

Rokudo defies description and smashes stereotypes

BY JANET FRENCH

When most people think of modern dance, they envisage skinny women and muscular men swooping about in leotards. Thankfully, artists such as Tedd Senmon Robinson are defying all such classifications with an art form that has no category.

Robinson, short and rather hairless, appeared at the Dunn Theatre last weekend to perform his show, *Rokudo*, which consisted of two pieces.

The first piece, "Red Line", was an experimental piece and was described in the program as "Ever changing and developing". It involved Robinson tangled in a giant piece of red fabric suspended from the ceiling of the theatre.

The 20-minute piece took the crowd through a variety of moods, for at times Robinson appeared to be attempting to seek desperate escape from his red material. But at other times, he seemed to enjoy its benefits by swinging around on the giant loop playfully.

The piece was fascinating, for

although it contained elements of dancing, it was more of a humorously mimed theatrical piece rather than a dance. Robinson's body language and priceless facial expressions gave his careful yet occasionally sporadic movements life and comedy.

The second piece was one entitled "Rokudo; Six Destinies in Three Steps". During the post-show discussion, Robinson explained that it was created as an exploration of what he calls "the six realms (of life)", and that sometimes these realms overlap so that it is difficult to distinguish one from the other. Indeed, the six moods were not presented sequentially, but mashed together into moves and music that were both confusing and intriguing.

Robinson, who is also a monk of the Northern Mountain Order, used a variety of costumes for this set, all of which were flowing and baggy. Another interesting matter was that the only colours used in set and costuming were red, white and black. This simplicity of colours was in great contrast to the complexity of the piece.

Again, this piece was not so much dance but rather a performance of movement, stillness and interpretation of music. The music varied from eerie and classical, to a spontaneous hyper sampling of "Supercalafragilisticexpialadocious" from the movie *Mary Poppins*, to an excerpt from the 60s tune "The Leader of the Pack". This diversity provided humour and insight to the audience, who were stunned by Robinson's serendipitous changes of mood.

The one thing that initially struck me as unenjoyable during the performance were long periods between pieces where the audience was left sitting in complete darkness, sometimes for multiple minutes. However, someone later pointed out that silence is golden and that a temporary lack of stimulus gives an audience a chance to think about what they had seen in each set.

Overall, the evening was somewhat of a surprise. The whole performance was utterly original and it laughed in the face of classical theatre stereotypes.



Robert Lamar draws back the curtain of the mind

BY PATRICK SHAUNESSY

Last Friday night, the McInnes room hosted the *Theatre of the Mind* exposé as a part of Winter Carnival. The show is a hypnotism demonstration designed to put a person's mind into a state in which suggested scenarios can be acted out. Under the guidance of master hypnotist Robert Lamar, volunteers were given various suggestions which they acted out

subconsciously before the audience.

Unlike the average hypnotic demonstration, Lamar made it quite clear that the purpose of the show was not to embarrass volunteers, but rather to show the extent of the suggestive subconscious.

At the outset, Lamar asked for as many volunteers as possible. And in fact there were about 40 volunteers on stage. Then, through various tests, Lamar reduced the

number of volunteers to approximately ten. These tests were designed to discover which people were in the proper frame of mind for hypnotism.

As Lamar pointed out, anyone can be hypnotized. It is just a matter of how receptive your mind is to suggestion at a given moment. Unfortunately, I was not in the right frame of mind to be hypnotized, so I had to be content watching the show from the audience as opposed

to being an active participant.

At first, Lamar made all of the volunteers believe that they were eight years old. He had them get up, ride on the school bus, and participate in a spelling bee. The scenes were hilarious. These were adults acting like children in every possible way, right down to the little quarrels over who had the easier words to spell in the spelling bee. But the funniest part of this particular play occurred when

Lamar made the players act out a show and tell scene. They way the participants seemed so excited about their favourite toys and how they described them was not only comical but also incredible.

The volunteers were so convincing in their parts as children, and yet these were not trained actors but ordinary people. This demonstrates the power the subconscious can have over the actions of the body; how when the mind is freed of all doubt and placed into a state of total relaxation, it can take a suggested idea and turn it into an incredible reality. To the volunteers this state seemed like a dream, and they were completely unaware that the actions they performed were real.

It was this very aspect which made the show truly remarkable. For it was more than just a show, but also an experiment. Lamar, along with a few other hypnotists, have put together *Theatre of the Mind* as a three hour demonstration (here condensed into two hours) of the power of subconscious.

The finale was perhaps the most impressive part. Lamar gave each of the volunteers a separate scenario and he was able to control ten different minds at once. He ran the different scenes as smoothly and precisely as a master DJ mixes different components into a song.

After the performance, Lamar asserted that it is doubt and fear which cloud our minds and prohibit out thoughts from coinciding with our actions. So often people hold back from doing things that they are interested in or dream about because they are afraid. Through *Theatre of the Mind*, Lamar experiments with minds absent of fear and totally relaxed. It is through this comical entertainment that Lamar forces his argument that we are capable of far more than we believe. In this way was the show was not only hilarious, but also quite revealing in terms of the unexplored potential of the mind.

Great Expectations overcome by poor results

BY AMBER MACARTHUR

Classic novels adapted for the big screen repeatedly fall short in achieving success, and *Great Expectations* is no exception to this rule. Even with two of the hottest young actors around, Gwyneth Paltrow and Ethan Hawke, and two long time Hollywood legends, Anne Bancroft and Robert De Niro, this rendition of Charles Dickens' novel (by the same name) drags out a dull and frustrating love story.

Finnegan Bell (Hawke) is a poor young man who lives in a fishing village off the coast of Florida and is stricken by the beauty of his wealthy childhood neighbour, Estella (Paltrow). Finn has a passion for art which begins in early childhood and eventually brings him to New York City, with financial support from his benefactor, Lustig (De Niro).

Finn embarks on a lifelong pursuit of winning the love of the snobby and arrogant Estella, who enjoys his company only as her "play thing". Even when Finn's life reaches new heights with newfound success in the art world, he spends the better part of the movie foolishly chasing after Estella, often jeopardizing his career.

Watching Finn as a pawn in Estella's game is excruciatingly painful. Fortunately there are a

few refreshing breaks from Finn's misery. Estella's aunt, Nora Dinsmoor (Bancroft), dances around the screen as an eccentric and disillusioned hermit. She is determined to make any man suffer from the one thing which has destroyed her — true love.

De Niro also adds some depth to the story as an escaped convict who lives his life on the run. But, as in many recent De Niro movies, his part is small, while the craving to see more of him far surpasses that of the other actors.

Although we literally see more of Paltrow in *Great Expectations* than in any other movie, her presence on screen is more similar to that of a fashion model/Playboy centrefold than a Charles Dickens character. As Estella she is hateful, manipulative and annoyingly beautiful. But, still, Finn sees some redeeming quality in her, unbeknownst to the rest of us.

And while the movie tries to bank on the classic tale of poor boy meets rich girl, the need to actually entertain the audience at the same time is somehow forgotten — destroying a story which could have had on screen potential.

