

EROTICISM goes to HELL

The incomprehensible nature of death. That's really what life is all about. Some look for a rewarding, blissful afterlife, and some hope to god there is none. Most simply uselessly ponder the concept of non-existence. Unimaginable. Some seek comfort in making others believe in their faith. Some seek comfort in acceptance of limited time. They say that after thirty, the average adult thinks about death every day. I say it starts much earlier than that.

The Dali Lama says you attain "Nirvana." The Vikings claimed right to "Valhalla." The Christians believe in a "Heaven." - all end-products of a 'correct' or 'proper' way of life. What then, is the end for those who may not follow the correct path? Is there a "hell"?

Sitting in "Holding Pool A" last thursday night (better known as the auditorium of Edmund Casey Hall), surrounded by the minions of existentialist hell, harassed by officious police, bothered by loud, obnoxious drunks, being given incomprehensible instructions and being informed of meaningless happenings, many of my own personal thoughts and beliefs on the subject of death came bubbling up out of the back of my hindbrain, sending, occasionally, that shiver that everyone gets when, for just a split second, they try to comprehend just what it would be like to be dead - the silence, the darkness...

Then the policeman comes by with a piece of paper on which is a badly drawn stick person with the words "wears a coat" scrawled unprofessionally underneath. Shoving this in my face he yells "have you seen this man!?" - we're looking for him. He wears a coat!" I again realize just where I am. This is Theater St. Thomas's production of Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialist romp through the deepest and darkest of the human fears - a play called *No Exit*.

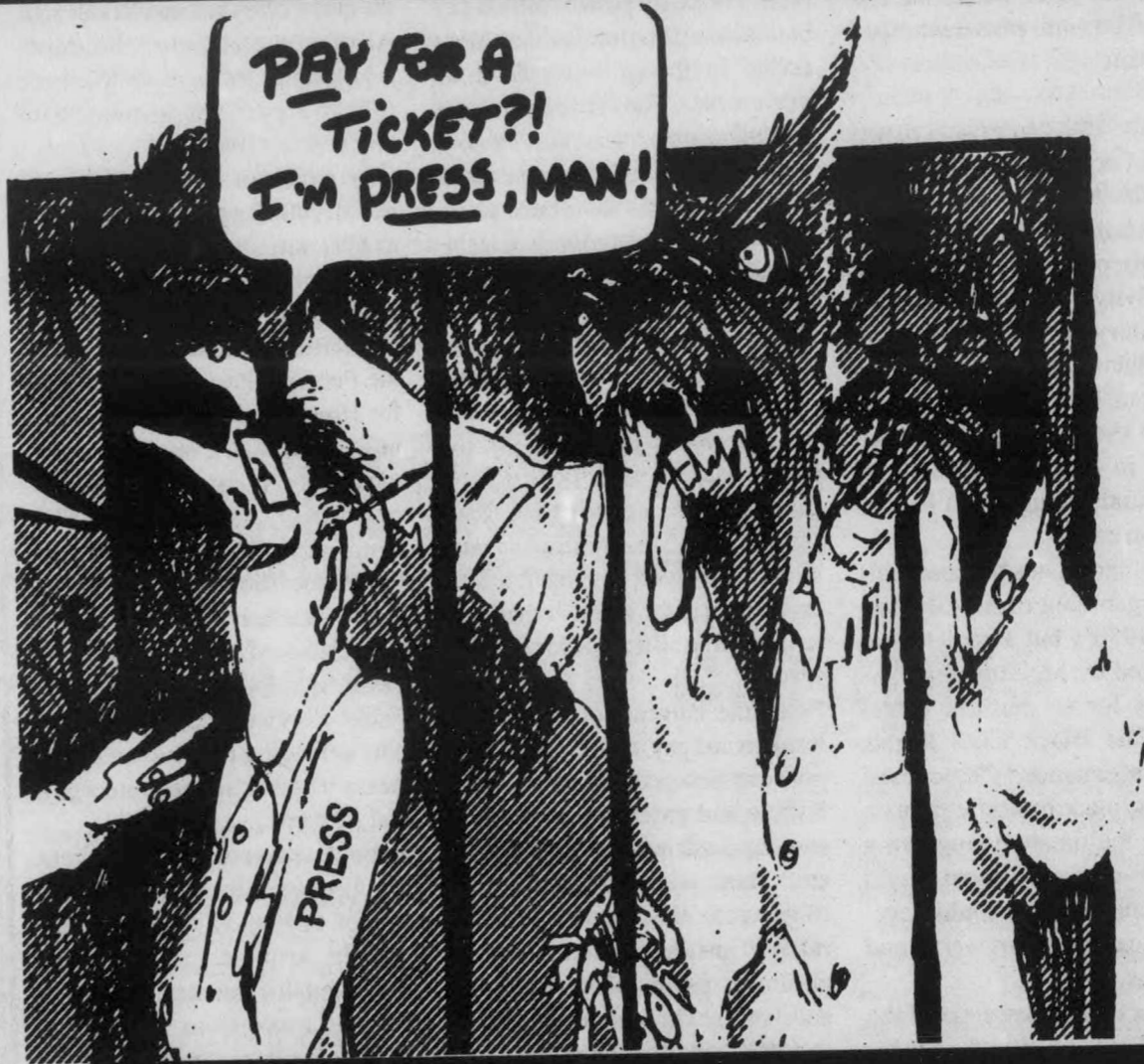
This is a four-actor play in which three people (a man named Garcin, and two women, Inez and Estelle) are in "hell," which consists solely of a room with three chairs, a fireplace, and an odd bronze mantelpiece sculpture. They are led in one by one by the Valet, an odd and slightly paranoid minion of Beelzebub, who explains to them that they are to spend eternity with one another. It is basically a fairly uninteresting and badly written play, being intended less for entertainment and more for intellectual stimulation (the kind

of thing that was extremely popular at the time it was written). The play putters along with no real discernable direction, the situational plot acting mainly like a pasty, not completely congealed connection between clever Sartrean lines like "A man is what he wills himself to be."

Theater St. Thomas carried the whole production off beautifully. They created a bizarre "hell" all their own, full of bureaucracies, red tape, incomprehensible rules and practices, and even stupid clerks and officious and unspeakably moronic police - just the things about the real world that make it "hell." They put this hell in the lobby, basement, backstage and anywhere else they could in Edmund Casey Hall, and led their ticket holders through it, harassing them, making them place their thumbs on an 'x' and then running it under a green light, placing them in seats (you were not allowed to sit with the person you came with), and generally making some people laugh, and some people uncomfortable. The important thing was that we, as the audience, all felt something. By making us uncomfortable, or confused, or even making us laugh, this group made us think, made us care what the play was about, and more importantly, made us anticipate the play and think about it when it started - something extremely important when dealing with what, as I said before, is only an interesting production from an intellectual point of view.

The acting itself was sincere, believable, and intelligent. The actors were amateur, but obviously knew their characters and knew why they were saying the lines they had (particularly hard in this play as many of the lines are things no one would conceivably ever say). Bruce Devlin was a convincing Garcin, convincingly nervous at the beginning, and convincingly psychotic towards the end. Kori Gorman's hard-headed Inez played nicely against Jennifer House's shallow and spacy Estelle. Good performances.

I really do think the important people in this play were all those who created the atmosphere around "Holding Pool A" however. My hat is off, down, on the floor and covering a mud puddle in front of David Peterson's feet. Keep it up folks, next time lets make the audience really uncomfortable. Theater can be as disturbing as a Hitchcock movie and as funny as Friday night at Yuk Yuk's, but it will take more efforts like this one to convince people of this.



DANCE FOR ARTS SAKE!

by BUGS BUNNY

On Monday night, the Playhouse saw the production of *Avalanche* by the Desrosiers Dance Theatre. *Avalanche*, a collection of works from the decade-old DDT, testifies to the non-conformity, playfulness and imagination of the DDT's founder and choreographer, Robert Desrosiers.

Certainly, *Avalanche* broke away from traditional dance ideals, making innovative use of imagery and props from scenes remote from the stage. "Cochon", a piece from the production *First Year*, saw the "birth" of the male from a huge and happy-looking pig mascot. "Tennis", also from *First Year*, had the audience in laughter, as two stylized "players" lobbed a human "ball" between them.

Desrosiers also has the ability to shift the focus of a particular piece simply by the addition of an immobile element. During the performance of "Blue Fox", from *Incognito*, the audience's attention and anticipation was distracted from the sole dancer by the presence on stage of a nude male. This completely transformed the piece.

Desrosiers' sense of fun at times seems to translate into irony. "Double Man", from *Concerto in Earth Major*, was an amusing play on the dual

animal/civilized nature of man. The female remained the passive pursued. The male, in pursuit, cleverly presented in profile, at first his animal side, and by changing direction, revealed a full-length restrained tuxedo. The "Chandelier Suite", from *Ultracity*, displayed all the male dancers in bizarre headgear (ie. chandeliers). While this piece was hilarious in its costume ideas, it essentially portrayed nothing more than female entrapment and helplessness. This was not redeemed by the ending, in which the females were carried off by the tuxedo-clad men.



The best works came towards the end of the first act. "Duet" and "Trio" from the production *Jeux*, were unique in their "plays" on same-sex partners. "Brass Fountain", a solo performed by Robert Desrosiers, was outstanding. An incredibly fluid and expressive dancer, his obvious emotion and involvement with the dance, right down to the flexibility of his hands, was beautiful to watch. "Capescape", from *Concerto in Earth Major*, was probably the highlight of the performance. Very controlled and co-ordinated dancer-placement and use of capes still allowed for the almost uncontrolled dance of each individual.

The diversity of the works in *Avalanche* were ultimately my only cause of dissatisfaction. The lack of unity among the pieces performed were mirrored by a lack of unity within most of the pieces themselves. While this sometimes lends itself to creativity for an audience, it is extremely distracting, as the pieces tend to lose their sense of focus. What does come across is a certain pretentiousness. While I certainly enjoyed the production, I walked out wondering why the sense of disorganization did not extend to the two pieces performed by Desrosiers himself. Egoism?

by Paul Car...
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