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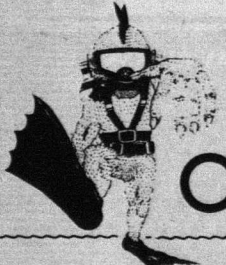
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OCEAN SPORTS

At full gallop

Winter's Tale
Mark Helprin
Pocket Books; \$4.95 paperback

review by Geoffrey Jackson

This novel begins with a simple and beautiful image:

"There was a white horse, on a quiet morning when the snow covered the streets gently and was not deep, and the sky was swept with vibrant stars, except in the east, where dawn was beginning in a light blue flood. The air was motionless, but would soon start to move as the sun came up and the winds from Canada charged down the Hudson."

This white horse has escaped from its owner to run through the early morning streets of Brooklyn, carrying the reader into an extraordinary story of a master thief, a beautiful and consumptive heiress, relentless gangs of criminals, and a New York so beautiful and so ugly, so despairing and so hopeful, that it transcends reality and becomes as mythical as Atlantis.

This is a novel that achieves that very rare and special thing; the creation of a new world. The book is so rich in detail and incident that it is impossible to give a truly brief and sensible summary of its plot. In fact whenever I have spoken to anyone about

continued from page 12

two families, the Webbs and the Gibbs. "It's the Old American Dream in one sense — the deeper one — the one coming out of the end of the 19th century when it was still idealistic and yet it deals with that microcosm in terms of the universe." Love, marriage and death become key events in the lives of the characters. *Our Town* appears deceptively simple yet it has hidden depths that strike at a fragile chord.

In the second term, *Dreaming and Duelling*, a contemporary play written by John and Joa Lazarus, is directed by Carl Hare. Joel, a high school student who loves fencing, fantasizes about an 18th century duelist. Ultimately he's practically killed by a friend in a duel. In sharing Joel's inner world of turmoil we cannot but begin an exploration of ourselves. *Dreaming and Duelling* opens March 7 in repertory with the final BFA production, *The Suicide*, which opens March 14.

The Suicide is a black comedy by Nicolai Erdman, a Soviet playwright of the 20's who was eliminated in the 30's. *The Suicide* deals with a man who is unemployed for a year and finally decides to commit suicide. Spokesmen of various groups approach him requesting that he turn his suicide into a gesture for their cause. He responds by holding a lottery. This interesting, quirky play is directed by Michael Murdoch.

Come Back to the Five and Dime Jimmy

this book I have found myself quickly babbling out little exotic vignettes from the story in the hope of piquing their curiosity. But I think I shall refrain from doing such a thing in this review. Such vignettes, taken out of context, could mislead people into thinking *Winter's Tale* is just a well-crafted example of escapist fantasy.

Instead, if I were to stand back and look at the entire book, I would say that Mark Helprin is using fantasy to bring across a vision of our urban culture that is both hopeful and spiritual. There is not a cynical or malicious thought in the book; even the cruelist villains act out a profound and vital destiny. Yet the philosophical heart of the story never overwhelms the tale. At every junction Mr. Helprin's very considerable ability with language, his vibrant imagery, and his full-blooded characters carry you on enthralled. The first time I read this book I quite literally found it difficult to put down.

And this review is difficult to write because it seems to be gilding the lily to praise a book already so lauded. The only real motivation I have for doing so is the same motivation that makes you thrust a book into the hands of a friend with the impassioned entreaty to "read this!" *Winter's Tale* is published by Pocket Books and can be found on most any rack of bestseller fiction. Unlike most best-sellers, it deserves to be there.

Dean, Jimmy Dean is an MFA directing project by Marcyanne Goldman. Playwright Ed Graczyk examines cult hero Jimmy Dean and his fans, exposing their self-deceptions and many well-hidden disappointments. *Come Back to the Five and Dime Jimmy Dean, Jimmy Dean* opens April 25.

The last production of the season is *Whiskey Six* directed by MFA student David Russell. Playwright, Sharon Pollack, sets the play in Blairmore in the 20's. Prohibition was at its peak and *Whiskey Six*, used by rum-runners, was 'the fastest car on the road'. Ms. Pollack will be coming up to Edmonton to see *Whiskey Six* which opens on June 6.

Experimentation with repertory this season has dictated interesting set innovations. "There's one set for the whole season. There's one basic format — a facade and raked stage which will be used with different dressings so it will look different but will actually be the same stage. Brian Currah has designed the stage and David Lovett is designing the productions", concluded Professor Hare.

Subscription tickets for the 1984-85 Studio Theatre season are \$12.00 and \$15.00 for a total package of six plays. They are available by mail or person from the Drama Department, Rm. 3-146, Fine Arts Centre, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta T6G 2C9 (432-2495). All productions are staged at Corbett Hall.

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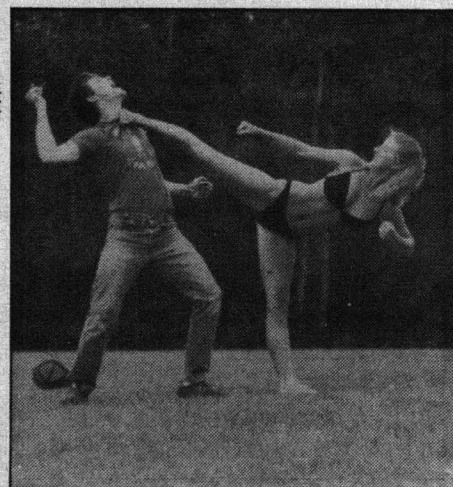
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