

# Best of the Jest

by Bradley Warner

Well, theatre fans, another comedy gem hit Halifax last week. It was especially relevant Canadiana straight from the country's heartland. Toronto's "Best of the Jest Society" encamped in the Rebecca Cohn and left its mark on some Haligonians — quite a feat of strength!

But then, it would seem that last week the city saw a surfeit of entertainment, including the Neptune Theatre's run of the Newfoundland comedy group, "Codco". It was too bad that two very fine comedy reviews had to compete for Halifax audiences.

The Best of the Jest Society seems to lead the existing comedy troupes and stage reviews in terms of topical Canadian humour and satire. Face it folks, it would appear that we bland Canucks have a lot of native idiosyncracies which can be "knocked" — and quite well at that. Witness our great "philosopher king", Pierre Elliott... what's-his-name. Well, the 'Jest Society' manages to present a truly funny and yet revealing picture of Canadian society as it has become under the present Prime Minister's reign.

In twenty-four short skits, (separated by a suitable intermission), we were presented with a collage of the most satirical or just plain wacky material. For example, Mirabelle Miracle wafts us into the rarified atmosphere of the bilingualism issue as airline pilots see it. Could you imagine being in the responsible position of delivering a

Jumbo-full of passengers into a most cordial bilingual airport — French first. Your pilot must address his enquiries in the official provincial language and translate the replies for himself. But, he is an Anglophone who can speak French only in a fashion and he is in a bit of a hurry. The plane is on fire and they are going to crash. Things are most cordial... 'Hello/Bonjour...I have a bit of a problem/J'ai une probleme...

Nobody on the ground seems to understand his French and the latter seems to possess a sort of selective group amnesia with regards to the English language. Ready or not here we crash!

Or picture our sometimes honourable "P.E.T." in the role of a social reformer. In "No noose is good noose", the flamboyant one browbeats a lowly Western Liberal backbencher — naturally a 'hard-nosed' conservative retentionist, into voting with the Party in favour of abolition. "If your sister killed a policeman, would you like to see her hung?" "But I don't have a sister". But the P.M., foppish in the extreme, has in the meantime placed a small noose around the M.P.'s thick neck and has begun to tug. You can hang a horse by a water tank but I bet he won't drink. (Epilogue; I know how the honourable Member voted.)

The Jest Society is a fine troupe. There are only five members, but their presence easily fills the Cohn stage. There was a minimum use of props and a clever manipulation of lights and sounds. In momentary

lulls, the audience would be treated to a "flash" news report from some part of the nation. (You know, lower Pugwash, "Tranta", or "Ah-taw-wah".) There were only a few lapses in the continuous rollicking, pun-nishment which the near capacity audience thoroughly

enjoyed. All were very receptive and were sorry when the evening came to an end.

Here's hoping that the Best of the Jest Society will maintain their high standards of comedy and not forget to return to Halifax in the upcoming years.



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# A Delightful Riddle

Last Sunday afternoon, Academy Award Winner Nelson Riddle, conducted the Atlantic Symphony Orchestra in the first year's Pop Series. The ASO was swinging like never before.

Familiar movie themes provided an appreciative, but rather small audience with easy listening: "What are you doing for the rest of your life", "Windmills of Your Mind", "Paint Your Wagon", favorites such as "I'm on my Way", "They call the Wind Maria," and "There's a Coach Comin' In", were all quite ably performed.

"Gabrielle" from "Paris When it Sizzles" featured a well-executed alto-saxophone solo which almost made you feel like dancing.

Riddle conducted two of his own arrangements, "Lisbon Antiqua", which he said he has been playing for twenty years and unfortunately sounded like it; and "Send in the Clowns" a lively selection with great dynamics.

"Theme and Variations by Riddle was a rather uninteresting arrangement where the theme became lost. The conductor found it necessary to introduce the various sections of his composition, which seemed to take away from the continuity.

The concert closed with the "British Columbia Suite", but the audience would agree that nothing came close to the enjoyable performance of "The Charleston" during which the ASO really came to life.

Nelson Riddle has a fine rapport with the audience which made the atmosphere seem informal. The audience left smiling.

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