

Shakespeare's Women in a different context



photo: John Davie

by Allison Johnston

Shakespeare's Women
by Libby Appel
and Michael Flachman

Shakespeare's Women is a visual feast! This final production from the Dalhousie Theatre Department is an extravagant display of all their greatest talents.

The set designer, Peter Perina, has outdone himself with moving stairs and doorways, all painted white. Slides are projected on them to manipulate the atmosphere. The white also reflects the intricate orchestration of spot lights that draws the audience's attention to particular people.

The costumes are marvelous. The men are all in tuxedos with minor differences, but which unify them as a group. Each woman has her own particular outfit. This lets us identify the women and also individualizes each particular female. The style and details of some of the dresses are breathtaking.

The actors make Shakespeare their own. Shakespeare is traditionally thought to be difficult because of the turn of phrase. These performances are exquisite. The actors are able to convey the main meanings of the scenes in a very natural way. This demonstrates the abundance of talent that is found in the theatre department.

This is the graduating class's final performance and is the culmination of all their work. There are several second-year acting stu-

dents in the cast, who give us a glimpse of what's to come.

Praise must be given to the director, Patrick Christopher, who has done a superb job of choreographing this spectacle. The images created on the stairs and in the doorways are reminiscent of stylized photographs or paintings.

The use of sound is simple but incredibly effective in setting the atmosphere, especially the voices at the beginning of the second act. The flute and violin players remind one of troubadours of Shakespeare's era and complement the images being created.

The play itself is about women and their conflicts with men, be it sons and mothers, fathers and daughters, or lovers. Scenes from different Shakespearean plays are taken completely out of context and are joined together through theme. Two narrators sew the scenes together and drive the play.

The only criticism of this production is that the connections between the different scenes are not always clear. Often the transitions are lost and the audience feels that they are seeing individual Shakespeare scenes spliced together. The narrators that act as the commentators are not enough to explain the order of the bits of plays. Often it seems that the fluidity is because of the staging and not because of the text.

It is a tight and well performed piece and a wonderful way for Dalhousie Theatre Productions to end its season.

ANYONE

She awoke in the morning
She pulled the bedclothes from her body
She reach over and shut off her alarm clock
Another day
It's time to get up
Nine to five she heads off to work
She gets by, she is an office clerk
She rides the bus to get downtown
She doesn't have a car,
It's how she gets around
Noon hour she eats her lunch outside
Summertime, the sun is out, it is nice
She eats a sandwich that she made at home
And washes it down
With an ice cold coke
Five o'clock she punches her card
Enjoys her job, she doesn't find it hard
She gets home and puts on her sweats
And goes for a job
She wants to feel her best
She takes a short cut through the park
She can't see too well it is dark
From behind the bushes they leap
If only someone heard her scream
Robert Keeler/June 1989

if a woman
tropical and fruit-bearing
offered you a fresh banana
would you smile and take it
or
would you turn away, embarrassed?

if a child
sunny and blossoming
held out crushed petals
would you laugh and smell them
or
would you turn away, impatiently?

if a man
dark and shadowy
abused your battered body
would you cry and hate him
or
would you simply turn away...

Martha Hancock

POETRY