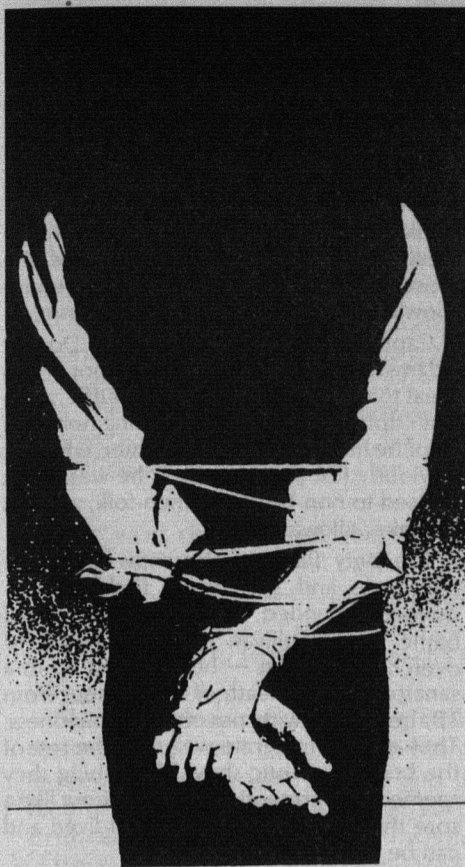


Rough Theatre tackles torture in Pinter's latest



One for the Road
The Rough Theatre at the Chinook
through October 29

review by Ron Kuipers

Harold Pinter is much known for his absurdist drama. But in his latest play, *One for the Road*, Pinter has taken a somewhat different approach. He claims, "my earlier plays were perhaps metaphors for states of affairs in various respects. This is not a metaphor about anything — it's just a brutal series of facts."

Rough Theatre's production of the play remains quite true to the author's intent. The events described in this play are brutal. Yet none of these brutalities are portrayed graphically. In this play, the audience is shown the results of government-sanctioned torture as several victims are subjected to a series of savage interrogations.

Those familiar with Pinter know that language plays a key role in his plays. This is no different in *One for the Road*. Language, rather than physical punishment, is used to torture the victims. The results of physical abuse are evident, but no such abuse is shown. Nicolas the interrogator, played unflinchingly by Brian Taylor, assumes a casual friendly manner. He assures his victims

that he is not just softening them up for another beating: "No, no. It's not quite like that. I run the place. God speaks through me," he calmly assures.

Pinter gives Nicolas the lion's share of the dialogue, but not the lion's share of the acting. In the play, Nicolas interrogates a man, his wife, and their son. Though dialogue controls most of the play, the actors can still butcher the production if they do not make perfect use of pauses and the like. No one butchered this production.

Victor, the father played by Raul Tome, is especially adept at using these pauses. As he slowly, painfully hobbles on stage the audience almost experiences his pain. Though he is continually tormented by his interrogation, he is as silent as a pre-shorn lamb. There is always an undercurrent of gloom in this production. The audience is shown the knife edge of despair as an innocent man is tormented physically and mentally, but remains silent and impotent.

The wife and son, played by Rebecca Starr and Michael Hasinoff, also meet the challenge of using silence effectively. It is in these silent moments where the horror dwells. The interrogator asks the wife repeatedly how many times she has been raped. The silence here is almost unbearable as she finally whimpers "I don't know."

A great deal of credit must go to director Alan Edwards. Pinter's scripts are very bare bones, offering little stage direction. It is up to the director to interpret the play properly. It took me ten minutes to read this play. The production was forty-five minutes long. The director has to fill in the rest. Edwards did a splendid job creating a shadow of horror over the entire production. Despite the absence of any graphic scenes, Edwards managed to capture the sense of violence brooding in and around the dialogue. An effect Pinter himself no doubt intended for the play.

But the dialogue centres around the main character, Nicholas. Brian Taylor is simply superb. He initiates everything — the terror, the horror, and the violence. He is excellent at holding the play together and ensuring that it revolve around the horrible torment to which he subjects his victims.

This play is shocking and direct. It has a political message: sanctioned torture is happening and it is wrong. In this way, the play may adversely affect our sensibilities. No one wants to be preached at. But Pinter is a masterful playwright, and if he is performed properly there are a plethora of other elements that attract one to his work. Rough Theatre's production stays true to the author's intent. It is not only insightful politically, it is satisfying dramatically.

ESO maintains high standard

Edmonton Symphony Orchestra
Magnificent Masters Series
Gisele Ben-Dor, guest conductor
Joshua Bell, violin
Friday, October 20

review by Mike Spindloe

This seems to be a season of unusual and memorable events at the symphony, with the presentation of the Mahler Symphony No. 1 with an extra movement and violinist Juliet Kang's debut springing to mind immediately in this context.

Last weekend the ESO hosted a unique pair of special guest artists. Gisele Ben-Dor became the first woman to conduct a full ESO concert, and another violin prodigy, Joshua Bell, turned in a performance which will be difficult to match as a highlight of this still-young symphony season.

In fact, before I rave about the job Ben-Dor did in rousing the orchestra to a state of better than semi-sentience, I have to rave

about Bell. Only 22 years old, Bell has already been playing professionally for a third of his life and possesses confidence and musical sensibilities few can ever hope to attain.

On this Friday night he attacked the Sibelius Violin Concerto, Op. 47, with a passion and vigour that left the audience pleading for more (which was not forthcoming) and even spontaneously breaking into applause at the end of the second movement (for the second time that night — a bizarre occurrence).

The Sibelius concerto made an ideal showcase for Bell's talents. Its moody D minor tonality and abundance of soloistic material provide plenty of opportunities for both expressiveness and technical polish on the part of the soloist. Even more amazing than Bell's audible performance here was his control; the emotions of the Adagio and the devilish assortment of leaps and bounds over the range of the violin in the outer movements never for a moment slipped into

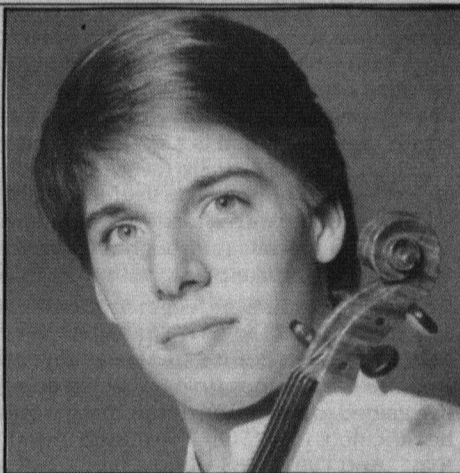
triteness or exhibitionism, but spoke with a sure and steady voice.

Almost equally as interesting to watch was guest conductor Gisele Ben-Dor. Her precise, crisp style of conducting provided an interesting contrast with the more laid-back approach of Uri Mayer, all the more so because the results she achieved were in general so good. She cuts a statuesque figure on stage, directing with economical and clear movements, like Bell; not allowing enthusiasm to get the better of her technique.

Opening the program was Beethoven's Symphony No. 1, the least adventurous, as one might expect since it is the first of the cycle of nine. Following the Adagio molto introduction to the first movement, Ben-Dor elected a moderate tempo through the Allegro con brio. There were no surprises here, but some solid ensemble playing from the orchestra in response to Ben-Dor's direction. The first aforementioned spontaneous round of applause followed this movement.

After the second movement Andante, the orchestra seemed to turn up the intensity level a notch for the dance movement, urged on by Ben-Dor. The finale to the Beethoven lacked something of the intensity of the third movement, although Ben-Dor's work with the violins in the tricky opening Adagio section was first rate.

Rounding out the program, was Stravinsky's Pulcinella ballet suite, incorporating nine movements from the entire work. Here the program failed us: while all the nine were listed, there was no indication of where breaks would take place. Thus it was difficult to follow just what movement was being played, and the audience remained unsure whether or not the work was finished.



22 year-old violinist, Joshua Bell

Pulcinella contains many Stravinsky trademarks: a small, chamber orchestra score, shifting time signatures, ostinatos, lots of opportunities for individual solos and unusual tone colour combinations (i.e. oboe and french horn). There is one major difference however: Pulcinella is based on the music of Giovanni Pergolesi, a pre-classical composer whose tonal idiom clashes severely with Stravinsky's 20th century oeuvre.

Overall, it is an intense and challenging work, as one expects of Stravinsky, and Ben-Dor handled it and the orchestra with the same precision she displayed the rest of the evening. Easily discernible were a few misplaced entries from various parts of the orchestra, but the overall effect was hardly less striking for these, and it made a perfect programming choice alongside the Beethoven for the first half of the concert.

All in all, an evening to remember from the ESO and its guests.

Waits gets Cold Feet

Cold Feet
Princess Theatre
October 27-31

review by Chris Helmers

Cold Feet is a... er... well... it's a comedy. I am hard pressed for an apt description of the movie because the plot and the characters are so appallingly, boringly, I've-seen-this-all-before-ly predictable... all except Tom Waits. I guess I'm not partial to this genre of comedy but I felt that Waits is the whole movie and he's the only element that makes the movie worth seeing — in fact, I would strongly suggest that you go just to see him in action.

Here we have a story about a criminal trio who devise a plan to smuggle a mittfull of large emeralds out of Mexico inside the belly of a stud horse. Monte (Keith Carradine) is a gentle, quiet, kind man who just happens to be a petty thief. Unbeknownst to the other two, Monte is tired of the criminal life and is planning on living out his days with brother Buck and his wife on their ranch in Montana. Maureen (Sally Kirkland) is Monte's girl (and he is, more than reluctantly, her boy). She is an insatiably sensuous woman (food and sex) whose dream is to marry Monte and to have all the food that she could ever want. Kenny is a killer. He feels that killing should be of equal penal severity to that of a parking violation. His dream is to be a corporate executive.

So the boys bring the horse across the border while Maureen flies on ahead and rents a travel home stateside. Kenny goes to meet Maureen and bring her and the travel-home back to a rendez-vous point

where they are to pick up Monte and the horse. Alas, when they arrive, Montague hath flown with the horse. Thus begins the search for Monte and the emeralds by which the amazing talent of Tom Waits is portrayed.

Kenny, our dysfunctional, emotionally handicapped hit man, and Maureen, our lady of the skin-tight lycra, who probably never dons one natural fibre in the whole movie, are placed in shocking contrast with the scenery (Arizona to Montana) and the people of the small western towns along the way. This contrast maintains the comic air but the real comedy is invoked by the performance of Tom Waits.

There are a few memorable scenes — like the border crossing. Before they get to the border, Kenny repeatedly presses Monte to watch him handle the border guard with such professional tact that they won't have any problem getting across. Then, when they get to the border, he derides the border guard so badly with stuff like "Haven't you ever done this before?" that you are positive they're going to get strip searched with truncheons. But the guard, after a suspenseful moment of consideration, seems to decide that he just wants to get these two out of his face so he says in a dry, flat tone "Welcome home" to which Kenny replies, "Didn't you see my passport? This isn't home, this is fucking Arizona!"

I laughed but it was always at Tom Waits. Maureen's outfits were great for their contrast/shock value, but the humour comes from Waits — that voice, that face, those hands. And don't get up to leave as soon as the credits start to roll. The power of Waits goes 'til the bitter end... and maybe even into *Cold Feet II*.



Tom Waits, Keith Carradine and Sally Kirkland (l-r) get cold feet in the movie of the same name. To see what else gets cold, go to the Princess.