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play? Who designed it? Only one actor was mentioned, in the picture caption—who were the other important players?

I feel I must explain for Arduini the white-face makeup of some of the characters. If Arduini were thoroughly familiar with theatre, she would have known that the exaggerated makeup of these actors matched their somewhat enlarged acting style, and the single-mindedness of their characters. They are really caricatures—archetypes of the groups they represent. The very "theatrical phoniness" criticized is what was intended—the makeups weren't supposed to be realistic. The three main characters are real people—they are fully developed and well-rounded characters, and that is why their makeup was realistic.

Another comment I feel I must make concerns the lack of Russian accents in the show. If Arduini had seen many plays in which false accents were used, she would have realized that it is almost always a mistake for an actor to affect an accent. How were we to develop the same Russian accent in 19 actors? Accents would only have been a hindrance to the actors and a distraction to the audience. It is understood that the characters are speaking Russian, not English. Accents are things we sometimes hear when people aren't speaking their first language, or are from a different region than the listener. Semyon and his friends are all speaking their mother tongue, and are all from the same area—accents would be inappropriate in this context.

I have one last correction. Who said that vodka consumed during the banquet was home-made? Prohibition was lifted in the USSR in 1925, and the play is set in the 1920s. The party takes place in a public restaurant, so there is no need to assume the vodka to be home-made.

I would like to thank Loren

Arduini for the acknowledgement of all the work so many people did on *The Suicide*, but perhaps in future reviews she could refrain from making needless assumptions and errors by doing a little homework and checking with those who know the play.

Donna Dawson
Dramaturge, *The Suicide*

Suicide review is "misleading"

Editor:

I am writing in strong response to a ridiculous review of the Theatre Departments' fourth year production of *The Suicide*, which appeared in your February 26th issue.

References to the play as "well thought out," to the music as "a nice touch," to the set as "well designed and well constructed," to the lead roles as "well executed," and supporting roles as "a job well done," emphasized the lack of any knowledge of theatre on the part of Loren Arduini.

This farce of a review is exemplified by its two key criticisms: 1) reference to the "heavy" make-up application on some of the characters as "irritating," and by the even more ignorant advice that

2) "Russian accents would have added much to the flavour of the play."

In the first place the director's choice of Commedia del Arte style is completely missed by your critic. I was immediately struck by the exaggerated clown-like make-up, gestures and poses which effectively supported the satiric comment on the values held by the members of such a society. Having the main characters painted more realistically created a stark contrast between the real dilemma and situation of the main character(s) versus the inauthenticity of the values of the masses. This clever choice was hardly an "uneve-

ness" as Arduini so ignorantly named it.

As for pronunciation, anyone with a smidgen of training will tell you never to attempt an accent when the characters are all supposed to be speaking their own language. In fact, the whole reason that this play can come so alive today is due to its universality. Furthermore, particularly impressive was the extent to which the abundance of tricky multi-syllabic character names naturally roled off the tongues of every actor with such ease.

After four years as a student in the theatre department, I do not feel that I am exaggerating when I say that this was the most polished and professional performance I have ever seen put on by a fourth year class.

What surprised and disappointed me most about *The Suicide* was that *Excalibur* could have printed such a shallow and misleading review.

—Valerie G. Tunis

OUR WRITER RESPONDS:

A review is merely a subjective observation of the production that is presented to the public at large. It is mostly opinion, with a few technical criticisms made here and there to state how the production may have been improved. Most of your criticisms were trivial and technical in nature. For a general audience, these details are not the deciding factors which determine whether or not the play was good or bad.

It may be that in taking a broader and more general view of the play that I have misled readers from the "facts" as you state them. The "facts" that your point out were not apparent in the production, but let me clarify a few points you criticise.

Semyon Podsekalinov is not a peasant per se, but he is of the same low income group that many citizens of the USSR found themselves at this time. He lives in Moscow in a flat or tenement; the distinction is not clear

from the stage setting. Whether he owned it or rented it from the government was also not stated in the play, or the production notes. In fact it is not true that, "no one in the USSR owned an apartment, instead they rented from the government." You contradict yourself because in the production notes you state that, "Some private housing was given to workers..."

I, like many others, cannot tell the difference between a Russian and Gypsy costume. Since it did not state anywhere in the programme, the play, or the production notes that these musicians were in Gypsy costume, I assumed, like others would have, that they were Russian costume.

The statement that, a man is worth nothing if he cannot be of any use to his country (which you put in quotes), was not put in quotes in the review because I knew it was never stated in the production. I did not say it was actually said. I intended to emphasize the uselessness Semyon felt because he was unemployed in the USSR.

Semyon blames the government for not being able to find work for him, due to the economic crisis in the country. If you know anything about political economy, you know that this situation was directly the result of the government's planning of the time.

I was mistaken as to which version of the play was used. The fact that the production notes stated there was a lack of an original script after it had been banned by the Censor Board led me to believe it had been destroyed. My apologies are extended for this error.

I still feel the exaggerated makeup on the supporting cast was unnecessary and distracting because the dialogue was enough for the audience to know that these characters were archetypes of their respective groups in society.

The lack of accents is justified for the reasons you have stated and were

ones I also stated in my review before it was edited, something you were not aware of.

Finally, the vodka is described as homemade to emphasize that the vodka was domestic. There is no evidence that the vodka was not home-made because in Russia, like other European countries at that time, citizens were permitted to bring their own liquor into a public establishment.

Thank you, Ms. Dawson, for taking the time to clarify some points in my review and for voicing your opinion of it.

—Loren Arduini

Fencing coverage is greatly lacking

Editor:

Nothing would give me more pleasure than to write a letter congratulating *Excalibur* on its excellent coverage of the men's varsity fencing team. However, this is not to be the case. Throughout the season our only exposure was what we had basically begged for. We would be told that writers would cover our event, but the only information *Excalibur* would receive was what we offered. We would complain, only to be blown off by what I think were poor excuses—lack of space, or that events not held at York would not be given full coverage.

The root of the problem has to do with *Excalibur's* choice to cover the high visibility sports such as football, basketball, hockey and volleyball over the lesser known sports such as fencing, curling and synchronized swimming. While it is not my intention to criticize these 'primary' sports, they would frequently receive more space after placing fourth than a secondary sport placing first in two separate tournaments held within the same week.

This year's fencing team has done better than the past 20, taking the

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OSAP improved for 1987!

The funding allocated to the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) for the 1987-88 academic year has been increased by 17%.

What are the major changes?

- increased living allowances;
- smaller contributions from parents;
- a special grant package for sole-support parents;
- increased grants for single independent students;
- increased funding for the Ontario Special Bursary and Work Study programs;
- interest relief on provincial loans.

What do the changes mean to me?

- increase in average grant assistance;
- larger grants mean smaller loans and a reduced debt when you graduate.

Where can I get more details?

Contact your financial aid office on campus.

How do I apply?

OSAP applications for the 1987-88 academic year will be available from the financial aid office of your college or university in early April.



Hon. Gregory Sorbara, Minister
Alan K. Adlington, Deputy Minister

OSAP