

A poke in the ribs



by HEATHER SANGSTER

When Geoff Hoyle pokes fun at an audience, he really pokes fun at an audience ... with a stick.

The opening skit in Hoyle's one-man *Fool Show* — playing at the Bayview Playhouse — begins with a Primal Folk Fool, in a mask and trenchcoat covered with bells, jumping across the stage and into the audience.

In the Fool's hand is a long stick that he twirls like a baton and simultaneously pokes at his groin and then at the audience, encouraging them to grab it.

The Fool sticks his tongue out, he leers, he licks his lips and then calmly jumps back onstage, takes off his mask, stands erect and begins a lecture.

The topic, of course, is the history of foolery.

With a combination of mime, clowning, dance, gymnastics and "almost" standup comedy, Hoyle educates his audience on the importance of fools.

Hoyle explained that a fool's job was to illustrate the truth by poking fun at power, pride, pretension and, simply, turning the world upside down.

Hoyle does just that. The next 90 minutes are spontaneously exciting. Hoyle's energy and his incredibly bendable body allow him to run through a series of skits

and characters at a swift pace.

Hoyle's first historical fool is the Abbot of Unreason who performs a mock religious ceremony, inspiring the audience to bray like donkeys rather than pray. He then becomes the Court Fool, the acrobatic entertainer, whose job is to parody the royalty. Hoyle pulls and twists his face to mock the pretentious kings and queens and uses his straight man — a stick with a model of his head on it — in an argument communicated only through the sounds of bells ringing on their fools' caps.

After another brief lecture, Hoyle performs Italian street theatre with two more fools — Pantaloon and Harlequin. He follows that with a very Charlie Chaplin-Buster Keaton-like skit about two waiters who chase each other around the stage. Not easy, when it's a one man show.

In the second half of the show, Hoyle's characters are given more time with the audience. Hoyle's "Fundraiser," a conventional, stuffed shirt type of fool with a nervous tick, comes out to deliver a speech and never quite does. Perhaps, it is because his favourite phrase is "However, nevertheless ..."

Mr. Sniff, a traditional, Red Buttons-like clown, literally brings the house down as he tries to unstick a chair from his hand.

Mr. Sniff innocently knocks down plaster, rips up floorboards and puts his foot through the stage. Appropriately, as he leaves the stage, Mr. Sniff becomes attached to the curtain and must be pulled offstage.

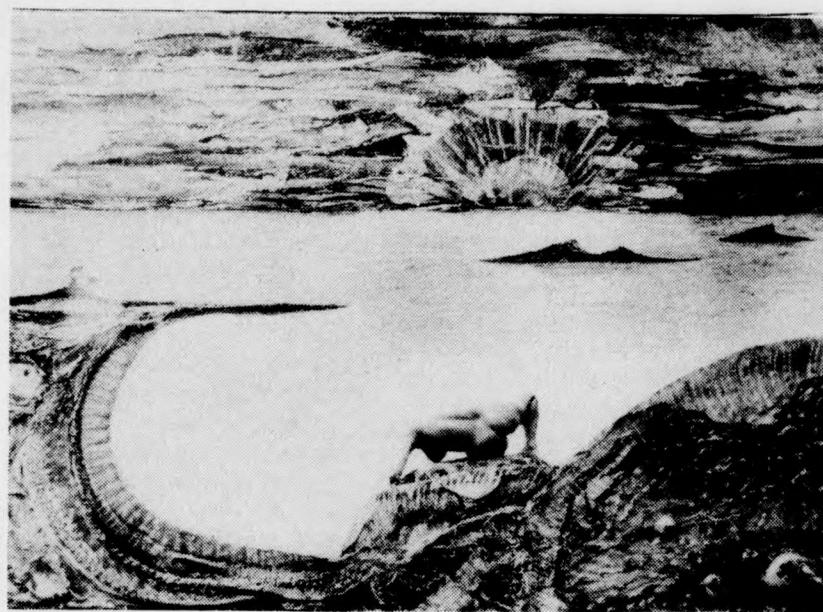
The final skit is Hoyle's most quiet, and perhaps best. The music is on and Hoyle, in a long coat and white gloves, comes out to perform a little soft-shoe for the audience. Hoyle has three legs. But, he doesn't let that stop him. He performs a mesmerizing dance that has the audience trying to figure out which of the three is really not his leg. It's hard to tell.

Hoyle's skits always involve some audience participation, giving everyone a chance to be a fool. However, Hoyle may also be a true fool and is indeed mocking his own audience by making them a part of the "grand fool show."

Hoyle's humour is very physical and, at points, the crotch pulling and body noises can be repetitive. As well, because he is portraying the history of fools, parts of the skits are predictable; we have seen it all before.

But, the audience didn't seem to mind. Hoyle received a lot of laughter, applause and two curtain calls. Even if we've seen it before, we definitely like to see it again.

Exotic fishbones and glam photos



An untitled painting from Spralja's "The Sea"

by BASHIR PATEL

Many commuters at the Keele campus have never seen the Glendon Campus, and a beautiful afternoon in late spring is a great time to discover it.

Also, a good excuse to be at Glendon is the Joso Spralja exhibition at the Maison de la Culture which runs until May 30.

Spralja's pieces, which he has been working on for the last three years, are combined into one large exhibit entitled "The Sea." It is a very unusual exhibit for Toronto city dwellers because Spralja says most of his inspiration has come from his native land of Yugoslavia and the surrounding Adriatic Sea.

Collections from "The Sea" are reminiscent of the work of Frank Frazetta, famous for his covers of sci-fi pocket books with exotic worlds populated by exotic women.

The works have a very surrealistic, "something out of this world" atmosphere. Spralja's daughter Helena says that viewers will find this atmosphere exotic because, in the city, they are constantly surrounded by industrialization and a polluted environment.

The texture for some of Spralja's paintings come from fishbones and the bodies of other sea-life which give it a three-dimensional quality. The tones and shades have what Artistic Director Jocelyne Benedek calls "transparent, water-like quality." Spralja uses a technique where he takes dried fish scales and fish-skins and extracts their original colour onto his pieces. The works integrate paintings, fishbones, magazine cut-outs and other sea objects to form a collage and bring out the artist's message.

Spralja's works highlight the theme of motherhood and nature. For him, there is no better way to do that than to use the sea, where all life on earth evolves. He captures the messages of progeny and procreation. There is also a particular urgency in his work because our earth is slowly being destroyed.

"The Sea" has been well received according to Benedek, with 400 people at the opening. It is a must see for those people on the Keele campus who want to retreat from their bleak surroundings. As well, those on Glendon Campus will enjoy the escape.

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