

arts

Wyman's company with a distinct style

The Anna Wyman Dance Theatre performed at SUB Saturday night as part of a series which has already presented the Winnipeg Contemporary Dance Theatre, and which will present the Alberta Contemporary Dance Theatre in April. More than the Winnipeg company perhaps, this one justifies its designation as theatre for, in *Here at the Eye of the Hurricane* particularly, movement, music, costumes and lighting worked to provide a total unified experience. An eerie sense of disembodiment

prevailed as anonymous figures spun across the stage encased in long robes or mouthed the words of an unintelligible song. Sequences of body isolations created a dynamic rhythm that ebbed and flowed until it neutralized itself in a symbolic circular wandering equivalent to a blank machine-like stare.

Reverberations exhibited similar controlled tension, this time to create aggressive staccato movements that reached an impressive climax as a dancer rotated violently within a circle of entwined bodies. Un-



fortunately the excitement did not continue into the next dance of *Depths* which only seemed to repeat the movements and feelings of the dances before it. The ending silent scream could have been more powerful but somehow lacked impact.

Dance Is... provided much-needed comic relief with take-offs on the all-to-familiar stereotypes and mannerisms associated with dance. A knack for humorous nuance and characterization was evident when dancers adopted the roles of athletes - particularly that of the baseball player with his jock exhibitionism. This provided a welcome contrast to the homogeneous impersonality of individuals in the earlier dances. The scene in which each dancer evoked the character of a particular machine (for instance, the childish intensity of the tricycle-rider) was not only humorous but gave insight into the nature of dance form - particularly the sculptural forms of Anna Wyman

The finale of *Peacemaker* was generally a disappointment. There was little sense of thematic or stylistic unity between the three parts and little sense of achievement at the end. Part I maintained an even and therefore uninteresting quality throughout. Part II, in which two individuals begin isolated within a single sack, meet, and then part, was beautiful in sculptural terms but the outcome was predictable. Part III was one of the most successful dances of the evening, despite the somewhat acrobatic entrances which clashed with the remainder of the dance. One appreciated the use of the individual and the couple as foils to the group identity. For the first time, one saw consecutive movements within single bodies as opposed to the sequential movements that depend on group participation. The resulting sense of flow created a greater organic unity between the dancers and their space.

Obviously Anna Wyman has forged a well-trained company with a distinct style and subtle movement. Unfortunately however, each dancer appears a self-contained unit - capable of powerful expression. Each dancer has superb control and concentration and their sensitivity to body placement is matched by Anna Wyman's sense of pattern and awareness of the significance of each intimately aware of his personal space but lacking vitality when required to leap outside of it. Too often the dancers take static positions and the result is a pictorial arrangement rather than a kinetic experience. With some themes this works admirably; with others it does not. Part III of *Peacemaker* demonstrated the possibility of overcoming this difficulty without sacrificing the essence of Wyman's movement.

C. Geddes



Appealing promenade concert

The Edmonton Symphony Orchestra Promenade Concert, presented by the du Maurier Council, was designed to entertain those who do not normally attend the symphony.

An Evening of Gershwin and Favorite Ballets accomplished just this. The concert was made more palatable to the uninitiated by the lighter music of Gershwin and the visual appeal of the Alberta Ballet Company.

The concert, conducted by Stanley Black, who is also a jazz pianist of note, opened at a lively pace with Copland's *Hoe Down*, from *Rodeo Ballet*.

The musical tone then changed to the more haunting Gershwin melody *An American in Paris* followed by *Rhapsody in Blue*.

An American in Paris was very cleverly performed, with excellent work on the violin and flute. The horn section seemed a bit sluggish at first but all instruments came together for a spectacular close.

Rhapsody in Blue was executed perfectly by guest pianist Alexandra Munn. She had no difficulty with the cross-hand passages and her playing on the whole added vitality to the piece.

The second half of the programme was on a more classical note with selections from the ballets of Delibes, Massenet, and Khachaturian.

The passage from Delibes's *Sylvia* was one which created a great atmosphere of suspense. It was well-performed, as was the ballet duet which accom-

panied it.

The dancing throughout the programme was exceptional considering the limited space available to perform in.

Massenet's *Le Cid* and four dances from Khachaturian's *Gayaneh Ballet* were well performed, with the English Horn in *Le Cid* being of particular note.

It was, however, the selections from *Coppelia* that I con-

sidered the most outstanding in the concert. The flute and string sections were perfect as was the timing of the piece.

The programme was one which even the least experienced concert-goer could enjoy. No matter what your musical preferences I advise you not to miss the next Promenade Concert.

Cathy Zlatnik

Theatre for dessert at Stage West

Where can you get both a buffet-style meal and a full-length theatrical production for eleven dollars? Only at Stage West, Edmonton's one and only dinner theatre.

Dinner theatre is a fairly modern concept which has been receiving more and more attention of late. The combination of dinner followed by a play creates an atmosphere quite different from either a restaurant or a theatre. After finishing their meals, patrons can relax and enjoy the play in the comfort of a spacious but intimate setting. The action of the play takes place almost in the midst of the audience, which is an experience for both audience and actor. Says William Fisher, actor in the present production of *The Gingerbread Lady*: "You feel closer to the audience. The audience is very relaxed. You can't help but have a good time."

While there are dinner theatres in Vancouver, Winnipeg and Toronto, Stage West

is the only one in Canada that features full-length productions. Although drinks aren't served during the action, they are available at intermission, a factor which definitely contributes to the relaxed state the audience achieves.

In traditional Neil Simon style, *The Gingerbread Lady* is rife with great one-liners ("I wouldn't trust you with the Pope during Holy Week.") The play has some very funny moments, but while the audience laughs a tragedy takes place before their eyes.

Evy is an alcoholic nympho trying to stay on the wagon with the help of her homosexual friend Jimmy, and Toby, an aging college beauty. *The Gingerbread Lady* is a pitiful story about characters too weak to face the world that exists outside of their own fragile pretensions. Says Toby: "I cover the outside with Helena Rubenstein. I use little makeup jars, you use quart bottles and poor Jimmy uses a little of both."

A Necessity of the heart

The Department of Music's decision to stage Mozart's *Così fan tutte* last Wednesday and Thursday at Convocation Hall as its annual student opera production was in many ways a bold stroke. Few operas are as difficult to perform and few have been as much maligned and misunderstood over the almost two centuries since its composition.

The story of two soldiers disguising themselves at the

behest of an old friend and successfully seducing each other's fiancées to prove that all women are untrustworthy seems to have all the ingredients of a nonsensical superficial plot to make it slapstick comedy *par excellence*.

But *Così fan tutte*, though it is a comedy, is far from being an artificial farce. Rather it is a sagacious and meticulously conceived 18th century examination of human nature. Its comic form does not diminish the seriousness of the opera's message: human beings are fallible, human emotions are mutable, "nature makes no exceptions" (as the principal character, Don Alfonso, puts it). Not merely *così fan tutte* (women are like that), but also life is like that.

The irrationality of human behaviour constantly threatens to upset one's sincerest intentions. The sisters fall for the disguised suitors, not because of weakness or shallowness, but because they are human. Alfonso is no cynical puppeteer. He's a humanist, a skeptic, a Socratic teacher in a word, a *philosophe* in the best 18th century tradition. The cynic of the piece is that scheming opportunist, the maid Despina, and Mozart rejects that psychology as such as naive.

The recoupling of the lovers at the end is neither a fairy-tale reconciliation nor a mechanical restoration of the original *status quo*. All four have had illusions shattered and return to their partners, wiser for their experience. What is more, their

Hollywood actress Gloria De Haven receives top billing as Evy. A very skillful actress, she plays a convincing, dynamic role, although at times her stage facade crumbles. There were moments when her performance became shaky, and she even stumbled over a few lines. It is unfortunate that this lack of cohesion marred an otherwise superb performance.

Mickey MacDonald did not play her part in depth. Shellah McGill gave a natural though unimaginative performance as Polly.

William Fisher played his role so that the audience realized that Jimmy is gay - the impression is made but not in a blatant manner. His deliverance was sound and his characterization convincing, though not fully developed. Jimmy is perhaps the most tragic figure of them all, but the pitiful aspect of his character is not entirely exploited.

This is equally true of the whole performance. Although

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