page fourteen



## The Comedy Asylum revives DinnerTheatre

by KimRilda van Feggelen

The King, in his court, used to eat a fabulous meal and them be entertained by minstrals and theatre groups. For anyone who likes the idea of "eat and be entertained", the Comedy Asylum offers the unique and fun concept of "Dinner Theatre" in Halifax.

The Comedy Asylum began as an independant theatrical troupe in 1981 in Fredericton, N.B., and, in agreement with Wandlyn Inns, they are currently touring the Maritimes. They were in Halifax last week, where, for a single admission price, patrons were treated to a buffet-style dinner (which included a dozen salads, lobster and roast hip of beef!), and the energețic talents of the troupe.

One of the reasons that this "entertainment package" is so good is the atmosphere that the company tries to set up; in order to create the feeling of intimacy involved in both Dinner theatre and the plays - a comedy from the 30's by Noel Coward - there was taped music (jazzy Billie Holliday and Scott Joplin ragtime), and candles. Also, the actors waited on tables in masks so they might hide the inconsistencies between their characters and waiters and talked with patrons, introduced patrons to each other and trilled about with an informal and friendly ease. The idea was very successful; the tables buzzed with strangers talking to each other about theatre and food and their pet doggies. After a relaxing hour and a half of eating, drinking and talking, the play begins - on a "stage" only five feet away from the tables.

Noel Coward's insights into the role of men and women in marriage delivers scathing humour that is timeless and light. The play is excellently paced and well directed by Debra Gray. the sexual innuendoes of the script still fit our modern day, though I doubt they can be considered as racy as they were in the 30's. The script deals out ealousy, double standards, and eccentricities in handfuls of iaughter.

The Comedy Asylum is currently working through the Wandlyn Inn only, but are also looking at the possibility of other venues with the success of PRIVATE LIVES. I feel sure that they will do well; they have the pure energy and enthusiasm it takes to entertain all audiences. The price of the ticket is a great entertainment deal - where else can you get dinner and a show for \$20? The Comedy Asylum meets the challenge of presenting good dinner theatre with a flair that is highly commendable and entertaining. I recommend trying it out next time they come to Halifax.

PRIVATE LIVES is a comedy about a divorced couple, Elvot and Amanda, who, by chance, end up at the same hotel in neighbouring suites on their respective honeymoons with new spouses. Fights ensue and Elyot and Amanda run away together, leaving Elyot's new wife, the naive and innocent Sybil, and Amanda's new husband, the pompous and stuffy Victor at the hotel. Naturally, Sybil and Victor get together and eventually show up at Amanda's flat in Paris where Amanda and Elyot are back to their passionate love-hate relationship

The casting of the company is great; from the docile eye-fluttering naivité of Sybil, played by Elizabeth Goodyear, to the unabashed outwardness of Jenny Munday as Amanda, whose fiery red hair is almost required by the script. Marshall Button's "flippant" moustache was an extension of the character of Elyot - his facial expressons and deliverance make him the outstanding member of the cast. Completing the cast is Yves Mercier as Victor Prynne, as suitable a stuffy ass as can be, and Karen Liewellyn as Louise, Amanda's very french maid.



The road to true infidelity never runs true . . . In this scene from "Private Lives", Marshall Button (as Elyot) and Jenny Munday (as Amanda) practise living in Noel Coward's world.