

Horror for laughs

# A night Dracula will never forget

W. Hurst

The appeal of Factory Theatre Lab's *Children of the Night* is the appeal of black glasses with a large, plastic nose attached: It's not terribly sophisticated, but it's funny.

In this two-character play set in 1949, a Dracula obsessed film freak meets his idol, Bela Lugosi aka The Count. Lugosi, past the zenith of his career, is a morphine addict. To feed his habit, he arranges a meeting with his dealer and on a rainy Hallowe'en night, complete with lightning, arrives at an apartment that is a shrine to Grade B horror movies. There is an Iron Maiden, an earth-filled casket, cobwebs and other momentos. This is home to Freddy, the film freak.

As it turns out, Freddy is a friend of Lugosi's dealer. However, Freddy is awestruck when he realizes the identity of his wet caller. From this moment on, Freddy, the ultimate fan, refers to his guest as The Count, never Bela or Mr. Lugosi.

Candid snapshots, blackmail and

stakes through the heart jerk the play along. These quirky devices, however, play second banana to the jokes, especially Freddy's. His jokes are not just bad, they are dreadful, but they have a cumulative effect. By the end of *Children of the Night*, an outstandingly bad joke gets enthusiastic laughter from an audience having a very good time.

The script by Paul Ledoux, is clumsy at times. The time and place is given by Freddy in a speech that is too obviously an information blurb. Lugosi's early career is told in a stodgy monologue. Also, Ledoux writes about drugs with a collegiate sensibility that seems out of touch with 1949.

Luckily, the actors divert attention from the script's problems. Neil Clifford plays Freddy as a slightly crazed young man with a shrill voice that never dropped and his head bobs around as if he belongs on the dash of a car.

Clifford also touches on the

darker part of the zealot. Freddy will accept Lugosi as the Count, not as a man. He thinks that Lugosi's reminiscence is a script, not real life. Freddy's idolatry could engender abuse.

Richard Partington has a more difficult task as Lugosi. Bela Lugosi is a filmic icon, but Partington develops a character rather than a caricature. His reading of Romeo's death speech is both tender and funny. With a healthy contempt and anger, Partington expresses the frustration of Lugosi who had a legitimate stage career before Dracula's curse.

The set by Reginald Bronskill is amusingly macabre suiting the play well.

*Children of the Night* is not a Moliere farce and doesn't pretend to be. Wearing a pair of black glasses with a large, plastic nose is not terribly sophisticated but it's funny. Try it.



**Waddington: Poet and professor**

Miriam Waddington, York Professor of English, will be reading from her two latest books Tuesday, November 2nd. The Show, which begins at 5 p.m. will be held in the Winter Senior Common Room.

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