

Home grown plays

by Lasha Seniuk

Edmonton's Workshop West Playwrights' Theatre is currently featuring two plays at the Northern Light Theatre location. This non-profit organization which is approaching its second anniversary has always prided itself on finding and presenting Canadian scripts and talent.

And it does just that. From February 7 - 24 Workshop West is performing two Michel Tremblay comedies, *Johnny Mangano and His Astonishing Dogs* and *Surprise, Surprise*. Both plays are basically sound although they could have stood a few more rehearsals.

The first play, *Johnny Mangano*, was stiffly acted. Ric Reid as Johnny, a two-bit performer in a dog-act, was unsure of his character. He missed a few lines and didn't seem to be the loser that he was supposed to portray. His counterpart, Marlane O'Brien as his wife, was much more flexible. She plays the dumb, nattering blond who never stops complaining. Reid's difficulty was one of range in her scenes of anger. There was no room for her to build her emotional scenes and therefore Reid could not properly react off her outbursts. This was the major problem of the play. Another two weeks of rehearsal probably would have remedied this.

The second play, *Surprise, Surprise* was the better of the two. For once in his career, Tremblay has not concerned himself with social comment. *Surprise, Surprise* is an entertaining comedy that is just a lot of fun. It's about three slobbish housewives who spend their afternoons on the telephone. They plan a surprise birthday party but havoc results as they invite the wrong woman.

Janet Daverne, who plays Madeleine, stole the show. Her eyes and facial expressions were a joy to watch. Susan Sneath as Laurette, the extremely dumb one, also showed great promise. She was consistent in her character and even though her role was stereotyped, she still managed to be fresh and bright. Marlane O'Brien's performance in this play was much better than her performance in *Johnny Mangano*. She played Jeanine, the slobbiest member of the trio and her performance was very realistic and well delivered.

The only real problem with *Surprise, Surprise* was that the cuing was sometimes a little rapid. The simultaneous conversations and the three telephones ringing led to some confusion.

However, when criticizing a group like Workshop West, one must take into account that they are a very

young troupe which has no theater of their own. This puts a damper on individual performances as well as on the Theatre's image. The Artistic Director, Gerry Potter, says they would like to have a theater of their own, but, as always, funding is a problem. Currently, the only reason that Workshop West is in Northern Light Theatre's home is that the latter is on a two month break.

Workshop West would like to start a different kind of theater in Edmonton, one that produces only Canadian plays. "The playwrighting business has really opened up in Canada in the last eight to ten years," says Potter, "and we would like to find and expose that Canadian talent that is out there. We like to think of ourselves as a popular theater of local talent and not an experimental theater."

And popular theater they are, producing plays by playwrights such as David French, Carol Bolt and Sharon Peacock. So far, Workshop West has found no limitations in producing only Canadian playwrights. They have found a wealth of Canadian talent and diverse plays and Potter says the only problem with Canadian plays has been one of translation.

The Theatre's biggest problem is lack of funding. Although they receive funds from the government, they still find it hard to make ends meet. In the past two years their budget has multiplied from \$10,000 to \$50,000. Potter explains that the "funding we receive from the government is based on our size of budget, so we really have to depend on donations to pay the actors. It's like a vicious circle but we try to get around it by being very conservative and reusing scenery and props."

When asked about other problems that the Theatre was experiencing, Potter explained that they had not yet drawn together as a company. However, Workshop West's increasing coverage by the media will help to give them more of an identity. They have traditionally been upstaged by Edmonton's larger theaters, but they now find they are getting some of the recognition they deserve.

Workshop West also offers playwrighting courses and workshops by Canadian playwright Gordon Pengilly. Anyone interested in these courses should phone Pengilly at 424-2533. This is just another example of Workshop West's commitment to the Canadian playwright. It's indeed refreshing to see a young theater so dedicated to its beliefs, unlike other theaters in Edmonton who have admitted to producing plays for the sole purpose of drawing crowds.

Met baritone coming to campus

Andrij Dobriansky, baritone with New York's Metropolitan Opera, will be giving a concert on February 17, at 8 pm in SUB Theatre. Accompanying him will be pianist, Thomas Hrynkiw.

Dobriansky made his operatic debut in 1964. After that he performed with the Connecticut Opera Company, the Seattle Opera Company, leading American symphonies and the Metropolitan Opera National Company with whom he toured United States, Canada and Mexico. Since the 1969-70 season he has been with the Metropolitan Opera Company in New York.

Thomas Hrynkiw has been making professional concert appearances since he was thirteen. He has won numerous awards including a 1967 gold medal at the Geneva Competition. Hrynkiw has extensively toured the world, appearing in prestigious places like the Kennedy Center and the Newport Music Festival.

Dobriansky and Hrynkiw will perform songs and arias by Ukrainian composers. Two selections by Daniel Auber and Wolfgang Mozart will also be performed.

Tickets: \$7.50 general and \$5 for students are available at the Heritage Savings and Trust Co. (10126 - 101 St. #192 Kingsway Garden Mall), Ukrainian Book Store (10205 - 97 St.), and Ukrainian (Edmonton) Credit Union Ltd. (10850 - 97 St.)



Andrij Dobriansky, baritone with New York's Metropolitan Opera Company.



The Houston Ballet as they performed Giselle last night at the Jubilee Auditorium.

Thursday Thursday

MUSIC

Convocation Hall, Old Arts Building

Feb. 18, 8 pm. The U of A's Symphonic Wind Ensemble directed by Fordyce Pier with Leslie Segall, flute soloist: music by Mendelssohn, Keenan, Gilles and McBeth. Admission is free.

Edmonton Public Library, 7 Sir Winston Churchill Square

Feb. 16, 8 pm. Latitude 53 presents "An evening of Medieval Renaissance Music" with Mary Louise Burke, mezzosoprano, Carl Lotsberg, lute, and Rickman Lilenthal, recorder: French secular songs and songs and dance music from the English renaissance. Tickets are \$5 at the door.

RATT

Feb. 14 - 16, 8 pm. Jazz with "The Bad for Business Big Band" featuring Bill Jamiesson, Bob Tildesley and others.

L'Express, SUB

Today, 12 - 2 pm. Alan Roberts and Dougie McLean, two top notch folkies from Britain who recently played at the Orange Hall for the South Side Folk Club. Admission is free.

The Centennial Library Theatre

Feb. 20, 8 pm. The South Side Folk Club presents Alan Roberts, Dougie McLean and Joanne Martineau. Tickets \$4 at HUB and Keen Kraft Music.

CINEMA

Edmonton Public Library

Feb. 16 - 17, 2 pm. *Phantom of the Paradise*, great rock and roll satirical remake of the silent horror classic *Phantom of the Opera*. Paul Williams film score is a real treat. Admission is free.

Provincial Museum

Feb. 17, 4 and 7 pm. *Brother of the Wind*. Four timber wolf cubs are rescued and raised to eventually return to their natural habitat; filmed in the Canadian Rockies. Admission is free.

SUB Theatre

Feb. 18 - 19, *Magic*, a terrifying love story.
Feb. 20, *Foul Play* with Goldie Hawn and Chevy Chase.

Espace Tournesol, 11845 - 77 St., 471-5235

Feb. 15 - 16, 7:30 and 9 pm. The fascinating ceremony of the Mevlevi or Whirling Dervishes is beautifully captured in Diane Cilento's film *Turning*. Filmed in Turkey and produced for the BBC in 1973, *Turning* is about the turning of the seasons, the cycle of birth and death, faces of devotion in prehistoric and present day Turkey, and the Whirling Dervishes; a 13 century old, now outlawed religious order who use dance and music as a means of prayer. Admission is \$2.50.

READINGS

Humanities Centre AV L-3

Feb. 21, 12:30 noon, Leona Gom, poet and author of *Kindling* and *The Single Tree*.

DANCE

SUB Theatre

Feb. 14 - 16, Orchesis, the U of A's Creative Dance Club presents "Dance Motif 80." Tickets are available at SU Box Office or from Orchesis members.

LECTURES

Lecture Theatre No. 3. AV Centre, Humanities Building

Feb. 18, 4 pm. Dr. Robert R. Wilson is giving a lecture entitled, "In the Shadow of God's Prick: the game of labyrinths." This is the third in the Edmund Kemper Broadus Lectures series. The four lectures by Wilson are collectively titled "Literature and the notion of 'Game'."

Lecture Theatre 1, Humanities Building

Feb. 20, 4 pm. The Departments of Anthropology, Art and Design and the University Collections will sponsor a slide-lecture by Dr. George Swinton, Dept. of Canadian Studies, Carleton University, on "Continuity and Change in 2000 years of Eskimo Culture. Dr. Swinton, the foremost authority on Inuit Art, is advisor to the Eskimo Cultural Institute, member of the Eskimo Arts Council and Member of the Order of Canada.

THEATRE

Corbett Hall, 112 St. & 82 Ave.

Until Feb. 16, Studio Theatre's Stage 80 presents Harold Pinter's *The Birthday Party* directed by Henry Woolf. Tickets are free for students and are available from room 3-146 in the Fine Arts Centre or at the door. For more information call 423-2495 or 432-2271.

Edmonton Art Gallery, 2 Sir Winston Churchill Square

Until Feb. 24, Workshop West Playwrights' Theatre presents two comedies by Michel Tremblay, *Surprise, Surprise* and *Johnny Mangano and His Astonishing Dogs*. Call 436-7378 for more information.