

Es tu, Alan?

Filewod: sheep in wolf's clothing

I was in the middle of a class assignment when I stopped to read last Tuesday's *Gateway* for spite. I came upon Alan Filewod's column about *The Innocents*, currently playing at the Walterdale Playhouse, and read that he had further to say about amateur theatre in general and *Walterdale* in particular with blinding amazement, followed by blazing anger.

First, let me make it clear that I am neither a member of the cast of *The Innocents*, nor am I on the executive of Walterdale Theatre Associates. I have however, been associated with theatre generally in Edmonton for the past twenty years.

Now to Mr. Filewod's review. Any critic of any play — and any member of the audience has a perfect right to dislike anything about it, and say so as vehemently as he feels necessary. His first four paragraphs are, therefore, perfectly valid, and enough to give a clear idea of what he thinks about *The Innocents* as a play and as a production. But he

In all fairness I must admit that my response to Alan Filewod's review of "The Innocents" was one of extreme disgust but I did not leave off my scathing review of said article at the second paragraph. I read it through, which was much more justice than it deserved.

Four paragraphs out of nine were spent on wide and low views at the play. The remaining were kept up the unfounded, assertive pace then aimed at amateur theatre in general and Walterdale and Samuel French in particular.

"The Innocents" was poorly done, admitted, but to use the acting as a criteria of the quality of a written play is to criticize a soup on the basis of a cracked bowl. Mr. Filewod obviously has not the basic knowledge necessary to discriminate between the various influences exerted by playwright, actor, or director on a given production. If it is easy to write a "scathing review of such an inept play," only partially viewed, how much easier is it to take pot shots at the much broader field of amateur theatre with less acquaintance than an entire play.

On the basis of some verbal banter exchanged with a "colleague," Mr. Filewod asserts that "nobody takes Walterdale seriously, except for those involved in production." Pray tell me, if there is so little serious involvement from outside, how has this inept organization been in existence for over 16 years? How has it managed to maintain a subscription list numbering in the hundreds and built a theater that costs over \$100,000? The cost of the theatre may seem paltry compared to the \$6.5 million edifice of the Citadel, but surely it must prove Walterdale to be just slightly out of the league of "the first steps of a retarded cousin."

How can a person claiming to be a critic judge the quality of directors, designers, actors, and technicians of an entire organization, past and present, on the basis of one play? I could recite many talented people that have served Walterdale's boards and have put those boards together, but my recitations would fall, no doubt, on ears made deaf through ignorance. The article leaves itself open for libel suit upon libel suit but the source of such slander must be taken into con-

sideration and dismissed for what it is — ignorant pontificating.

I was most taken by the statement "there is no excuse for this sort of anti-art that Walterdale perpetuates." Firstly, this is a poor old horse whose rotting corpse is never free from continual kicks by hackneyed critics. What is "anti-art"? No definition given, Mr. Filewod tosses it out for us all to admire and applaud as a sign of incisive criticism. "A Day in the Death of Joe Egg," "Nothing But a Man," "Leaving Home," Hedda Gabler, "Effects of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-moon Marigolds;" these are plays of anti-art, productions to be attempted by "third-rate" amateurs — perhaps second rate plays? I think not, nor do any of the reviews of these productions reflect anywhere near such sentiments.

Walterdale is a community theater. It uses the community as a source for every aspects of its productions. It depends on the community for support and has received it. It maintains a professional standard by using professionals from every walk of life. I am tired of hearing it criticised because its participants are there for the pure

virtue of the theatrical art rather than monetary gain. That, Mr. Filewod, is the difference between Walterdale's amateurs and any professional troupe, that and no other factor separates them.

An interesting side swipe was that directed at Samuel French and its collection of "second-rate plays" and "nominal royalties." He terms it "The Muzak of Theater." I gathered this was meant as from

In his review of the Walterdale Theatre Associates production of "The Innocents," Alan Filewod tells us that he has "been informed by a colleague that nobody takes Walterdale seriously, except for those involved in its production." Second-hand bitchery, Al, makes for second-rate criticism.

I take Walterdale seriously. I take it seriously for the numbers of playwrights and actors it has introduced in Edmonton, many of whom have gone on to work in the professional theatre (which it would seem Alan Filewod takes a bit too seriously). Many of whom, for that matter, have chosen not to. And others of whom chose to

treat the subject with humour. This does not mean that we, the homosexuals, have lost our sense of humour. It merely emphasizes the fact that we do not consider our situation to be all that amusing.

As a significant number of GATE's members are part of the U of A's student body, who through their fees help to support your newspaper, we take your display of "humour" as a personal affront to our dignity. You are willing to accept our money, but appear to have difficulty in accepting us.

We find that the joke has continued into the Nov. 25 edition, whereby Mr. Mutton's "sexual orientation" once more is raised. It is quite obvious that the person(s) behind this are totally ignorant of what homosexuals are. The preconceived idea of what constitutes "MASCULINITY" and the implication that such a phenomenon is absent in male homosexuals is a stereotypical

return to Walterdale regularly.

I take Walterdale seriously for offering those people with remarkable energies — if not always remarkable talents — an opportunity to develop their sincere interests in theatre, which interest they bring to the professional theatres as discerning audience members.

I take it seriously for producing so many seasons of theatre, of no more erratic quality than that found in any regional professional theatre, without a cent of subsidy. I take it seriously for operating free of the rigor and perfidy which characterizes Edmonton's professional theatre. (In which, by the way, I make my

living.) I could take Alan Filewod seriously. It is clear that he is a knowledgeable man who as a critic has something to say, if he would quit proselytizing and say it. Theatre in Edmonton could do with a kick in the head, and if that's your intention Alan, hossana, hossana, hossana.

But you have managed to dismiss Walterdale's legacy of activity after seeing one-half of one show, and largely on the basis of an eight-year old girl's performance.

What we need now is criticism, not railery.

Frank Moher

Ed. Note: Point well taken; we

Ed. Note: making a mildly-pornographic joke about prostitution is sexist, i.e. reveals a form of discrimination based solely on gender, then you are quite correct Mr. Creechan. I don't know what sexism is.

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