

It won't bite but it'll tickle

by Richard Whitby

You can't take it with you, but you can see it at the Neptune Theatre until March 22. If you are looking for biting satire or heavy political comment in this dated comedy, don't bother. But if pure entertainment for a couple of hours is what you are interested in, "You Can't Take It With You" can fill that need easily. The acting is passable, the set and costume design are excellent, and the play itself, though old and overworked to some extent, retains the zany character that has made it a favorite of companies for almost forty years.

The play, written and set in 1936, at the tail end of the depression in New York City, is a combination of sight and sound gags, and one-liners that move along at a vaudevillian pace though not in the gross and outrageous manner of vaudeville. There is a subtle sophistication below the surface that is brought off quite well by most of the actors. Jack Creley, as Grandpa, is the central character, and is excellent in the role. It was especially interesting to see (listen to?) the way that he, and David Renton as Mr.



Rita Howell and Jack Creley

Sycamore, handled the New York accent which in most cases is grossly overplayed. Here, however, it is tempered perfectly, even though Renton sounds like the Buckleys or George Plimton, who exhibit the noted Harvard sound, the effect is minimal and would only be important in the context of exaggerating it and drawing attention away from the dialogue. Rita Howell as Mrs. Sycamore has the latitude to perform in a variety of ways within the limits of the character and she seems to have resisted the temptation to be another Edith Bunker, though at times she does sound that way. Alice Sycamore was designed to be the pure, kind, pretty example of early womanhood, but unfortunately, Rosemary Dunsmore has portrayed her too nicely in the play's worst bit of overacting. Nevertheless she is just believable enough not to be a serious detriment to the overall performance. Joseph Rutten is intriguing as Mr. DePina and some of the funniest bits center around him.

The cast is loose, an important factor in a play such as this. At one point

when Mr. DePina is posing for one of Mrs. Sycamore's paintings and Grandpa is throwing darts at a nearby board, Creley looks at Mr. DePina then looks at the audience and shakes his head and says something to the effect of "No, I couldn't do it." This ad-libbing is indicative of the general atmosphere and it is certainly a welcome change from "Hamlet" for both audience and performer. It is easy to perform, easy to sit through and in this sense presents little challenge to either group. For that reason the temptation is to crap all over it. But if the theater is meant to entertain, and if that end is achieved through any vehicle then in that case the end justifies the means. I came away from "You Can't Take It With You," smiling and I think for that simple reason the play is worth going to whether it overwhelms the audience or not, which in many cases of jaded reviewing seems to be the criteria for raves or a hatchet job. Sometimes living in the Maritimes one needs some simple humor to brighten things a bit; "You Can't Take It With You" is worth at least the price of a balcony seat.

Dal explores the unknown

by Michael Greenfield

Snow was accumulating steadily outside the SUB, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, far north of the equator. However, inside the SUB the climate had radically altered. Dashikis were everywhere, displays with masks, statues and hollowed out logs covered with skin created an atmosphere foreign to Halifax. A large amount of ebony bodies mingled with others of all races who came, despite the weather, to experience Africa Night.

The concept of Africa Night is to introduce to Halifax an African, essentially black culture, struggling to assert its beauty in a world too long dominated by white colonial rule. It also serves as a reaffirmation of their heritage for native Africans far from home and descendants of Africans far removed from their roots.

More entertaining than informative, the evening succeeded in displaying a richness in culture while enabling everyone to get drunk. The evening featured exhibits, a lecture, food, a fashion show, music and dancing.

A beautiful display was set up in the afternoon on the second floor exhibiting items from all over the African continent. Richly coloured cloth hung on the walls. Carved figures, small wooden furniture, and skillfully designed jewelry exhibited by people proud of their countries artistry.

It was almost 8 o'clock when Professor Ali Mazuri spoke. Unfortunately, Prof. Mazuri had to gear his

speech to a Saturday night, short attention span crowd. His task was, in a short speech to discuss the wide topic — **The African Culture and The Black Experience**. Considering the limitations he did a fine job.

Professor Mazuri divided Africanism into 5 different levels: 1. Sub-Saharan Pan Africanism - the unity of black Africans south of the Arab states. 2. Trans-Saharan Pan Africanism - includes the Arab people. 3. Trans-Atlantic Pan Africanism - the unity of Africans with those in Europe and the Americas. 4. West Hemispheric Pan Africanism - unity within the non-African European and American states. 5. Global Pan Africanism - world African unity. However, Prof. Mazuri pointed out, people other than those of African origin may be identifying with the African movement. He presented the Australian Aborigine and the Papuans of New Guinea as examples of people who have expressed to him a desire to associate with Africansim.

No people have been more humiliated than Africans, Professor Mazuri stated. People have suffered more and are poorer, but none have suffered the degradation throughout the ages that Africans have. Today, what could be more humiliating than, the presence of a brutally racist, hangover from the colonial era on the African continent itself.

In terms of World Culture, the globe is definitely Eurocentric. Throughout most of the world a dualism

exists — the indigenous cultures of Africa, Asia, and South America plus the powerful Western, European based culture. In regards to language, English and French are the only two undisputedly global languages. Western dress, music, law etc. have spread throughout the world. Forced into the background are the many native cultures. Professor Mazuri said that only recently are Africans beginning to realize that the qualities of a good ruler are not proficiency in English and a foreign education.

This cultural domination was achieved with the help of the importation of Christianity into the area. The feminist meekness of the God of Love religions helped the aggressive colonialist Europeans subdue the proselytized nations.

The goal should be to Africanize Christianity, Africanize Islam; reassert African culture as part of the growing global culture, to break the monopoly of Europe. The difficulties in this are great. The prestige of Western Civilization still lies heavy on the Third World.

Prof. Mazuri's speech was a call for the reaffirmation of the varied African cultures, in a sense a call for more Africa Nights. His speaking manner was fluid, and lively. The crowd was certainly impressed. It is too bad that he did not have time to go into the points he merely sketched out.

Chow followed the speech. A hot meal well worth waiting for. Original African dishes — beans,

rice, fried plantain — but the star dish was the tasty Meat and Chicken Stew. It sure beat the hell out of Saga.

The desert was a feast for the eye. Beautiful multi-coloured robes and dresses. Tapestries of purple, green and gold flowed onstage to the beat of African music. Clothing from throughout black Africa presented itself in a well staged fashion show.

The group **Toronto Revival** ended the evening with music and dancing. Though the music was not African, no one can deny a

certain degree of influence exerted by African music on the North American soul that made up a large part of **Toronto Revival's** repertoire.

It was after 1 a.m. when it ended, and the white stuff was still falling. Yet a new dimension had been added to snow blanketed Halifax, an African dimension. Every year Dal has an African Night, mostly entertaining, but always a little of Africa rubs off. For the African students a well done effort, one of the events that makes Dal worth attending.



African garments on display