

Entertainment

Tale of P.O.W. camps in Southern Alta.

Kristallnacht takes absolutely no prisoners

Kristallnacht
Theatre Network
Til Dec. 7, 1986

review by Matt Hays

During the second world war, the allies in Europe had an overload of prisoners of war. The solution to this problem was to ship thousands of P.O.W.'s to Canada to new camps. One such camp was in Southern Alberta.

Kristallnacht is the story of one of these prisoners, and his influence on an Albertan family.

Walter Ferguson needs help on his farm, and the camp lends prisoners out during the day to work. Fritz Ganzer is a prisoner who ends up working on the Ferguson farm.

This job opens Ganzer up to new relationships and pressure.

Back at the camp, his Gestapo loyalist superior urges him to attempt an escape while on the farm. Meanwhile when Ferguson's son is reported missing in action, he turns on Ganzer. Further complications arise when Ganzer falls in love with Laura Ferguson, Walter's daughter.

When one hears of a play involving Nazis, one shudders at the possibilities. Let's face it — Nazis have been done to death. Film, theatre, and — worst of all — made for television movies and mini-series have used the Swastika for a bad guy trademark over and over again. Nazis bring cliché first and foremost to mind.

Playwright Richard Epp, deserves commendation for *Kristallnacht*, because he avoids all these traps. At moments, we expect the script to take a certain turn but no, we're pleasantly surprised by a play that keeps the audience interested.

The characters are well drawn and equally interesting. Ganzer is a confused but likeable man caught between his intellectual bunkmate, investigative



journalist and love interest Laura, and his Nazi indoctrination of days past. We're quickly caught up in his conflict. Epp has also created some lively and witty dialogue.

Look forward to Epp's future works. The performances are good all around, but the real shining star here is Phil Zyp, who plays Ganzer. Zyp has been in a number of Edmonton productions, but

here he is finally given a script of worth to work with. As a prisoner, he captures the boredom of war. His ever-present naivete illustrates just how young many of these German soldiers were. Zyp's perfect German accent never falters throughout the show (this isn't Zyp's first brush with Eastern European accents; he appeared as 'Slavco' in *Soap on the Rocks*).

Daniel van Heyst's set is excellent, and it must have been difficult to design. Theatre Network's stage is relatively small, but the play has a big feel to it.

Theatre Network tries to feature as much new local work as it can. Some of these scripts have their faults. With *Kristallnacht*, Network has found a winning script, and a talented director, Warren Hartman.

Music to warm Commonwealth cockles

Edmonton Symphony Orchestra
Nov. 21 and 22
Jubilee Auditorium

review by John Charles

Canadian mezzo-soprano Janice Taylor has always left such a vital impression when she's sung a few arias in previous Edmonton appearances, I've always wanted to hear her in an extended work.

Taylor provided that, and more, at this weekend's Master Series concert with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra. She sang two song-cycles, Mahler's *Songs of a Wayfarer* (1884) and Elgar's *Sea Pictures* (1899), which added up to 45 minutes of singing.

The four Mahler songs are his first masterpiece, an autobiographical depiction of a man coming to terms with the loss of his beloved to another, for which Mahler wrote his own texts. (Written for low voice, they're also sung by baritones, but conductors seem to favor altos when it comes to signing contracts.) The narrator tries to console himself with the joys of nature, but in the final song, the woman's "eyes of blue" threaten to haunt him forever.

There's folksong element to Mahler's melodies here, which makes them very accessible, but the brilliant, delicate orchestration — a few harp notes, a solo horn, the ghostly funeral march in the fourth number — make them seem modern.

Taylor wore a black gown with a rose-and-black coat which billowed out behind her as she swirled on stage. The effect was elegant and commanding, words which generally describe her performance too.

This mezzo has a strong, rich voice. Her lowest notes are not velvety as Maureen Forrester's are, nor does she have a particularly beautiful top register, but it's a seam-

less voice used well.

She used a score for the songs, which suggests they've not become a real part of her yet, and that was also apparent, for though she sang intelligently and phrased the songs well, these were not deep or especially insightful interpretations. There were few nuances, but one was an especially beautiful, anguished cry on the words "Oh woe!" in the third song.

With Taylor straightforward, confident, and pleasing, conductor Uri Mayer led a fine performance with fresh, vibrant string sound and lovely solo work from all. The haunting textures were sweetly conveyed.

Elgar's *Sea Pictures* is public, Victorian music and was the composer's first work after his breakthrough *Enigma Variations*, which suddenly made him the first important English composer in 200 years (since

the death of Purcell).

The five texts are minor, sentimental poems of the era, one by his wife, one by Elizabeth Barrett Browning. But Elgar's orchestration is so imaginative and grand and his belief in the poems so true, the result is splendid and exhilarating.

Whether the mood is light and playful or dark and stormy, the music represents the struggle of life throughout and in the final song, *The Swimmer*, the orchestra becomes the ocean with torrential outbursts that threaten to engulf the singer who soar triumphantly above it.

Mrs. Browning's *Sabbath Morning At Sea* is the masterpiece here, as Elgar vividly depicts, as in an opera scene, a woman's fears and doubts on board a ship, before she gradually realizes God is watching over her.

Tunes to think by, not drink by

Darkness Shapes Imagination
This Fear
Independent Release

review by Scott Gordon

Finally, after too many years of never recording and releasing an album, 45, or whatever, the most intelligent and thoughtful band in Edmonton has released a 5-song, 12-inch EP. The wait was worth it.

This five member ensemble has been around since, well, we're not quite sure, but I can recall them playing as far back as roughly 1980. They have never really been on the suds and scream circuit that many local bands find themselves in because they didn't want to. They wanted to think, and this EP will make the listener think. A rare thing in

this day and age, even in the big time.

"Soldier of Fashion" is possibly the best cut on this record not only for the lyrics and beat, but also for the musicianship. This musicianship is equally strong on the other cuts, especially when Jonty Parker-Jervis lets loose with that violin of his that has taken him to Australia, among other places. The rest of the band lets loose as well, but they do it with a professionalism that grabs you and doesn't let you go.

This is also evident in the production mastery of Rob Hewes. Good heavens! Awards have been given to this EP! Some people may say that the awards are only from the Alberta Recording Industry Association, but that is not fair. And it is also not fair to think

that just because they have a Norman Yates painting on the cover that makes them artsy. Well, who gives a flying rat's patootie if they are artsy. You can dance to their music, you can listen to their music, but you cannot ignore their music once it's on.

Grant Beattie, keyboards; Frederick Patterson, drums; Brian Repka, bass; and Mark Wasarab, guitars, may not be household names, but it just doesn't matter. Their music speaks for itself, and in a loud voice at that. This is simply the best locally produced record to come out, period. One should not miss the opportunity of seeing them live, but if you can't, get this EP. You'll be dancing and thinking, which is exactly what This Fear is all about.