

the ARTS

Mucho olé at the citadel Neville si, Silvers no

My first reaction to John Neville's production of William Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* at the Citadel is one of mixed feelings. Mixed because there is a kind of unmitigated joy such as inspired by any Shakespearean comedy and mixed because there remains an unfulfilled desire to be totally swept up and wafted away on the wings of poetic fantasy.

The joy was there. It seems that no production of a Shakespearean play is capable of utterly destroying the master's magic. This production does a great deal to fulfill the script's demand for vibrant action. Perhaps the reason the magic failed to work totally was because such a jewel as *Much Ado* was placed in a setting that did nothing to set the comedy off to advantage.

Somewhere along the line a decision was made to place the play in a Mexican setting. The time is hardly contemporary and there is a disturbingly anachronistic dichotomy between wars waged with muskets and duels threatened with hands on sword. Dialogue praising Benedick as a man renowned throughout all Italy sits strangely on these ears. That Benedick is a man of renown we can appreciate, but a character of international renown is stretching credibility too much. Placing Shakespeare in new contexts is not new. Academics and producers alike are quick to note that his plays, for all their Bohemian or Italian settings, are still a mirror of Elizabethan England.

The search for the ever elusive ideal of a relevant and revealing setting for Shakespeare's plays frequently leads directors astray. Decisions are usually justified by holding that Shakespeare was a man for all time and that his wit and wisdom transcends the bonds of place and time. It just didn't work out that way this time. The setting anchored the production to a reality that the words couldn't fully transcend.

For all this his production still has much to recommend it, more than enough to excuse the setting. Above all else there is the manner in which the lines are delivered from the bondage of obscurity. The wit of the scripted line has been marvellously pointed and turned and punched until all but the most obscure of Elizabethan puns come across with their intended bawdy sting or ego deflating barb.

Directorially John Neville has coped well with keeping the dual love stories clean and cogent. Claudio and Hero love impetuously and rashly in the manner of young love. They are easy prey to the devious and malicious machinations of the bastard, Don John. Beatrice and Benedick love like sparring partners trying to bring each other to the floor rather than capitulate their emotions. Their wits fly free and yet they are the unwitting dupes of Don Pedro's coy cupidry.

What was lacking was a degree of zest. Neville failed to overcome the improbabilities of the plot and make them work for him. There was a nagging sensation that the actors were trying to bend the script to suit their means rather than trying to measure up to its demands. This made for a certain stodginess which crippled some of the natural flow of events.

Neville's credibility as an actor was firmly established in his appearance of Benedick. Most impressive was the manner and ease with which he handled the Shakespearean line and the old bugaboo of the Shakespearean soliloquy. He made it seem all very easy and casual. A sheer delight to watch this artist.

Pamela Brook was only slightly bettered by Mr. Neville. As Beatrice she was a delightful foil to Mr. Neville's Benedick. Her engaging wit was captivating at its best and frolicsome in the least of her moments. Her portrayal of Beatrice may not have been definitive but it was definitely an enduring impression.

As Don John, Eric Donkin established himself as the arch villain swiftly and cleanly with a characterization that was tight and sound. Roland Hewgill did not fare so well as Don Pedro. His constant air of joviality was difficult to sustain and soon tended towards the insipid.

Douglas Chamberlain got a lot of mileage out of Dogberry, the characteristic rustic plum. It is hard to fail in such a part but difficult to make a great success in. Chamberlain's failure as a great Dogberry may be laid in part on his costume. It was so out of keeping with the rest of the cast it was hard to accept him as anything more than the obligatory comic turn. A grave pity since there was a lot of promise in his characterization.

Amongst all of the cast Judith Mabey as Margaret stood out. She did so because she captured the zest and vitality of the comedy to perfection and gave it wings. This was an impressive accomplishment in such a small part.

Phil Silver's set and costumes did little for the play. The set lacked imagination and playing space. It was not an ideal setting to stage any kind of action and thus enforced an incredible amount of redundant staging.

It is possible to make such damning comments as these because Mr. Neville gathered a very competent group of people for this play. They did the play justice and they did it well but with such talent they could have done better. What failings they had can be overcome and many of them will as the play goes into its full run. If you can find a ticket it's well worth scrambling for.

Walter Plinge

Jazz cocktail

Come eight-thirty Sunday night the SUB Theatre will be filled with the sound of some fine jazz. The Edmonton Jazz Society has booked the Phil Woods quartet for this occasion only so you'd better get your tickets while you can.

Phil Woods has been called the greatest alto saxophonist playing in the world today. He has performed in almost every country of the world, at every major jazz festival in the world and with every major jazz player in the world. His alto saxophone style is derived spiritually from Charlie Parker but remains an individual voice.

Phil Woods sound is one that some people call searing. He is in demand as one of the best lead alto saxophonists for the

Talk, Hétu, et tu

an interview with the ESO's new conductor,
Pierre Hetu

This Saturday and Sunday the Edmonton Symphony opens their new season under a new baton. Pierre Hetu consented last week to an interview with *Gateway* reporter Allan Bell. So interesting was the interview it was decided to run the interview in two parts rather than subject it to severe editing which would have necessitated an almost total castration on the piece. Accordingly the second part of the interview will appear in next Thursday's edition of the *Gateway*. In the second part Hetu talks about what he considers to be the ingredients of good music.

GATEWAY: What are your impressions of the activities that Edmonton has in the field of the arts and in music in particular.

HETU: First of all I haven't been here that long you know. I have been told that there is a fantastic potential here for culture because of the different ethnic groups. Even more than in Calgary for instance, which is more businesslike and more American. I guess I'm going to find out. I like the city myself, right now. Of course I came at the end of the summer, which is three weeks ago, and we are getting ready to start our season. The only thing I must say is that, without really knowing the city, I am very much encouraged.

GATEWAY: Some people have commented that you have chosen a safe first season. If you're successful, what direction do you intend to take with subsequent seasons?

HETU: The second season is going to be very unsafe. If this one goes through, then we might be expecting some kind of reactions to the second one. I have some projects...I am going to be confronted with the rock specialists on Friday October 5th at the university and we are going to speak about rock and contemporary music and so forth. What I would very much like to do next year is go to the Students' Union and give two or three concerts of contemporary music for orchestra or maybe not for full orchestra because a lot of contemporary music written today is for smaller groups. I am probably very idealistic but I would eventually like to form an Edmonton public for avant garde music. A composer of today would say, "Well I have played in Edmonton and I have been bored so I guess I have to be careful next time." or "I have played in Edmonton and it was well received so I suppose it will be well received some other place."

What I am going to be confronted with on October 5th will be the fact that rock is a

different field of music than orchestra music. For instance the range of what is being written today for orchestra is a direct evolution from Mozart. That is it has been changing all the time. Debussy rejected the romantic period and Schoenberg came and rejected what was done before and then Stockhausen came and rejected

what was done before. We're coming to this point now where everything is rejected and composers are trying absolutely wild things, some of which have really nothing to do with music. I mean music in the traditional sense of the word. I conducted a work some years ago where some spray cans were involved

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ORACLES

cheap thrills

Little Big Man directed by Arthur Penn with Dustin Hoffman. Student Cinema. 50 cents in advance, \$1.00 at the door. Friday 28 and Saturday 29; 6:30 p.m. and 9 p.m.

theatre lives

Much Ado About Nothing by William Shakespeare. Directed by John Neville. Now running at the Citadel.

40 Carats by Jay Allen. Directed by Joe Vassos. At Walderdale Playhouse, 11407-107 Street. October 2 through 13 at 8:30 p.m. Reservations phone 424-0121 or the Bay Box Office.

jazz cocktail

Phil Woods Quartet. SUB Theatre, Sunday September 30. Jazz Society members - \$2.50, non-members - \$3.50.

watch out for

Bim. At the Hovel. Thursday, September 28 through Saturday September 30.

Kris Kristofferson. At the Jubilee. Friday October 5.

Rita Coolidge is coming but it is not known whether or not she has recovered sufficiently enough from her illness to play.

B.B. King, with Elvin Bishop and Uncle Vinty. Kinsmen Fieldhouse. October 9. \$5.50 advance, \$6.00 at the door. Tickets at Mikes.

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