

Entertainment

Shedding a new light on the Bard

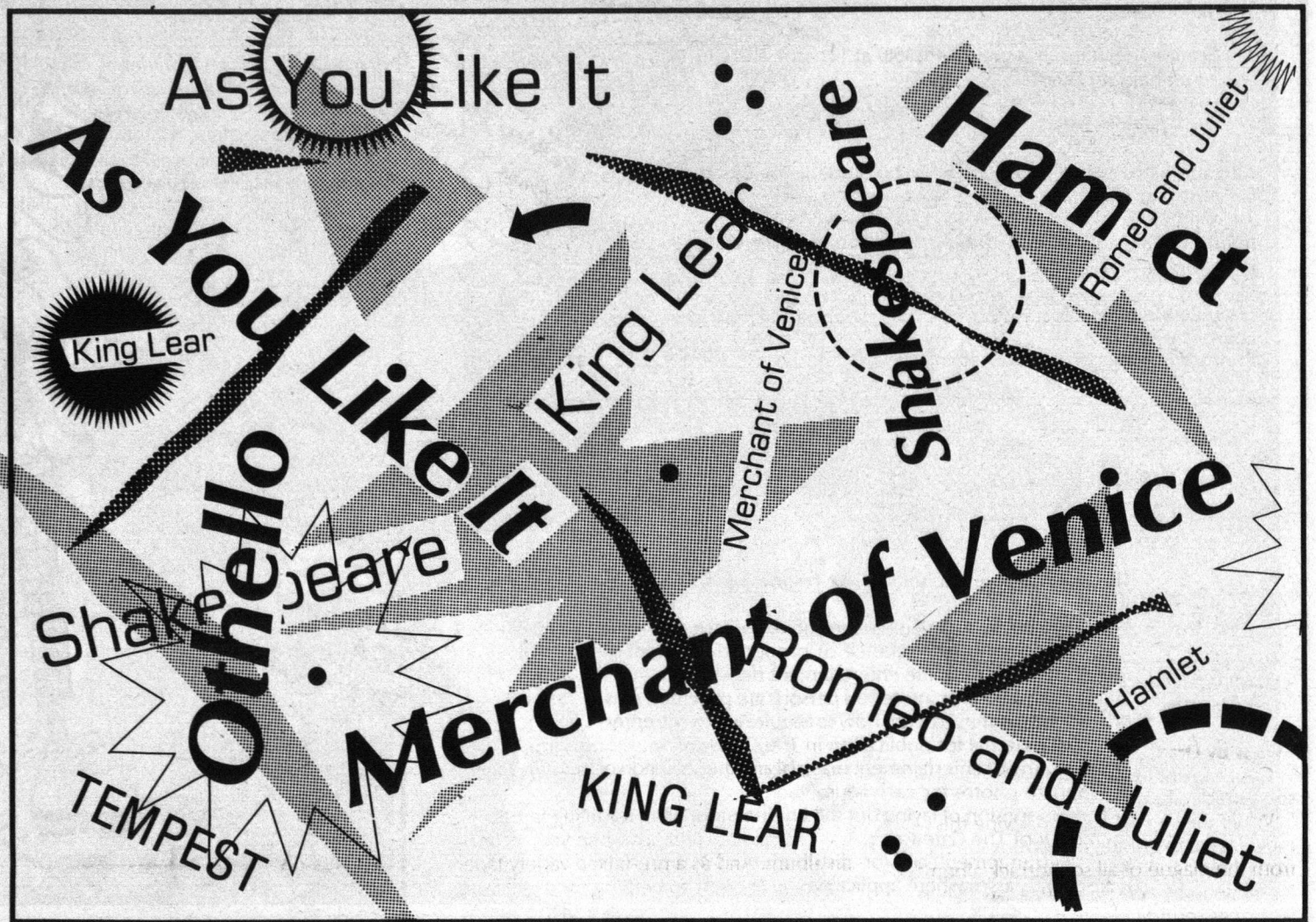
by Elaine Ostry

It's that time of year again, time for the annual Edmund Kemper Broadus lecture series, named after the first head of the U of A English Department. This year's speaker, elected by the Visiting Speakers Committee of the English Department, is Dr. B.N. de Luna, English professor.

The five lectures, accompanied by slides, are about Shakespeare and his life. They are extracted from a book that Dr. B.N. de Luna wrote in 1982, called *The Mortal Shakespeare: Some New Light on his Political and Personal Relationships 1580-1616, Together With a re-Ordering of the Sonnets*. It has not yet been published, rejected on the basis of its length: 3,509 typed pages.

The lectures intend to stress the importance of understanding the "cypher literature" of Elizabethan writers. This style entails writing about someone, but calling him by a mythological name, rather than his own. By knowing the myth, one could understand who was being discussed, and the satirical meaning. This style came into practice as a result of the censorship of the time, which punished direct criticism with punishments such as removing ears and slitting nostrils. Shakespeare himself wrote "cypher literature", but Dr. B.N. de Luna intends to concentrate on the representations of him by other playwrights and poets of the time.

Dr. B.N. de Luna seems to deserve the honor of guest speaker. Her fascination for Shakespeare began when she read *Hamlet* at age ten, "not understanding much, but realizing somehow or other it was real dynamite." The Elizabethan Age is her specialty: she has written a book about Ben Johnson, and another on Queen Elizabeth I. Both books were published by Oxford University Press. She spent twenty-two years writing *The Mortal Shakespeare*, doing research in the British Museum and



London's Public Record Office.

Dr. B.N. de Luna promises the lectures to be stimulating, claiming that they are "revolutionary" and "will have everybody scurrying to the Elizabethans."

The lectures will be held in the Lecture

Hall #1 in the Humanities centre. Here is a schedule of times and titles:

4:00 Mon. 26 Jan.: More Grist for Shakespearean Mill.

4:30 Tues. 27 Jan.: The Bard's Birthright Reconsidered.

4:00 Thurs. 29 Jan.: "A Tumultuous Privacy".

4:30 Tues. 3 Feb.: The "unlick'd Bear-Whelp" of Stratford.

4:00 Thurs. 5 Feb.: Marshall's Depiction of the "Fatal" "Merry Meeting".

Dreary drudgery: the three drab Slab Boys

The Slab Boys
Walterdale Theatre
January 21-31

review by Peter Cole

The action of the play takes place in the slab room of a carpet manufacturer. Here, paints are mixed for the designers by three slab boys: Spanky, Hector, and Phil. Spanky is a character of uneven disposition, most of it salacious and sarcastic. Hector is a bumbling fool and object of derision. Phil is an aspiring artist whose mother keeps trying to kill herself.

The other characters, in order of appearance, are Willie, the gaffer; Jack, a designer; Alan, the new boy; Sadie, the tea lady; and Lucille, a sketcher.

The Slab Boys is about aspirations and drudgery. Only Alan, and possibly Phil, can come close to rising above the dross of unrewarding toil. The rest are plodders, content to live without meaning, their lives untouched by beauty. Only Phil seeks rewards which money could never equal. He has to escape the ugliness of his home-life. Because he is searching for beauty, the rung by rung climb of worldly success is simply incidental for him.

The play tries to mix tragedy and low humour, sometimes in the same breath. Puns mixed with black humour may draw laughter, but they do little else. They do not further the play's progress and simply taint the speaker with further shades of grey.

The performance was one of those second-preview down nights which only added to the already dreary script. The

cues were off, and embarrassing silences made one think that someone was going to shout "line"! The business on the stage was often of a lounging and unconnected nature, especially for the actors not engaged in dialogue.

Words in the script of late-fifties Scottish slang come and go with nary a shred of meaning left behind, especially when spoken in a thick uneven dialect. The advantage of swallowed and hastily mumbled dialogue is that much of the low humour is lost. Some of the most amusing and enjoyable moments occur when no one is talking or shouting.

A re-motivated group of actors emerged after the intermission. One empathizes with various characters, but the low humour interrupted the development of the story, as did the innumerable entrances and exits.

The play does not benefit from having eight characters — at least two could be cut: Alan and Sadie. They get in the way of the story. Cheap laughs do nothing but fill in time, and stock characters are often demeaning and shallow.

Though it was an off-night for the most part for the cast as far as cues, organic interaction, and stage presence are concerned, there were moments of pathos and beauty. Many of the actors were just on the verge of being comfortable with their characters and with knowing their relationships to the rest of the cast. With a few more performances under their belts, the actors hopefully will be more comfortable with their characters and with being on stage. Lounging about is not a very dramatic way of presenting oneself even if it is in keeping with the character. Those on stage who are not directly involved need

something to do rather than mucking around the sink, smoking cigarettes, and mixing colours from time to time. Speaking of cigarettes, they should smoke parsley or something not likely to be detrimental to our health — and their own.

The directing is insightful and crisp, but

A move-your-body beat

The The is The Band

Infected
The The
CBS Records

review by Dragos Ruiu

The The. Funny name, cool group.

You might have heard Infected, from the album of the same name playing in a few clubs. Or perhaps you saw the video for the song of a similar name.

These guys are HOT. Good dance music with a powerful beat and intelligent clear lyrics that make you think. It's going to sell. They have that move-your-body-and-sweat-next-to-someone beat.

Caveat Emptor (Buyer beware, translated for you boors like myself) though... the single is the best dance tune. So if you merely want to be trendy — do that 12 inch single type thing and save yourself some dollars.

The title track is the strongest (fastest, loudest) on the album, but the rest of the album doesn't lag far behind. Their sound is isolated percussion and a horn section

suffers because the script is cluttered with myriad entrances and exits (through a single door as demanded by the playwright) and two-dimensional characters. If everyone could be as consistent as John Lowe, this very flawed play could be an amusing two hour experience.

disguised as the rhythm section, beating along with the slow drawling base which leads the whisperlike vocals.

The syntho-rhythm is very aggressive, and sequencers and electronics can be heard along with the variety of horns. The lyrics are not happy fluff (Oh shucks, and I hoped they would cover "Two of Hearts") but they are very clear and musical. These guys are on the verge of breaking into the radio-pop scene, but unfortunately for their bankbook and fortunately for us their lyrics have too much edge to receive radio play. (And they say the word scrotum, kids).

The music and sound effects evoke powerful pictures, particularly 'Sweet Bird of Truth', that makes you feel like you are in a jet every time you hear it. (Halucinogenic flashbacks minus the drugs).

If you like strong-beat/syntho/aggressive music the only thing that could possibly put you off buying this album is the Andy Warhol on bad acid illustration on the album cover. Ignore it, buy this album anyhow.