

# Glendon's Hamlet died well

by David Schatzky

Despite the high degree of competence demonstrated in the areas of neat staging, excellent technical assistance and general authority of presentation, director Michael Gregory's Glendon College HAMLET at Burton Auditorium last weekend was mainly lifeless, pedantic and boring.

When one reads the play, one discovers it to be a passionate, witty, fast-moving, exciting, mysterious epic of psychological drama, that investigates a young man's Oedipal feelings, the nature of hypocrisy, the machinations of lust, the felicity of comradeship, the folly of sword-play, the bittersweet humour of senility and madness, the corruption of power, the threat of death, the arrogance of youth, the power of the supernatural, and in fact, almost anything that defines humanity.

A production of HAMLET that lacks a sense of immediacy and real human emotions is as killing as a high school teacher who uses the play as an example of the dramatic use of iambic pentameter. Unfortunately, by virtue of ponderous pacing and talking down to the audience, this production managed too often to convert Shakespeare's intensity into about four hours of measured, well-controlled monotony.

There may be two reasons for this. One is that HAMLET should not be done by inexperienced actors. Verse is difficult to speak. And the complex and sometimes chameleonlike changes in mood that occur all the way through this play demand a finely tuned emotional sensitivity from the performers if the sub-layers of the play are to be communicated. Sometimes a director will not bother to interpret these sub-layers if he feels his actors cannot handle them. What results is a false clarity of line, a one-dimensional dull charade.

The stars of this particular evening were Donald Acaster; who designed a most flexible and intelligent set, with ample and numerous acting areas, to which he added smoothly-flowing illumination; and

a young lady named Angie Pawlowski. In a very short sequence in which she portrayed an adolescent boy in the troupe of visiting actors, she had all the spontaneity, concentration, sense of character and situation, and inventiveness that were lacking (or perhaps squelched) in all the other performances.

Hamlet himself (John Taylor), was in command of all his resources: a strong, pleasing voice, a functional body, and an intelligent mind. But of all the distinguishing characteristics peculiar to the melancholy, fiery, contradictory Danish student-prince, only a well-placed sense of irony was presented.

There was no understanding, it seemed, of the inner turmoil that churns Hamlet from his now-arrogance to his now-feigned madness to his now-indecision to his now-tenderness to his now-wit. This is an introspective analytical man, at war with himself, not a preacher or professor, slightly cynical and rebellious. His soliloquies particularly (from which we have a right to expect much), lacked any inner drive or motivation. It was annoying that they were delivered at us, instead of being a dialogue with himself.

It goes without saying that to play this part is a tour-de-force, but one takes that much at least, for granted.

In this era, when one does such a familiar play, one should add something memorable to it, or clarify its difficulty in some way.

This was merely a visual reading, too long and uninspired.

Art is discipline, I admit, but an inner one, wedded to personal spontaneity (and in theatre) group interaction. Just as the humour in this production was either heavy-handed, contrived, or fey, rather than seminal, the unity of interpretation and characterization was imposed and shallow, rather than derived from the emotional and dramatically sound depths of Shakespeare's challenging and still vital script, and the actors' own resources.



David McCaughna

## miscellany

excellent new British film, opening at the Hollywood South this weekend. It features that superb actress, Maggie Smith.

### BILLBOARD POET

York's billboard poet, Mike Segal, has another billboard poem up now, in the same location as the last. It is located on Yonge just above Bloor at the end of Yorkville Avenue.

### JOAN BAEZ

One of the best new albums out recently is the new Joan Baez double album, Any Day Now. All songs are by Bob Dylan. Joan is a marvelous interpreter of Dylan and the album includes a great version of Sad-Eyed Lady of the Lowlands.

### BRITISH REBELS

On student rebels in Britain, from an article in the London Evening Standard: "Some of the students went to sleep, but most of them went swimming. They had managed to open the door to the pool in the basement. The Socialists wore their underclothes, and the Anarchists didn't."

### GRAPES

Anyone wishing to join in a protest against California grapes is invited to join the picket at the Dominion store at Keele and Lawrence on Saturday from 9:30 to 1. The protest is organized by York student Lyba Spring.

### NIXON

US President Richard Nixon, after consulting with ex-President Lyndon Johnson, has decided to end the war in Vietnam by announcing that he will not run for re-election in 1972 so that the Vietcong will know that he is sincere in his peace efforts.

### CANCELLATIONS

More rock groups are cancelling their Toronto appearances than are bothering to appear here. In recent weeks Ten Years After, Canned Heat, Blood, Sweat, and Tears, and Super-sessions have failed to appear. Now comes the news that both The Rolling Stones and the Doors have cancelled their Toronto performances. It may be justifiable in the case of the Doors. Jim Morrison masturbated before an audience in Florida and is recovering in Puerto Rico.

There is some compensation, however. Jimi Hendrix has been booked into Maple Leaf Gardens (ugh!) for May 3.

### SANITY CIRCUS

Don't forget: Sanity Circus at Simpsons, downtown. Through Saturday you can attend a refined version of York's Sanity Circus for 25 cents.

### BOOKS

The Third World Book Shop, on Walton St, off Bay just below Gerrard for a good selection of materials on black revolutionary movements, etc.

### JEAN BRODIE

The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie, an

### THANKS

As this is the last Excalibur of the year, I would like to thank all those who have written for the entertainment section. Especially, Frank Liebeck for his incisive theatre reviews, Richard Levine for Maud, Pat Kutney for his opinions from the music world, Alex Cramer for his penetrating views on music and the 'hip' scene, Linda Bohnen for those excellent book reviews, David Schatzky, the design staff for this section, and many others.

Escalation? The Draft? Politics? The Establishment? Youth Movement?

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