

# The arts

## Sleuth left clueless

Jack Wilson, director of the play *Sleuth* which opened at the Walterdale Playhouse on Tuesday, felt that "this was a play to

challenge the capacities of both our cast and crew," and that "if we could pull it off, it would be a feather in our caps."

Well, Walterdale got their feather, all right, but it more resembles duck down than a peacock's plumage.

This is not to say that the production is not worth seeing ... it is. But people who attend should be aware that they are going to watch an amateur production of what is a complex play requiring a good deal of professional expertise.

For those who attend the performance with previous exposure to the movie, which starred Michael Caine and Lawrence Olivier in the title roles, the 'amateur' in 'amateur theatre' will be immediately visible.

An enjoyable play which works well on stage, *Sleuth* is extremely well-written and has an interesting trick to its plot structure. But the burden it places on the two main actors is very heavy. And the type of professionalism needed to ensure that all the different characters come off solidly and credibly is one which many professional groups would have trouble bearing, much less an amateur community group.

John Rivet is very good in the difficult and lengthy role of Andrew Wyke. He gives us the pompous and pretentious writer figure, but falls a bit short of convincing in his scenes of fear and takes some of the polish off his performance with the occasional stumble.

Ray Hunt as Milo Tindle is acceptable, although his blocking and timing tend to be awkward in conspicuous instances, such as the scene in which he contemplates acceptance or rejection of the robbery scheme.

Hunt's performance is especially rewarding in view of the fact that he is taking the place of another man who was forced to vacate the role for medical reasons. As Mr. Wilson relates, "Ray had read the play and knew what I was asking him to accept, but 2½ weeks ago he had done no work and attended no rehearsals."

Special effects are very well done, as is the set construction. One of the difficulties with the set, however, is that the Walterdale stage is not very large and is actually unsuited to the staging of *Sleuth*. Even so, set designer Dan McPherson, the same man who designed the actual playhouse itself, has utilized his space very well.

On the whole, director Wilson has blocked and shaped the play well. Because of its length (over two hours), however, the tempo of the play has been speeded up and some lines dropped. The effect of this is to rush over some parts where dramatic pauses are necessary and chop some background material which might lend more emphasis to the underlying theme.

In summation, the play is a good amateur production - much better than usual Walterdale fare. To a new viewer of *Sleuth*, the production will go over well. To the movie viewer, the difficulties with make-up and accent become obvious and much of the impact is lost. Walterdale has attempted to stage a difficult piece of professional theatre and it comes as close to the mark as most amateur groups could hope to.

*Sleuth* will run each evening at 8:30 p.m. at the Walterdale Playhouse, 10322-83 Avenue, until November 29.

Kevin Gillese

## A Chile evening

There should be fine music at the Hovel tomorrow night when some outstanding local performers get things together with a benefit concert for the children of Chile.

Betty Blue and Garry Kolliger, Richard White, and Joe Hall and the Eyeball Wine Co. will be on stage providing an evening of solid entertainment with all proceeds going towards the purchase of one ton of food for the children of Chile. Admission is a low \$2.50 per person with doors opening at 8:30 PM and the concert starting at 9.

## Tozzi in Norma

Giorgio Tozzi, the basso who was enthusiastically received by Edmonton audiences last month when he appeared in concert with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra will make his Canadian operatic debut in the role of the Archdruid Oroveso in Bellini's *Norma*, November 27, 28 and December 1st.

One of the few operatic personalities to have gained enthusiastic endorsement of musical comedy audiences, the

strapping 6'2" basso is widely known and admired for his portrayal of Emile de Beque in *South Pacific* - a role he has performed frequently since the 1957 West Coast production in which he starred opposite Mary Martin. Tozzi's voice can also be heard on the sound track album which won him a Gold Disc from RCA Victor.

Tickets for *Norma* are available at Woodwards, Edmonton Centre.

## Time to turn in the tutu

The enthusiastic reception the Royal Winnipeg Ballet received at the Jubilee Auditorium last Wednesday evening was astounding. It seems that people will applaud anything, particularly if it is possible to understand and the audience feels compelled to wipe their ignorance. One was prompted to ask them to stop, to cease encouraging such mediocrity on the part of a ballet company that claims to do more international tours than any other Canadian dance group.

The ballet performed was John Neumeier's visual collage *Twilight*. Neumeier, widely acclaimed in this country as a rising star is choreographic innovation, did not live up to his reputation. Part of this may be attributed to the amateurism of the dancers, who despite their obvious eagerness and enthusiasm still lacked the polish that would entitle them the designation of "professional." Poor timing, a usual problem of dance companies, was painfully obvious. In fact, the entire performance seemed disconnected. Even the music did not tie it all together.

Little ingenuity could be seen in Neumeier's choreography. Its meaning was totally incomprehensible unless the introductory comments for each of the three dances was read. Even then, however, there were gaps. The first dance of the ballet trilogy, *Twilight* was the

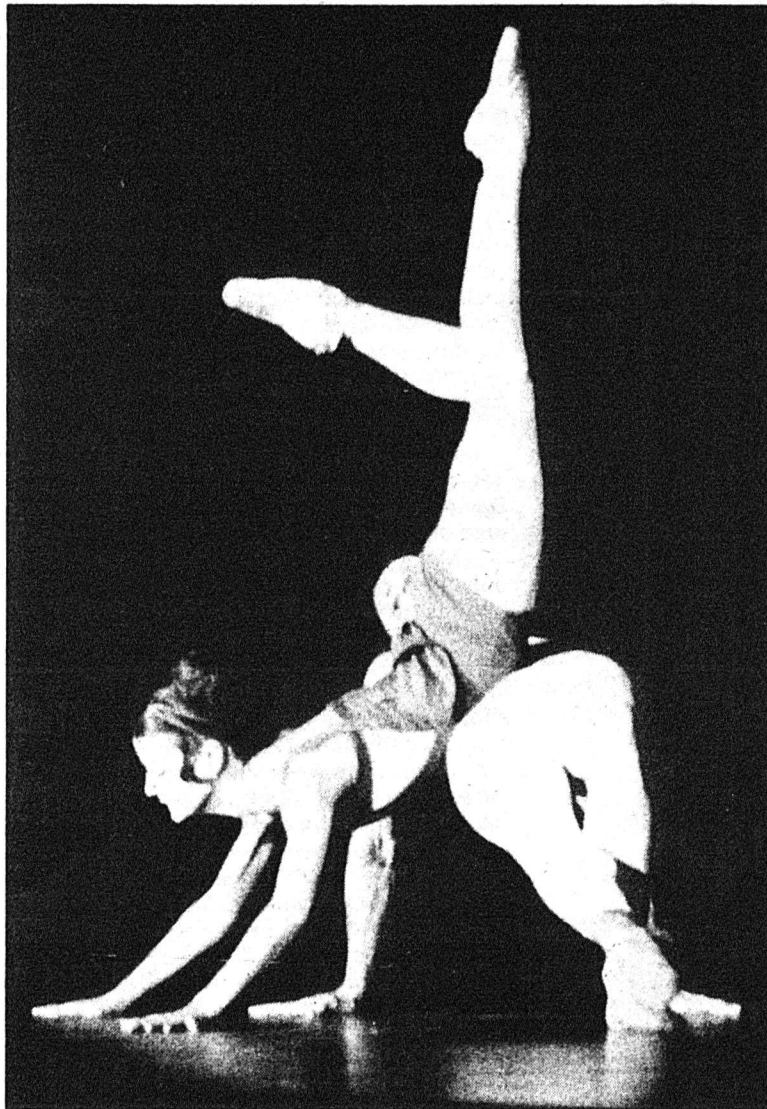


Photo by Gerhard Hiob

worst of the three. Billed as a portrait of the unconscious state and the inner being of the dancers, *Twilight* seemed to lack just what it claimed to possess. Whether the classical music of Alexander Scriabin was inappropriate in genre or application, whether it was the ineffectual choreography, whether it was poor interpretation by the dancers or whether it was a combination of all three is hard to say. All in all, however, it was very poor.

The second dance *Rondo*, was slightly better, mostly in

comprehensibility, but the final number, *Game of Life* overwhelmed the spectator with too much noise, light and activity.

All in all, the performance was a disappointment. After all the publicity acclaiming John Neumeier and his ballet trilogy as the best thing to happen in years, the actual experience was a letdown.

There is much room yet for improvement in the Royal Winnipeg Ballet Company.

Eve Rose



## Angry Eyes follow Christopher Robin to spell-binding conclusion

They opened the show on equal footing, but after the initial medley of mellow ballads (Denny's Song and Christopher Robin, among others) the concert featured two-thirds Loggins and just one-third Messina.

And that is virtually the only complaint to be made about the Loggins and Messina concert at the Coliseum last Thursday. Jim chose to highlight Jim Messina's fine engineering and brilliant arrangements and to down-play the vocals and

acoustic guitar-work Ken Loggins is best at.

This decision represented a let-down for those who expected an evening of gentler tunes, but for those who didn't it was more than satisfactory. In all other respects the concert was commendable, displaying technical precision and a roster of easy-listening, smooth-flowing numbers from old and new collections. (Ask anyone who was there about the spell-binding rendition of Angry Eyes.)

The band featured one hell of a fiddler named Richard Green, and an excellent percussionist, Steve 'Crazy David' Forman. The whole ensemble, in fact, proved to be most proficient and professional, but it was Jim Messina's show all the way as he led the group through an array of impressive, well-arranged numbers. In producing the duo's music Messina has managed to meld a basic latin rhythm with an electronic rock overlay, all interspersed with well-placed

guitar solos.

After all, this level of excellence is the least one can expect from performers who have had every record they produced go gold.

After the concert Ken Loggins said in an interview that the format for their Edmonton performance was changed to include more material from their forthcoming album, which was to be recorded live in Seattle the following night.

It is because of this much of the melodic intimacy created by

Loggins' style of seductive folk-rock was lost, and Kenny Loggins came across as a front-man for Jimmy Messina's superior musical abilities.

As for the Flying Burrito Brothers and their warm-up act, they could have used another month in rehearsal before going on tour. Called back (surprisingly) for an encore, they played a rousing version of Orange Blossom Special, which highlighted an otherwise monotonous show on their part.

W.P. Lewis