

Moore's "Review" an enjoyable retrospective

By Michael Christ

Earlier in this century, the musical revue was a way of Canadian life. In the school systems, designed on the English model, the musical revue was as integral to its existence as grey prickly flannels or goosebumps and tartan skirts. If you were fortunate, the family occasionally attended a touring revue by a group

annual *Spring Thaw* which rewarded your attention. The year was 1948.

The first *Spring Thaw* was directed by Mavor Moore in 1948 and for 24 years thereafter, the musical revue continued to delight audiences wherever it played. Last week, the Department of Theatre provided us with a retrospective

endowed with the flesh and blood of a young cast instantly becomes art - not artifact - and the nature of that art was entertainment.

The revue was never more enjoyable than when its humour broached upon timeless sources of comedy such as Canada's capricious sense of identity. The revue was never more provocative than when it offered prophetic insights into contemporary Canadian problems.

It is also very reasonable to say, that the revue was never as bad as when it attempted to recreate a sketch, like the one ending the first act, whose humour evaded contemporary understanding and thus forced the student actors into the most compromising antics to make a terrible thing into something that was merely bad.

In every respect, *Review of Revues* represents a quantum leap from last year's musical production, *Salad Days*. The most striking element - that which makes a musical a musical - the vocal element - demonstrated improvements which were shown in all aspects of the production. While not everyone can sing well, musical director John Oxley has demonstrated that everyone can at least sing competently when they undertake the training required.

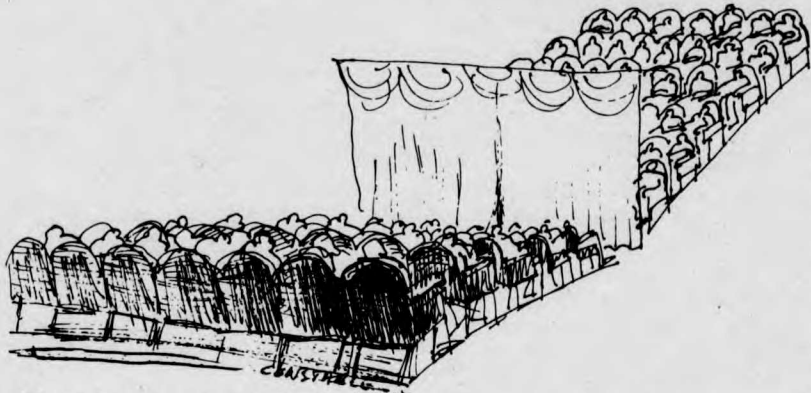
The Treasurer of Ontario, and the Department Chairman, William Lord, co-operated in providing the set design which was distinguished by its economy and clean utility. Costume designer Louise La Perriere demonstrated that you can dress an actress from head to toe quite elegantly for less than the price of a shirt, while Dorian Clark proved that McLaughlin Hall need not be synonymous with obtrusive or spotty lighting.

The theatre department expressed itself amiably in all respects with the possible exception of two. I was somewhat distressed to find that no student was apparently equal to the task of designing the set. Secondly, despite having numerous courses in playwriting within the department, and despite being part of a university which grants degrees in

creative writing, I have not as yet seen one contribution of the writer's craft in any of the department's productions. From all those talented writers can we not extract one revue? From all those talented musicians in our music department, can we not extract one revue?

The cast of *Review of Revues* has shown us that the musical revue is an

effective entertainment as well as valuable exercise to work towards. If their performance suffered in the slightest, it was due to dated material. Fresh material and a modern score would reflect more comprehensively the talents within the department in a production which could not fail to charm their contemporaries.



calling themselves "The Dumbbells."

Then came a time when your country went to war, flannel gave way to khaki and you now watched *The Air Force Show* or *The Army Show* - and you were grateful. On returning home you never broke the tradition: this time it was the first

look at *Spring Thaw* in a selection of its highlights aptly titled, *Review of Revues*, directed by its creator, Mavor Moore. It gave us a chance to view a valuable artifact from our theatrical past and to examine its effectiveness from a modern perspective.

Happily, an historical work when

Weil reader the best

The Simone Weil Reader, edited by George A. Panichas. David McKay Co., New York, 1977. Reviewed by Cynthia Wright.

Simone Weil was one of the most brilliant thinkers of this century. She was also one of the strangest.

George A. Panichas's anthology of selections from her writings is the best - almost the only - introduction to Simone Weil in English. (Her works have been available in translation only since 1951).

Simone Weil was a French-Jewish philosopher, a contemporary of Simone de Beauvoir, Sartre and Camus. She is primarily remembered today as a Christian mystic although she refused to be baptized and remained a severe critic of the Church. She has been called "a modern saint" but she never detached herself from the world. All her life Simone Weil was politically active.

She qualified as a teacher of philosophy, but worked in factories. In the thirties, she was active in the trade union movement. She posed as a journalist in order to get to the Republican front in Barcelona during the Spanish Civil War. During the Second World War, she worked with the Free French in London, where she wrote *The Need for Roots*, one of her two main political works. The other, *Oppression and Liberty*, was described by Camus as unequalled since Marx's works in its insights

into social, political and economic society.

Simone Weil did not live to see the end of the Second World War. She died in 1943 of pulmonary tuberculosis - and starvation. She refused to eat anything because people in Occupied France were dying of hunger. She was 34.

Intensely spiritual, Simone Weil was a thinker of dazzling originality and scope. She wrote with startling clarity, but the process of understanding fully her life and thought is a demanding one. She can be irritating. Sometimes one must violently disagree with her. But first, as T.S. Eliot wrote: "We must simply expose ourselves to the personality of a woman of genius, of a kind of genius akin to that of the saints."



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