

# arts

## Moment strained hazy contrived

Attending Theatre 3's world premiere of *The Photographic Moment* is similar to going shopping at a bargain sale of a jewelry store that attempts to sell garburators that have a tendency to back up — if, after you've sorted through the debris your find of the occasional worthwhile trinket or even the odd gem, their value has been diminished by the strain of the surrounding mayhem.

Extreme script weaknesses, contrived play structure and thematic haziness detract from the beautifully moving and simple moments of characters trying to activate their lives into some meaningful action. While the action of the play revolves around the brothers and sisters

of a rural Southern Albertan family during the depression, the script centres around repetitiveness, pedanticism and the occasional overuse of exaggerated clichés. Characters seem to be too often repeating the statements of another character or telling previously established story lines.

Along with an overabundance of immediately foreshadowing lines like "Listen, this is what we're going to do", the script further attempts to needlessly pound the play's action and meaning into the audience's mind with uncomfortably blunt and strained Chekovian lines like "we've nothing to show for our lives" and "we were young then".

Following the first act's clean and simple exposition, script weaknesses are aggravated by the second and third acts becoming entrapped in a series of over-extended, predictable and seemingly compulsory cartharses by each character, about what was, is and will be wrong about his or her life.

While the script, structure, and to this mind, too frequent and abrupt mood changes from extremely flowing openness to strained concealment of the part of the characters, contribute to a sense of realism and character frustration, *The Photographic Moment* tends to too frustratingly say and put forth little in comparison to the volume of words it churns out.

Over emphatic scenes such as the bloody revelation of an abortion (sending most of the audience members to their air sickness bags or nervous laughter buttons) and inconcise and ambiguous scenes, especially the plays concluding scene about "something terrible" one sister almost did, further bring about a lack of thematic coherence and focus. Because the play attempts to grasp and package too much life, moving scenes such as the brothers discussing their war participation or the sisters revealing utilitarian motives for marriage, lose their simple shine amidst other diffuse action of the play.

Nevertheless, — the production's performers do fine jobs of defining the excellent characters Baldrige has created. Judith Mabey as the ever hopeful optimist Clare and Ken Argell-Smith as the gruff but deeply concerned Percy, are worth the price of admission. Both Elan Ross Gibson as the pessimist Bunny and Fletcher T. Williamson as the ambitious Avery, occasionally lose clarity in moments of high emotion, but they handle as well as possible audience numbing thematic lines that even a performer who had made a career of being dish detergent commercial hands would balk at servicing. However, Sheelah Megill as the perhaps overdrawn Philistine Mildred, lacks the humanness of the others with her nervous collar primping, facial twitching and head nodding, straining light comedy and being reminiscent of her creation of Lucky in last year's *Waiting for Godot*.

Richard Roberts' set is both remarkable for its detailed re-creation of a farmhouse as well as its provision of ample and varied utilitarian stage areas. While director Mark Schoenberg might take some of the responsibility with Roberts for the backs of those sitting on a trunk and bed, he does do a fine job of delineating exact presentations of sections of the play and does not dwell on the play's potential melodramatics.

Though hidden, sensitive moments show Baldrige has the potential to write ingeniously about the human condition, *The Photographic Moment* as an invigorating experience rates only somewhere between a good orgasm and counting the number of books in the adjacent Centennial Library. Nevertheless performance and ticket information for this Theatre 3 production can be obtained by phoning their box office (476-6870).

by Lawrence Wargrave

## At the Opera

Ann Howard, London born mezzo, will sing the title role in the Edmonton Opera Association's production of Bizet's *Carmen* on October 31, November 2, 4, and 6th (special student matinee) at the Jubilee Auditorium.

Starring with Miss Howard in *Carmen* will be Jean Bonhomme as Don Jose, Barbara Shuttleworth as Micaela, and Allan Monk, as Escamillo, the Toreador. Pierre Hetu will conduct the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, and Irving Guttman will direct. Sets and lighting are by John Naccarato of the Seattle Opera. Alexandra Munn returns to the Edmonton Opera Association this season as Chorus Director.

Tickets may be purchased at Woodward's, Edmonton Centre Fourth Floor Box Office.



## Prague string quartet here tomorrow

Czechoslovakia's Prague String Quartet will be playing for the Edmonton Chamber Music Society at Convocation Hall on Wednesday, October 30, 8:30 p.m.

Formed originally during the inter-war years by Ladislav Czerny, the Prague Quartet resumed public performances in 1956 and has appeared

constantly in concert throughout Europe since then. In 1965-1966 the Quartet made its first global tour, playing in South America, Japan, Australia, the United States and Canada.

The Prague Quartet has been known as Czechoslovakia's finest string quartet for many years. It has been particularly praised for its performances of works by modern Czech composers.

The program of Wednesday's concert comprises *Intimate Letters* and *Quartet No. 2* by Janacek, Haydn's *Quartet in B flat, Op 76, No. 4* and Ravel's *Quartet in F*.

Admission is by season membership in the Edmonton Chamber Music Society only. A few memberships are still available at Fine Arts 3-82 or at the door before the concert.

## Experimentation, progress keynote Matthews album

IAN MATTHEWS  
Some days you eat the bear, and some days the bear eats you.  
ELEKTRA 75078

Ian Matthews became known to Western audiences when, along with the now-defunct Matthew's Southern Comfort group, he took Joni Mitchell's *Woodstock* ballad to the "top of the charts", as the saying goes. Many fans of Ian Matthews however, mightn't be aware that he began his career as a popular British folksinger with the old Fairport Convention. He has recorded eight albums since he left Fairport in January 1969, *Some days you eat the bear...* being the most recent.

The album immediately preceeding "Some days..." was the immensely popular *Valley Hi*, the best album Matthews has done to date. Produced by Michael Nesmith, (one of the best in the business), *Valley Hi* was the climax resulting from Matthews' Americanization. Matching the success of *Valley Hi* was a difficult task, and *Some days you eat the bear...* is a slight disappointment.

On this album, Matthews seems a little less concerned with commercial success than before, which is a good thing, but his constant experimentation with new styles and new session men is a bit unnerving.

The shift from a British folkie to an American folk/country singer has been a long, tedious road for Matthews, a fact that is painfully apparent from the large number of backup musicians he has gone through on his albums. On *Some days...*, he relies mostly on Jeff

Baxter for acoustic guitars and Willie Leacox for the drumming, with many other American country stars popping up here and there. As he has in the past, Matthews has dabbled in production, coming up with an adequately-produced album, but not nearly as professional and expertise as Michael Nesmith is capable of.

Matthews has again chosen songs by well-known American songwriters, including Jesse Winchester, (*Biloxi*), Gene Clark, (*Tried So Hard*), and Tom Waits, (*Ol' 55*). One of the most disappointing songs on this album is Version No. 2 of

Matthews' own composition, *Keep On Sailing*. For this arrangement, he has made the grave error of adding an Alto Sax to a song that would be perfect with Pedal Steel and acoustic guitars only.

Experimentation and progress are the key elements of this album, and it is clear that Ian Matthews is a versatile and dynamic musician. *Valley Hi*, was dedicated to his wife, Chris, for "tearing up her roots". *Some days you eat the bear...* should be dedicated to Matthews himself for the same reason.

Gordon Turtle

## Baldrige for lunch

Mary Humphrey Baldrige, whose play *Photographic Moment* is currently being produced by Theatre 3, will be the third artist to appear at this year's Citadel lunch-time 'specials' on Wednesday, October 30th at 12:15 p.m.

Mary, who is married to Theatre Calgary Artistic Director Harold Baldrige, originally studied drama at the University of Alberta in Edmonton. However, she decided to embark on a career as a poetess rather than an actress, and since her university days, has enjoyed giving readings of her works as much as she enjoys writing.

A large variety of magazines and anthologies across Canada, including *The Fiddlehead*, have published Mary's work, and she has had one book of poems

published — *Slide Images*, put out by Rhetort Press of New York.

Mary's poetry has been described as "surprisingly dark and even a little vicious." Her readings are dramatic and fascinating. In addition to *Photographic Moment*, a play about survival and the Depression, she has two other plays to her credit — both one-acters. *Bride of the Gorilla* was produced in Calgary earlier this year and has been published by the Playwrights Co-op of Toronto, its sequel is *Cry Wolf Harry*.

Admission to the show, which is sponsored by the Citadel Housefighters, is \$1.00 and you can buy coffee and sandwiches for 75 cents at the theatre.