

ENTERTAINMENT

Lust with the improper stranger

Pasolini avoided the safe and sought the dangerous

W. HURST

Pasolini/Pelosi is more than a dramatization of the murder of Pier Paolo Pasolini, the Italian filmmaker. This excellent production, at the Theatre Centre, delineates the need of a man to avoid the safe and seek the perilous. Pasolini had a dangerous need for sex with Italian street toughs--punks who would threaten him and gratify him sexually. He was bludgeoned to death by one of these punks.

Sky Gilbert's script, which draws heavily from Pasolini's poetry, is less true narrative than a string of highlights. The audience is shown Pasolini rehearsing actors, talking with friends and cruising the streets and cinemas. He used street boys in his films, in juxtaposition to people like Silvana Mangano. Mangano's patrician and remote beauty made a harrowing counterpoint to the coarse hustlers.

Gilbert, who also directed the play, specifies action by location. Upstage left, a riser is used by various characters to comment on Pasolini's work and life. Upstage right, vignettes are played out to clarify Pasolini's rejection of what he called the "dull life". Centre stage is for the reality of Pasolini's life: his films, his seductions and his murder.

This clever staging allows both actors and audience to deftly shift focus and perceptions. Given the speed of the scene changes, the set-up is almost mandatory. Moreover, all the actors, except Damir Andrei as Pasolini, undertake a multitude of different characters.

Frank Pellegrino is outstanding, whether an Italian screen actor, street stud or bellowing father in a

commedia del'arte familyscene. He inflection of his voice; he alters his body to specify each character. A shrug is carefully adapted to the nature of a fop or a hustler. Daniel Allman has fewer characters than Pellegrino but he shows a similar dexterity. In a cinema scene, Allman manages a shockingly tender quality that is quite unlike the raunchy set-up. By resting his head on Pasolini's shoulder, a street boy becomes trusting vessel, not predator.

Less successfully, Angelo Pedari has been given the role of Pasolini's murderer, Pelosi, as well as other characters. Pedari looks the hustler part but he doesn't sound it. His voice rips out of tight chest, sounding strained even in relaxed passages. It doesn't reverberate from his guts. Doesn't he breathe?

Arlene Mazerolle is not the only woman in the show--she is all the women, playing Laura Betti, Pasolini's truest friend, a housewife, even Rita Hayworth and more. In all these parts, Mazerolle is extraordinarily believable, giving each woman a distinct voice, body language and personality. The play's closing dialogue, which could be a sermon on understanding, draws the audience into a primal grief and love. Mazerolle lowers her voice and you pitch forward in your seat, forgetting that you are watching a performance.

Against the melange of characters everyone else is busy performing, Andrei has only Pasolini, but how dies one actor believably combine the oppositions in Pasolini's character? How does an actor play a man who is now a cult figure? Andrei

makes the 'how' irrelevant. He just does it. The laconic talk with an actor and rebuff of a stylish come-on are as much in character as the hustle in the alleys. In Andrei's performance, the sublime and the brutal form a whole being.

Unfortunately, the play is less than a cohesive whole, because *Pasolini/Pelosi* abuses three symbolic people: a suburban housewife, a supposedly-sophisticated, professional woman and an urban homosexual whose every word is a gay cliché. Objecting to the endless farting in Pasolini's *The Canterbury Tales*, hardly minimizes the offended person's humanity. Worse still, the

opening night audience could congratulate itself for being superior to people bothered by the depressing aspects of *Teorema*. In fact, Pasolini has become a cult figure to those he would have loathed: the artsy intellectual who thrills to dangerous vulgarity in art but avoids it in real life.

These simplistic put-downs almost over-shadow a truly dangerous suggestion the play does make. In a stark fellatio scene, the street hustler rages against Pasolini because he has been brought to orgasm and he profanes women as well as his sexual partner in a torrent of verbal abuse. This pugnaciously

straight man seems to dislike women as much as he despises homosexuals. He uses the sexual act as an act of control. When he is sexually gratified, he sees himself as losing power. This drives Pelosi to murder, in an attempt to supposedly regain his power.

Pasolini/Pelosi realizes some of that power, some of that rage. It is a jarring play with superb performances. Like Pasolini's films, the most pungent parts are the most brutal. And you'd never see this at St. Lawrence Centre.

The Theatre Centre, 666 King St. W. Thursday through Sunday until April 2. 8 p.m. (2 p.m. Sunday)

G.V. Chesterton onstage

One man show blends artist with art

PAUL PIVATO

In *G.K.C.*, English writer G.K. Chesterton is the subject of a brilliant one-man performance. Impersonated by Tony van Bridge, Chesterton comes to life on stage as a burly man with huge shaggy whiskers, a man full of warmth and wit. The play is nothing more than a patchwork of anecdotes and excerpts from Chesterton's writings, given to the audience with hardly any action. Yet *G.K.C.* still manages to be highly entertaining, at once thoughtful and humorous.

The show begins with an entrance by van Bridge. As he describes Chesterton, van Bridge changes into Victorian apparel and dons a grey wig. His transformation complete, van Bridge steps forward and introduces himself as G.K. Chester-

ton. His characterization of Chesterton is so enchanting that the audience believes it is actually the writer himself.

Using only the power of Chesterton's words, van Bridge creates a world rich with people and action. The actor's sparse use of movement forces the audience to listen, yet his characterization remains absorbing throughout. Van Bridge has a feel for all the nuances of speech: he shifts easily into different accents, controls the flow of his words, pausing for effect, and glides from one topic to another. What threatens to become a plain recital of Chesterton's writings never happens. Rather, van Bridge weaves together choice fragments of autobiography and writing that spellbind the audience and evoke the zest and charm of Chesterton.

First performed at the Shaw Festival in 1970, *G.K.C.* was written, devised and arranged by van Bridge, who recently appeared in the CBC mini-series *Empire, Inc.*

G.K.C. ends rather suddenly and unsatisfactorily with the conclusion of a *Father Brown* story. The ending seems arbitrary. When van Bridge leaves the stage, it appears as if he has simply grown tired of speaking

and, with nothing more to say, exits.

In *G.K.C.*, Chesterton is portrayed in all his colours: disorderly, absent-minded, critical, humorous and rebellious. Known as the "master of the paradox", Chesterton exposed hypocrisy with a searing wit and also penned the famous *Father Brown* detective stories. One aspect of his character that van Bridge explores is Chesterton's love of liquor. Van Bridge-as-Chesterton tells how he sought shelter from a blizzard inside a church. Thirsting for a shot of spirits, Chesterton instead is offered an Arrowroot biscuit.

One of the highlights of the show is chunks of dialogue taken from encounters between Chesterton and his rival George Bernard Shaw. In one such encounter, Shaw pointed to Chesterton's swollen gut and asked, "What are you going to call it?" Chesterton calmly replied: "If it is a girl, I shall call it Elizabeth. If it is a boy, I shall call it Gilbert Keith. But, if it is only wind, I shall call it George Bernard Shaw."

G.K.C. triumphs as a sparkling, witty play that captures both Chesterton the man and Chesterton the writer.

Art exhibit at Atkinson

The real risks of surrealism

STEPHANIE-LYN GROSS

"In some countries, surrealism is not an easy way of life," said artist-publisher Ludwig Zeller. He and Susanna Wald presented their surrealist art exhibit, *The Exquisitely Lively Corpse* last Wednesday at Atkinson College.

Both Zeller and Wald have lived in Toronto since 1971, working as artists and running the *Oasis* publication which they founded in 1975. Before moving to Toronto from Santiago, Chile, they had set up *Casade de la Luna*, which was intended to regroup "artists and poets interested in surrealism", according to Zeller.

Zeller and Wald have collected paintings, drawings, sculpture and poetry from countries around the world. Using these works, as well as their own, they have produced several shows in Toronto.

In the Fellows Lounge, several paintings were displayed, three by Wald and Zeller. One notable oil, by Philip West entitled *Telephonic Fish-hook* was detailed and powerful. Zeller displayed his own collage of mixed media entitled *The Terrace of Thirst. The Sea Cocoon* by Guy Rousille was a four-colour lithograph. Most of the paintings and drawings used the same basic colour scheme: dark grey, blue, burnt orange and black. A dramatic effect was achieved by the use of bold lines and animated shape, characteristic to all the art in the show.

Several small sculptures in both clay and bronze paled beside the impact of the paintings and the incredible amount of published work. Forty books and 14 magazines, plus pamphlets and exhibit programmes from around the world were shown. Few were in English.

Zeller, a native of Chile, had

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TOM SELLECK BESS ARMSTRONG in HIGH ROAD TO CHINA

Fun and adventure at every turn.



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