

Shaw recovered, but the show went on and on . . .

The Citadel opened its fifth production of the season with a Shaw Playbill, staging two of Shaw's lesser known plays *Village Wooing* and *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets*. The two play made for a rather slight evening which I would recommend only to the most devoted of the Shaw cult.

George Bernard Shaw has never held much attraction for me and viewing these two plays has not added any new reconsidered praises to my estimation of his work. Shaw's ideas of what is dramatic and fit to be staged seem at times only slightly less absurd than his own estimation of himself as a playwright and his weaknesses as a dramatist were only too evident in *Village Wooing*.

Although it is a short play (even then taking up the major portion

Citadel productions of Shaw's *Village Wooing* and *Dark Lady of the Sonnets* proved therapeutic for GBS by transferring boredom from himself to his audience

of time in this stingy production) *Village Wooing* dragged mercilessly from first to finish. Shaw was 78 when he wrote it and never claimed the play to be among his better works. He remarked that he "dashed it off one day to alleviate the hours of boredom." Successful as it might have been as therapy for Shaw, the play has very little in it to alleviate the boredom of the audience watching it.

The play consists of three short confrontations between only two members of the cast, Denise Fergusson as 'Her' and Kenneth Dight as 'Him'. They first meet aboard

the Empress of Patagonia and later in the small village shop where Fergusson works at which time she convinces Dight to buy the establishment. Having done so, she next gets him to propose in the last encounter. There is certainly no action in the plot capable of capturing and sustaining the interest of an audience. Nor was there anything amusing enough in the characters dialogue to make up for it. There isn't very much to say about the acting. Denise Fergusson tried hard enough to be convincing and at times was quite entertaining. Kenneth Dight gave a poorer performance. He never rose past the

drab flatness of a cardboard figure in his characterization. Together the two didn't project any kind of a meaningful unity, never getting enough out of their acting to convince anyone of a likeness to any kind of relationship between a man and a woman. But if they didn't do Shaw justice, at the same time Shaw isn't giving actors much of a break in *Village Wooing*. They just didn't have anything to work with.

The Dark Lady of the Sonnets was a much more enjoyable play but it too had its limitations. It begins with Shakespeare climbing over the wall of the Royal Palace at Whitehall to keep a rendezvous with his 'dark lady'. He has a short conversation with the guard about his lady's faithfulness when accosted by Queen Elizabeth. His 'dark lady' arrives at an unfortunate moment, mistakes the Queen and after complaining about having her love broadcasted in all forms of licentious poems and plays, she leaves. Will then appeals to the Queen to sponsor a National Theatre. End of play.

The chief flaw was that it was far too short to really make up for the tedious effort that preceded it. Its appeal too was to a very limited audience. To get all the humour out of the play you had to have a rather extensive knowledge

of Shakespeare. Most of the wit comes from the fact that Shakespeare picks up some of his best lines in *Hamlet* from the conversation of the guard. Even this was overworked. In effect there was very little to the play, other than Shaw using his knowledge of Shakespeare to make an appeal for a National Theatre which he himself was pushing for at the time he wrote the play. There were some interesting themes touched upon, but the play was much too short to really do anything with them.

The acting for this play was superior to that of the first, but again its brevity (it only lasted about 20 minutes) did not give Mulcahy, who did Shakespeare, or Sheila Haney (Elizabeth) a chance to go very far. Mulcahy was a bit of a let down. His performance had none of the exciting magnitude he produced in *Philadelphia*. Sheila Haney perhaps did the best job, though Tony Lloyd and Deirdre Kirby were equally good most of the time. Mulcahy directed both plays. The first he moved along at a far too tedious pace while the last was pushed far too quickly. Even he was not able to handle his lines. The setting and costuming of *Dark Lady* were as charming as those for *Village Wooing* were lifeless.

The Shaw Playbill will be running until March 15. You can pick up tickets for the production at the box office or phone for reservations at 424-2828.

—Philip Hinman

When the sawflies mate, Stelfox will be there

Despite the many protests, both verbal and implied, by certain members of the Gateway and the general public, we like to feel that the arts pages do perform a useful function, in providing a sluggish semi-consciousness of the arts on campus. This week we are taking another dramatic step forward.

In an attempt to get as far away from the ivory tower as possible, we are using these pages to bring to the people the ART OF THE PEOPLE. We had the pleasure recently of receiving a copy of *When the Sawflies Mate in Summer and Other Alberta Poems*, by Henry Stelfox. We can not think of a more representative Alberta poet than Mr. Stelfox; he has been a resident near Rocky Mountain since he first settled there more than sixty years ago. Unfortunately, the foreword to his book gives only general information regarding his life, but we have these few interesting facts: "He and his wife have raised nine children, and he has worked hard at being farmer, rancher, real estate agent, auctioneer, clerk, stock raiser, and veterinarian . . . in 1954, Henry Stelfox was awarded the Julian Crandall conservation trophy . . . in 1956, the Geographic Board of Alberta named Mt. Stelfox in his honour . . . he also was a member of the Alberta Farm Loan Purchase Board during the late 1950's."

Before exploring Mr. Stelfox's poetry, we must regretfully report that his book is difficult to obtain. It bears no publication date, and has no publisher. We assume therefore, that it is a privately printed book, and that those of the public who are interested may obtain the book directly from the author in Rocky Mountain House.

Space does not permit, of course, that we may quote from 98 of Mr. Stelfox's poems, but several small samples might prove indicative. We also feel that any comment on our part would be superfluous. Here then is "The Knocker":

Wire worms, and cutworms, early frosts and hail galore,
And snow just when the wind turns to the north; you want no more.

Your horses see an old friend passing in the lane,
Your best mare tried to shake hands; now she is dead lame.

That new three stranded fence, is bust for many a rod.
And I've had to fetch the cows since someone shot my dog.

What I've seeded early is filling fit to bust,
But its leaves are getting curly. That's a sign of rust.

The oats I seeded the end of May are a heavy looking lot,
But I'm scared to take a look that way. That black stuff looks like smut.



HENRY STELFOX

The bank manager advised me to buy up lots of cows,
They all got in the creek and drowned. I wish I'd bought some sows.

This is Henry Stelfox the agrarian, the man of the land. There is another Stelfox, one of tenderness and sentiment. We dislike the prac-

tise of printing only excerpts of poems, but the length of this poem "Mother" prohibits inclusion of the entire work. We cite the first verse of "Mother":

Could I again just live the past,
Those times, where o'er life's trails I trod so fast.
Could I an infant be, once more upon the breast,
And hear that voice, which soothed me then to rest.
Could I those orbs, those pools of love just see,
Those eyes, which then watched over me.
If I could just but live again the past,
A better life I'd live, and spend it to the last
With Mother.

We regret that this article can only be a mere glimpse of the work of Henry Stelfox. We would be interested to know if any of our readers follow up this brief introduction, or if they know of any other local artists of a similar nature. Indeed, in view of the experimental nature of this article, we would be delighted to receive any comments at all. If public opinion warrants it, we would consider making a regular series on this theme.

—the Editors

records

FLEETWOOD MAC: ENGLISH ROSE Epic BN 26446

Electric blues, pure and simple—that's the content of the latest offering from Britain's number one blues group, Fleetwood Mac. Simple chord sequences, consistent rhythms, and spontaneous improvisations give the group an opportunity to express feeling for the music they play. Their adaptation of the steel guitar goes over quite well, particularly in the exotic *Albatross* (one of 3 instrumentals)—by far the outstanding cut on the album.

GUY LOMBARDO: THE NEW SONGS, THE NEW SOUNDS. Capitol ST 128

Getting sick of the same songs appearing on every easy-listening album for the last 6 months? Feel that if you hear another version of *Honey*, *Harper Valley P.T.A.*, or *Gentle On My Mind*, you're going to scream? Well, if you thoroughly despise these songs, you might be gratified to hear Guy Lombardo butcher them.

Frankly, I don't know whether he's serious or not—according to the album cover, which expounds Guy Lombardo's "new sound", he is—but the result seems to be either a parody on his old corny saxophone sound of years gone by, or else he's making fun of modern pop music; regardless of his intention, he does show how incompatible his sound is with the music of the 1960's. The Guy Lombardo perversion of Johnny Cash's *Folsom Prison Blues* will send you into hysterics. Listen to Kenny Gardner's vocal interpretation of *Harper Valley P.T.A.*; then, as you clean up the vomit from the floor you can hear *Mrs. Robinson*, and blissfully relish the fact that Simon and Garfunkle exist!

On the novelty side, however, the album has some merit. In fact, I'm still debating with myself as to whether or not it should be filed under "comedy".

DEEP PURPLE: THE BOOK OF TALIESYN Polydor 543.016

Deep Purple's second album is a vast improvement over their first, but the still have a tendency to substitute gimmickery for musicianship. Of the seven cuts on this album, the combination of their own *Exposition* and the Beatles' *We Can Work It Out* stands out. Featured on the album is a 10 minutes extension of their latest single *River Deep Mount High*.

ESO tidal wave cleans beach with pulsating performance

Lawrence Leonard tried hard for a pulsating performance last Saturday, and that is exactly what he got.

He took Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 in G Major at a rapid, bouncy pace and more or less brought the whole thing off.

The concerto is a delicate interplay between many separate units of sound within the orchestra and at times the effect was indeed superb. At other times the orchestra was not as good as it could have been. At its best, the effect Bach achieves is one of many voices, all equal, combining for a unified effect in which no voice is predominant. The orchestra failed when, at times, one voice would drag our attention away from the total work. It is a problem this orchestra can not, or will not, solve in the near future. This performance of the Brandenburg No. 3 showed the orchestra is now good enough to try and do its own thing, even with Bach, and good enough to get its point across. One only has to compare the Leonard version with Klemperer's interpretation on the Angel record to see Leonard's liveliness in contrast to Klemperer's domineering control.

The Brandenburg was good apart from the minor squabbles inside the work and Beethoven's Fifth was pretty much in the same bag.

Again we were treated to an exciting interpretation from the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra. The first movement was taken at a really driving pace, and regardless of what Ann Burrows may think, I liked it.

I mean really those originally revolutionary opening bars have been degraded to the point where they are being used in Loan Shark ads on television so what's left to dispel a rather blasé attitude towards the piece?

Lawrence Leonard cleaned the beach with a tidal wave.

But Beethoven suffered almost the same defects as the Bach. The orchestra seemed to lag ever so slightly behind Leonard's hectic pace and at times sections would get out of synchronization with one another.

But even with these slight flaws the interpretation came off and the Symphony was exciting, if not perfect, when we reached the finale.

Mussorgskys Picture's at an Exhibition, arranged by Ravel, was the triumph of the evening. The work is a series of impressions representing 10 pictures. The orchestra demonstrated its true potential all the way through this piece. It was a sensitive rendering with a proper respect for the dynamics. I can only agree with a friend of mine that "Lawrence Leonard has a feeling for the big moments". Leonard's sensibility was at its best in this work.

I am going to close this column with a few words of criticism.

I do not think it is the role of the critic to say an orchestra is great and then qualify his remarks by adding "great for Edmonton, or great in terms of Canada". An orchestra is either great or it is not great. We have an excellent critical ruler against which to judge the attainments of the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra and that ruler is our record collections. And even if we do not own an extensive record library, that excellent radio station, CKUA, and its serious music programming, handled by Ed Kilpatrick, De Koven, and Matt Hedley is enough to keep one well-informed. Against this background the ESO comes out as an orchestra on the way up, but not at the top. Last Saturday showed us the orchestra has reached the point where it can do its own thing. If it continues as it has in a few more years it will be able to do it well.

—Brian Campbell