and takes the audience on a grueling exploration of human relationships.

The play is set in England during the 1950's. The Harrington's, Stanley and Louise, and their children, Clive and Pam, are relaxing at their weekend cottage in Suffolk. Stanley, played by Emero Stiegman, is a successful self-made business man who owns a furniture factory. His wife, Louise, played by Heike Wenaus, is a woman wrapped up in the deceptions of decency and sophistication. She is critical of her husband's boorish manners. Their personal struggle is channeled in their conflicting ambitions for their son Clive, played by Rob Candy. He is a young man caught in an emotional turmoil; a pressure cooker of troubles about to explode. His only contact with happiness is

with his vivacious sister Pam, played by Kelly Ryan.

Clive's problem is magnified by the presence of Pam's German tutor, Walter Langer, played by Steb Hornborg. He is an idealistic man running from his past and trying to find a new family and new life in England.

He is a symbol of prestige for Louise—someone of culture that she can relate to emotionally and romantically.

The "Five Finger Exercise" contains some very intense emotional and dramatic scenes. It is witty and tragic, a very demanding play requiring a sensitive, subtle performance.

The play was well cast. Especially good were the performances of Sten Horn-

borg and Heike Wenaus. There were moments of awkwardness, times when the emotion seemed contrived, losing some of its credibility.

The setting, in such a small space, was quite effective. The blocking perhaps might have been more carefully planned. During one scene Pam sat with her back to the audience during a lengthy dialogue. Several times the actor's face was obscured by the stove pipe in centre stage, giving the effect of a spliced film.

The Halifax Independent Theatre is a young company formed in 1976. They operate from the Crypt Theatre rent free under the condition that they perform one religious

play a year. In the past they have done such works as Ibsen's "Little Eyolf" and Noel Coward's "Hay Fever".

"Five Finger Exercise" was a fine effort and pleasantly done. I hope the theatre will continue, improving with experience and nurturing their potential.

The play was directed by Richard Perkyns. It will be performed on the 17th, 19th, 20th, 24th, 26th and 27th at the Crypt Theatre in All Saints Cathedral at the corner of Tower Road and University Avenue.



# Theatre hoping for closer ties to Neptune

by George Evans

Dal Theatre, in its 10th year of operation, is hoping for closer ties with Neptune Theatre. As a show of good faith, John Neville of Neptune has been given an honorary position on the Dal Faculty of Theatre at Dal. In the past, there has been a lack of interaction between Dal Theatre and Neptune, which is now being overcome through the cooperation of Mr. Neville and the people at Neptune.

These two aspects of theatre can be mutually beneficial in various ways by developing closer ties, primarily through trading knowledge and talent, as well as giving concrete direction to Dal Theatre students.

This year promises to be a constructive one for our theatre students. Two major productions are planned by the department before Xmas. The first is "The Wonderful World of Sarah Binks" based on a work by Paul Hibert and then "Lysistrata", a work by Aristophanes which shall run from November 29-December 2. Theatre students are still needed for the work crews of these productions.

In interviews with Prof.

Davis R. Overton and Prof. Robert Merritt, a brief listing of Dal Theatre was obtained. In 1965, the Drama Department was part of the English Department, at which time Prof. Laurence and Prof. Andrews began work to develop a separate theatre department.

Initially there was some controversy as stated by Prof. Overton, "Primary concern of the administration was that anything which was not actually an academic discipline should not be offered as a bachelor degree" or as Prof. Merritt put it, the early Drama Department was viewed as a device for "play production".

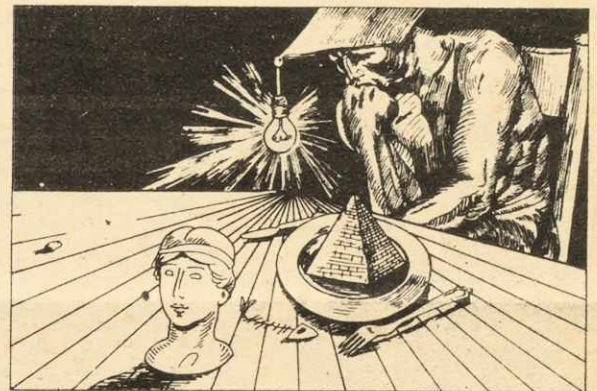
To dispense these doubts Andrews and Laurence developed an honours theatre program, which consisted of ten courses. To obtain a degree in theatre one attended all 10 courses and maintained honours marks, thereby fulfilling the academic requirements of the university.

By 1969 developments were in full swing and planning had begun for construction of the Arts Center. It was logical that the Arts Center should be utilized by a theatre department and when in late 1969 a faculty vote was taken, the

decision for a theatre department was agreed to with little opposition. The arrival of the Arts Center allowed the Theatre Department to move out of the dining room of the Faculty Club, where signs of the old production's may still be seen, into a viable environment.

The original program was phased out in 1973-4, at which time a scenography program was initiated with Prof. Perrina. Not until 1975 was an actor training program started with the arrival of Prof. D'Ambrosia. Now with the Dal Theatre Department being well established, it fills an important role in this area as the only maritime university to offer a degree in theatre.

Enrollment has generally been on the upswing. Prof. Merritt recalls that in his first Theatre 100 class he had 25 students, while this year's class has over 50. Unfortunately, it seems that a much higher percentage of students who graduated from the first, more strictly academic program were able to find post graduate employment in the field. Perhaps closer work with the local theatre can help improve this situation.



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