

## Women's double-header sees good and bad

Theatre review by Michaleen Marte

Workshop West is attempting to live up to its name, with some dire consequences. Their new production at Espace Tournesol is evidence of this. Two plays by local artists are being produced on the strengths of one sole actress. Indeed, this is a daring move with many inherent pitfalls.

A good, even brilliant one-person drama is hard to find and the concept must be well-designed to make it effective. However, this is only half of the problem. For a true success a good *solid* play must be performed by an extraordinary actor whose talent can give the drama its greatest impact. With all of this in mind, Workshop West has set themselves against some very tough odds.

Janet Daverne is the actress selected to interpret the plays by Rick McNair of Calgary and Howard Dallin of Edmonton Rick McNair's *Punch and Polly* was the first work. Overall, it was a tedious and embarrassing affair. What was intended as a tragic-comedy became a melodrama. The fine thread drawn between comedy and tragedy was trampled over; no "melting mood" here. Of course, the idea was intriguing: a suicidal puppetress displays her torment through her puppets. But I am not convinced that it worked.

Daverne provided a one-sided performance. In playing Polly she was weak and weepy, though her role at the egotistical lover through the pupper was much better. The play exploits the eternal theme of *Punch and Judy* to no avail. Punch represents the aggressive, domineering male who makes the submissive female his victim. This theme was presented but without intrigue. The total effect was sadly unimpressive.

The second production, *Somebody Waves Goodbye*, returned to a more conventional form. Here we find the female on the move, packing to leave her lover's apartment. The intervening monologue reveals a woman who is a nomadic spirit, drifting in and out of relationships that do not secure her a permanent place.

Fortunately, Daverne fares better in this play. She gives an interpretation of an individual's life with honest, believable humor. However, she is at a disadvantage because the content of the play wears thin. It becomes as uncomfortable as listening to a woman's long tale of broken love affairs, where inspiration for continuing on is as mundane and accessible as a copy of *Colette*. In *Somebody Waves Goodbye*, the *Punch and Judy* perspective on the male and female relationship was covertly present, thanks to the sardonic wisdom of playwright McNair and the performance of Daverne.

Workshop West must be commended on its ambitious current production. Such innovation will quickly become a genuine success. It is also good to see Espace Tournesol expand its production to areas of art outside dance.

## Omigod...!

Boy, we blew it. Actually, the bloody Arts Editor blew it when he announced that JoAnn McIntyre's production, "Brush Off", was staged last weekend. "Brush Off" runs this week from Wednesday to Saturday in Thrust Theatre. We, (Turtle especially), apologize for this ridiculous error, and for the fact that we missed announcing the mistake last week.

## New Ritt work looks at working-class heroes

"Norma Rae"  
Directed by Martin Ritt  
Movie review by Gordon Turtle

The most striking and memorable aspect of Martin Ritt's new movie, *Norma Rae* is its truthfulness. Many viewers of the movie can well identify with the problem it presents: as a student, one can think of his father or mother who has worked for thirty years under disgusting, filthy and unhealthy working conditions, or perhaps the student himself has had a taste of bitter factory life. Whatever, *Norma Rae* stirs either painful memories of previous employment or startling visions of current occupations.

Sally Field plays the title role in *Norma Rae*. She is one of many employees working in a non-union textile factory in the southern States. The workers spend long hard hours in their dismal, gloomy shop, performing dull and repetitive jobs for minimum pay and absolutely no respect. The factory is the economic backbone of the town the story is set in and almost every citizen of the town is employed one way or another with the factory. Their lives revolve around it and subsequently they have become an embittered, defeated group.

When Ron Leibman appears as an intellectual union organizer, the workers greet him coldly; their

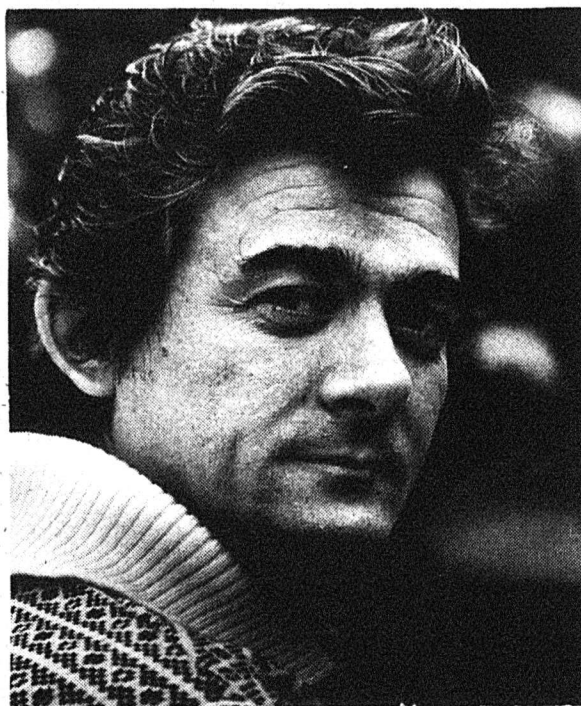
experience with the "communist, agitating and Jewish" unions has been negative and fruitless in the past, and their distrust of the New York union men is well-founded. Nonetheless, Leibman, (who is perhaps best known as Kaz in the television series, *Kaz*) sets out on the difficult task of convincing the textile employees that only through unionization will their lot be improved.

His first break comes when he convinces Norma Rae to join the union and be his inside worker. Norma becomes somewhat militant in her dedication to unionization and eventually loses her job and winds up in jail.

There are problems with the development of Norma's character, and the most glaring one is her too-sudden conversion from a redneck to a militant. Generally, however, Sally Field is superb as Norma, and her experiences inside and outside of the factory are oftentimes painfully real. She carries the role with authority and confidence, and shows that her much-vaunted "maturity" has not been mere press hype.

As Norma's husband, Beau Bridges is adequate but hardly inspiring. His reaction to Norma's new cause is distrust mixed with a tinge of jealousy, as he becomes concerned about the nature of Norma's relationship with her union mentor.

One of the most pleasing aspects of *Norma Rae* is



Playwrights Howard Dallin...



...and Rick McNair

## Harrison continues to pass

George Harrison  
"George Harrison"  
Record review by Janice Michaud

George Harrison, while a member of The Beatles, was termed the quiet one who supplemented John Lennon and Paul McCartney's material with sometimes-mellow, often piercing and always lively guitar mastery. Whereas Lennon and McCartney dominated the band's direction by producing quantity, Harrison quietly and steadily seeped through with quality.

Although prone to write despondent material like *Magical Mystery Tour*'s "Blue Jay Way," Harrison did offset McCartney's pretty tunes and Lennon's electronic noise. Some of Harrison's material then, as in later work, had a philosophical nature, while other work, like "I Me Mine" was plain old rock and roll, and others — "Something" and "Here Comes the Sun" — were gentle, stirring songs.

Before the band's demise, Harrison was enthralled with eastern religion and became a pupil of sitarist Ravi Shankar. When the group finally disbanded, Harrison's future material reflected this eastern influence. His solo albums, *All Things Must Pass*, *Dark Horse*, *Thirty-three and 1/3*, and his involvement in the Bangla Desh concert mirrored his latest passion. Harrison seemed to be in a period of extremes. When his work was good, like on *All Things Must Pass*, he shone. On the other hand, when he delved too deeply into religion his work tended to be inferior as illustrated on the *Dark Horse* album.

On his latest recording, *George Harrison*, the scale seems to be fairly balanced instead of tilted to an extreme. Traces of spiritual influence are still felt but are predominated by a brighter, softer Harrison. Never

that strong vocally, Harrison, with much solo piano behind him, is more confident on this record than before. His skills as a guitarist come off sounding better than ever and the majority of these compositions are fresh.

The first side consists of a nice mixture of tunes, some commercial music and a little bit of the Legendary Eric Clapton joins Harrison on opening, disco-flavored tune, "Love Comes Everyone." Then, Harrison infuses some variety with a couple of image-ridden folk numbers, "Not Guilty" and "Here Comes the Moon." These are contrasted with the most showy number of the album, "Soft Shaped Hana." Probably the most commercial cut of the album, "Blow Away" concludes this side.

Side Two, which offers both the weakest and strongest material, ranges in style from the calmly spiced, "Dark Sweet Lady" to the boring "Your Love Forever," to the acoustic number, "Soft Touch." The most elaborate cut on the album is the highly orchestrated tune "Faster." As the title implies, "Faster" is an uptempo song which again illustrates Harrison's stronger vocals and presents his ideas of life. His voice rings as he sings, *Chose a life in circus / Jumped into the deepest end / Pushing himself to extremes / Made it — people became his friend... / need to wonder why / His wife held back her fears / few have tried / To realize their dreams.*

This record, with some new ideas and a few old ones, is probably Harrison's best in a long time. Consisting of a fine range of musical modes, laid out in contrasting succession, it would appear that George Harrison will be around many turntables for quite some time.

the relationship between Field and Leibman. They form a strong bond of friendship that is greatly underlined with sexual attraction. But this attraction does not become a trite affair; in fact, it does become an affair at all. The two part on amiable, friendly terms.

Director Ritt has made a film that coaxes an emotional response from the viewer without resorting to sentimental or unrealistic pictures of either workers or management. The supervisors and bosses in the textile factory are not absolute villains, and the employees are not absolute saints. His treatment of underpaid and overworked textile workers is beautifully sympathetic, and his depiction of the factory is complete. The filth, the poor lighting, the intolerable noise level, and the general ugliness that still exists in most factories is shown in its most stark detail. While at times *Norma Rae* walks a little on the side of commercialism, Ritt is able to maintain an exquisite balance between commercial viability and sincere, important social documentary.

I only hope that people who see *Norma Rae* do not think that the working world is not as bad as it appears in this movie. If you have ever worked on a production line, or been inside a factory, you should multiply that experience by thirty or forty years. What you'll come away with is *Norma Rae*.