

## Fine dinner dining at the Diner

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Into its fourth straight season, the Comedy Asylum returns once again to the Wandlyn Inn Dinner Theatre with yet another humourous hit on its hands. This time it's *Wally's Cafe*: a situation comedy written by Sam Bobrick and Ron Clark, the creators of such earlier works as "Norman Is That You?", "No Hard Feelings" and "Murder at Howard Johnson's". It's the inmates' first full act play in over a year: quite a change from their previous repertoire and quite a challenge. But first — dinner is served!

Indeed it is served up with finesse and practicality. Wandlyn's management and staff wielded their carving knives with such speed and know how, that they managed to feed over 100 people in just about ninety minutes. The five course buffet was attractively arranged and culminated in an assortment of extremely appealing desserts. Wine and low lighting would have set the tone for a romantic rendezvous had it not been for the bustling of Jenny Munday, Vaughan Fulford and Jill Watson (the cast) serving coffee and making wise-crack conversation with the audience. The stage was now set for something different, something fun, something exactly like *Wally's Cafe*.

The setting for *Wally's Cafe* is designed in the shape of a leviathan hamburger (although we only see the inside) complete with pickle and tomato. The hamburger is situated some distance from the roadway in the middle of the Californian Mojave desert. It is the dream come true of Wally Murdock (Vaughan), a jovial, slightly stupid ex-short order cook from the outskirts of New Jersey. Act I takes place in the summer of 1940 as Wally is preparing the Cafe for its grand opening. He has just been joined by his wife Louise (Jenny) who is obviously disappointed that Wally has invested their entire life savings in a hamburger. After quite a few lengthy exchanges of one-liners they are finally interrupted by a knock at the door: It is Janet (Jill), a chubby blonde from Quincy, Illinois hitching her way across USA to make it big in Hollywood. However, Janet puts fame and fortune 'on hold' when Wally and Louise, convinced that she has no talent decide to hire her on as a waitress.



Left to Right: Jenny Munday as Louise Murdock. Jill Watson as Janet and Vaughan Fulford as Wally Murdock.

Photo by Dan Johnson

In the next scene, eighteen years later, Janet is again a waitress at Wally's having been to Hollywood and back. Wally is still vainly hoping that business will pick up and Louise is still threatening to leave. Act II closes with Wally and Louise revealing that there

have been some infidelities over the years. The score is three to one in favour of Louise, with Bernie (Wally's sole competition across the highway) having been the tie breaker.

Act III takes place during the summer of 1981. Wally has

lost his New Jersey accent in favour of a pair of loose fitting dentures. He is now into the depths of senility, and (sadly) joke after joke is based on the disintegration of his body and mind. Louise, never having left, is packing up the Cafe in preparation for their depar-

ture to an old folks home. Enter Janet, dressed to kill and ready to sweep Wally and Louise off in her big black limo. She has finally made it rich after a succession of shameless marriages to men very much her senior.

For what it's worth *Wally's Cafe* is definitely silly/fun but it might have been downright ridiculous had it not been for the context in which it was presented. Having prepared the audience to expect a play that is light-hearted and amusing (using the atmosphere of a friendly meal as their frame of reference) the actors were able to get away with the script with very little trouble. Director Marshall Button maintained a tight ship over his crew and although there were intermissions between each Act, the play was well timed and consistent. Jenny Munday was excellent as the tired, haggard Louise, just as Vaughan Fulford was wonderful as the hopeless dreamer, Wally. As Janet, Jill Watson was the perfect dumb blonde. *Wally's Cafe* is situation comedy up-front but underneath it is about lost dreams and lost souls. It is a success story in that Wally and Louise managed to stand each other for as long as they did. But moreover, it is a success story for the Comedy Asylum, as once again this group of gaggers do a fine job in entertaining their audience.

## Progressive ballet

Theatre Ballet of Canada's performance last Monday proves that ballet is a viable artistic expression in today's art world, just as Swan Lake reflected late 19th century Imperial Russia. Since TBC's inception in 1981 in Ottawa, they have built up an extensive repertoire of diverse, contemporary works. Through continued touring TBC has provided Canadian audiences, whose, at times, only exposure to Ballet is the tradition-laden National Ballet, the opportunity to see progressive ballet. Unfortunately continual touring causes a great deal of wear-and-tear on a company which can be detected by the audience. Thus TBC's weaknesses were visible — especially their lack of technical precision. All this aside, Theatre Ballet gave an impressive array of choreographic food for



thought.

The opening piece, "Valse Fantasia", was choreographed by the late George Balanchine. It reflected Mr. Balanchine's remarkable talent of fusing

technical classicism with modern minimalism. A real treat for all audiences.

In the second ballet, "Full Moon", choreographed by

Lynn Taylor-Corbett, a pair of dancers, a howling wolf, a piano and a saxophone shared this dance — that elicited an impressive applause from the audience.

In Gradus' piece "Moralities", grand movements dominate this work based on three Aesop's fables. Through the guise of fables Gradus creates a haunting image of the Nazi phenomena. A powerful work indeed.

The final piece "Confetti", was choreographed by Gerald Arpino, ended the evening on a happy note and also provided an effective contrast to "Moralities." The colourful "Confetti" made clear that dance is an exciting emotional expression. A lot can be said without a word.