



To the Editor, Sir

Dear Sir;

It has come to my attention that Dr. Arthur L. Murphy, a citizen of this fair city, has written a play entitled *To the Editor, Sir* dealing with the battle of myself, Joseph Howe, for a free and unshackled press in the early years of this province's history. This play, presented by Theatre Nova Scotia at Collins Court, ran from Sept. 18-25. Allow me now, Sir, to say a few words concerning this production.

Dr. Murphy's play, under the able direction of Mr. John F. Dunsworth, is a well paced, tightly crafted piece of work that manages to condense a fairly complex issue into an entertaining dramatic production. Although the plot centres around a political issue, it is ultimately a warmly human work that deals with the problems of sharing a marriage while still grappling with greatness. Consequently, when at the play's climax, the character portraying myself is declared "Not Guilty?" of Libel, the audience burst into spontaneous applause, although I'll warrant that not a soul was ignorant of the outcome of the case before they entered the theatre. It was the man and his family they were cheering, rather than the political ideal.

There are, however, several points to which I would like to take the liberty of objecting. Firstly, the actor portraying myself, Jari-Matti Helppi, lacked the emotional intensity to make his outburst in the courtroom believable.

To think that I, Joseph Howe, workaholic, should be played in such an unenergetic, lackluster fashion, was truly disappointing. I must also report, alas, that my wife fared little better; the actress portraying her, Rose Ellen Meagher, lacked the inner drive to make our relationship seem truly believable. Consequently, with neither performer inspiring the other, the two did not seem to be responding to one another; instead, each appeared to be acting in a personal vacuum.

Ruth Owen's portrayal of Mathilda highlighted the indifferent performances of the lead actors by its sheer brilliance. Owen brought the Howe's crusty old house maid alive, radiating the simple honesty of the good woman's soul in her every move.

In many respects, *To The Editor, Sir* is a play of minor characters, among the most notable of whom, Richard Collins' heartily drunken Jeremy Doull, Arlo M. Moen's florid Brenton Haliburton and Richard Marion's London Larry, were praise-worthy performances. Others, however, such as Thomas E. Gray's John Howe (who sounded as if his mouth were firmly stuffed with wool) were somewhat less that notable.

Before I bring this letter to a close, allow me, Sir, to mention one more item that I think is worthy of the reader's consideration. While the theatre in Collins Court is well adapted for its decor to a performance of a historical play, its seating arrangements leave much to be desired. The seats are on such a shallow slope that all but a few audience members are blocked by heads in front of them. Something should be done about this circumstance; one should not have to be a contortionist to catch a glimpse of the play—especially a play such as *To The Editor, Sir* which brings alive the history of this province. I have the honour to be, Sir, your very obedient servant.

Joseph Howe



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