

'Tis Pity She's a Whore

Favourite classic in intense, lusty production

By JEFFEREY GIDDENS

An interesting and exciting example of the English renaissance theatre is now in production at the Hart House Theatre. 'Tis Pity She's a Whore, an often revived classic written by John Ford in the 1600s, is a tragic drama with intentionally vain attempts to lighten the otherwise sorrowful atmosphere with classic comic relief.

A lusty and physical production, the three hour play begins delicately and genteely enough, but by the end of the third act the theatre-goer has witnessed a multitude of on-stage

deaths, all supposedly necessary in the name of honour, chastity and love.

Set in Parma, Italy, the story is characterized by intense, self-destructive heroines and noblemen. We find our chief heroine, Annabella finds herself "with child". Reed Needles (Giovanni) and Pauline Donohue (Annabella) poignantly present the nature of this catastrophe in the face of the staid morality of the era. Their incestuous relationship is seen by the Friar (who has held all of this in confidence) as utterly abhorrent, but when he learns that Annabella, a noblewoman, has become pregnant by her brother, the Friar is sure that two good souls have been lost to the devil and there is no prayer he can offer.

On the quiet privacy of the empty

stage, brother and sister divulge their hitherto secret love for each other and begin their journey down the road of mutual self-destruction.

Their incestuous relationship proceeds ideally, until, in horror, Annabella finds herself "with child". Reed Needles (Giovanni) and Pauline Donohue (Annabella) poignantly present the nature of this catastrophe in the face of the staid morality of the era. Their incestuous relationship is seen by the Friar (who has held all of this in confidence) as utterly abhorrent, but when he learns that Annabella, a noblewoman, has become pregnant by her brother, the Friar is sure that two good souls have been lost to the devil and there is no prayer he can offer.

To save whatever face she can, Annabella decides to marry a nobleman who absolutely loses his head with anger and disappointment when he discovers his new bride is not a virgin. You can imagine his reaction when he finds out from his trusty servant Vasques (Bob Lackenbauer)

that his bride is pregnant, and by her brother to boot! Blood flows copiously on the stage, as justice, honour, revenge and fate take their course in this tragedy of love and perversion.

GENTLE FLURRY

Inevitably, the bricks of the main themes are cemented together with a gentle flurry of sub-plots that amuse while delaying and building climaxes of situation. The entire production is quite commendable. Most of the acting is done well and the cast generally speaking, has the motivation down pat.

Equal to the truly authentic acting is the meticulous costuming. Multitudes of fine velvets and rich brocades adorn the cast and are an essential ingredient in establishing the credibility of the performance.

Not as brilliantly executed as the acting and costuming, is the set. Though it is frugal in a tasteful sort of way, it leaves too much to the imagination. Several added pieces of ornate period furniture would go far in embellishing and concretizing the



Estee Cooper as Putana in a scene from 'Tis Pity She's a Whore, at Hart House Theatre.

regality of the upper class Italian setting.

All in all, 'Tis Pity She's a Whore is quite a play and, staged in the quiet elegance of the chandeliered Hart House Theatre, it promises to be a provoking and satisfying theatrical experience. 'Tis Pity She's a Whore. Hart House Theatre till November 23. For reservations call 928-8668.

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