

# Dalhousie Music's mini operas satisfying

by donalee moulton

Opera can be a long and tedious form of entertainment, often requiring the undivided attention and concentration of the audience. This is not the case, however, with mini operas, which are just long enough to arouse one's interest, yet not lengthy enough to lose one's attention.

Last week the Dalhousie music department put on the two mini operas - *Rider to the Sea* and *A Dinner Engagement*. *Rider to the Sea*, a J.M. Syng play, revolved around a family whose menfolk all worked at sea and who eventually were all claimed by it. *A Dinner Engagement*, on the other hand, was a light, amusing comedy of a once-rich family trying to retain this image for their guests -- the Grand Duchess of Monte blanco, and her son, whom they hope will marry Susan, their old maid daughter.

*Rider to the Sea*, as a literary work leaves much to be desired. The plot is so common it approaches being hack and cliché. There appeared no room for creative acting to develop as there was no originality about the opera.

The highlights of this opera were the singing and the set. With the exception of Peter Mushkat, all the performers excelled. Patricia Cameron, the Rose Bowl winner this year, gave her always near-perfect performance, along with Ann MacDonald, who was superb as Nora -- one of the daughters. The only problem was the positioning of the performers with respect to the audience. Often the part required players to turn their backs or lower their heads, thus muffling much of what they sang.

The set, made by members of the

theatre department, was simple and highly effective. The lighting and sound effects combined to elicit the foreboding, eerie atmosphere so much a part of the mini opera.

The mini opera, however, was not a success. Characters were stereotypical; action was slow and repetitive; and the theme was one

constantly reproduced on stage and screen.

It was the second mini opera that provided the night's entertainment, and it did indeed prove to be highly entertaining. Unlike the tragedy *Riders to the Sea*, *A Dinner Engagement* was a light comedy, with no symbolic underpinnings or

deep thematic connotations. However, that is not to say it required little acting ability -- in fact just the opposite. The performers had to be versatile and simultaneously present the appearance of comfort and ease with every facet of the character they portrayed.  
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## Shakespeare goes well with lunch

by Catherine Young

Last Thursday at 12:30 p.m., Lunch Box Theatre featured the Dalhousie Dramatic Reading Group with selections from Shakespeare's "MacBeth" and "A Midsummer Night's Dream". This was a departure from the usual Lunch Box Theatre fare; the players read directly from their scripts, as they would in a reading group. The first segment of the program was devoted to a selected scene from "MacBeth", the Witches scene. Of course, as Dr. J.T. Low leader of the group said, this scene is "a vehicle for actresses". The three Witches (Marian Frazer, Patricia Fulton, and Marilyn Goode) did quite well with the roles of the Witches, despite a great amount of uncertainty with the script. The uncertainty seemed due to the fact that several of the players were last minute replacements. Robert Hughes was especially effective in the part of Banquo as was John Low in the three roles of Glamis, Cawdor, and MacBeth. Laurence Gillespie (playing King Duncan and Ross) and Tom Regan (playing the Captain and Angus) were rather uncertain in their roles, but experience will surely give them needed confidence in acting.

The Second half of the program consisted of scenes from "A Midsummer Night's Dream". The scenes performed captured the delicate humor of this whimsical play. On the whole, this segment was performed much better than was the scene from "MacBeth". Double (or triple) roles were played by the performers. All parts were performed well. Patricia Fulton and Tom Regan were especially touching as the young lovers, Hermia and Lysander. Marilyn Goode as Helena conveyed effectively her love for the cruel Demetrius (played with proper disdain by Lawrence Gillespie). Marian Frazer, in the parts of Hippolyta, starveling, and Titania, displayed the most skill and confidence of all the young players. Robert Hughes and John Low, in the roles of Puck and Oberon, supplied the much-needed humorous touches.

Although some aspects of the scenes were uncertain, and a few players fluffed their lines badly, it was a very good first presentation for such a group. The group was capably directed by Dr. John Low. More presentations by this group will be looked for in future.  
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Dr. J. T. Low Dal Photo / Mooney and Marian Frazier

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