

# A little ironing out and the Loot's okay

by Kim Rilda van Feggelen

"Anarchism is a game at which the police can beat you."

This quote, from George Bernard Shaw, seems to illustrate the line of thought behind Joe Orton's play *Loot*. This "black comedy" is playing at the King's College Theatre from March 2-5, and is a fund-raising attempt for the Metro Group Homes Association.

The plot centres around Mrs. McLeavy's funeral - or really, arrangements for the funeral - she never does actually get there. Her son Hal (Patrick Gaul), along with his friend Dennis (who is also the town undertaker) have just pulled off a bank heist. As Hal, his father, and the nurse Fay await the arrival of the hearse to take them to the cemetery, they are visited by Police Inspector Truscott (in disguise as a man from the water board) and the complications begin. The loot from the robbery is stored in the casket, the corpse is transferred to the closet. The hearse leaves with the money but has an accident on the way.

Inspector Truscott, as it turns out, is trying to solve two crimes and it is revealed that Mrs. McLeavy has been murdered by her nurse Fay, who wants to make Mr. McLeavy her eighth husband...in other words, you can begin to see the general confusion that is the setup for this comedy.

By far the strongest performance of the evening was nurse Fay, played by Sarah Orenstein. Miss Orenstein is both confident and comfortable on the stage and her voice carried wonderfully. This is essential, for even in the small theatre at King's; I had trouble making out some of Mr. McLeavy's lines. Charles Beaton's sometimes garbled delivery weakened his performance considerably - it was hard to think of the character being as meek as its portrayal.

Dominic Larkin's Truscott was

well done, with a fair amount of vitality and conviction. His juxtaposition with Patrick Gaul as the jumpy lad who can rob a bank but cannot lie (Orton displays a lovely farcical touch on the Catholic Church here) makes for a number of funny exchanges. Hugh Corston's portrayal of Dennis is also well handled, though there are moments in the play when he and

in the background instead of having them just looking scared), and this slows the play down. As a first attempt at direction, however, Ms. Whyte has done a good job.

Perhaps the funniest touch to this production is the performance of Giselle Nofle as the corpse of Mrs. McLeavy. During the course of the play, she is tossed into the closet, stripped, wrapped up like a



Hal overdo the nervous looks so much that one wonders why it takes Truscott so long to catch on.

*Loot* is directed by Nancy Ellen Whyte, who keeps the pace at a reasonable clip. There are moments when some of the characters seem a bit aimless as they wait for their lines (it would be interesting perhaps to give Hal and Dennis some nervous quirks they could work on

mummy and dragged about the set continually, with nary a grunt of protest. Truly a fine performance!

In all, *Loot* may need to be ironed out a bit (I am sure that this week's performances will see an improvement) but carries itself well. Despite the flaws, Mr. Orton's wit is unavoidable, and one cannot help but laugh at the turn of events.

# Dancemakers at the Cohn

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wings, doing a sort of primate cake-walk, end up at centre stage,

do some exquisite moves, a couple of pratfalls, and lope off, slinking back into the slack-armed slump in their exit. These faceless humanoids drew whistles and hoots from the audience. It was just so funny; you had to be there.

After the first brief intermission, 'Arrival of All Time' (chor.: Anna Blewchamp; Music: Ann Southam) was presented, my favourite of the evening. The programme write-up included a Woolf quotation, "I feel certain that I am going mad again...and I shan't recover this time. I begin to hear voices, and I can't concentrate...I can't fight any

longer." The piece started normally enough, a woman seated at a desk, a man and two women in front of the desk. As the woman picked up a pen to write, the dancers metamorphosed into the parts of her disintegrating mind, in bizarre and stilted movements across the stage.

The writer eventually went after them and dragged them back to civilized order in front of her desk, but not for long. Soon after this one reprieve, subtly at first, the disorganization started again, and at the last the writer was left standing alone at her desk, with her pen back in the drawer, her psyche shattered and still writhing.

The next piece was not quite as heavily symbolic, exploring sounds and rhythms emanating from within the body. 'Walking the Line' (Chor.: Karen Rimmer, 1982; Music: Henry Kucharzyk) started with six dancers playing an elaborate line-game of patty-cake, making their own music using the different body parts (thigh, hand, stomach, chest) of themselves and their neighbours to achieve pitch and resonance differences in melody. This became more and more complex, and, with the addition of externally produced music, evocation became confrontation and, later, battles of will. This fascinating piece ended with the dancers back in their line, this time silent and isoated, each with their own

pattern and style of sequencing, in individual states of frenzied movement.

After the second intermission, the last piece of the evening was dedicated to the changing moods in social dance through much of this century. This was very effective in its presentation, because it did not use the most well-known of the dance tunes of the day, but more of the stuff written about the dreams of the day. The Sheik of Araby, Cab Calloway blues, 'Let's Face the Music and Dance', Jitterbug Juke, and even Gene Pitney emotion were included, with the psychedelic music (a la White Rabbit - J.A.) of the 60's and 70's rounding off this piece, with powerful movement in a story-telling mode. Maybe the smaller-size audience in the Cohn was just as well during this number, with the sing-along crowd a little less inhibited than usual during this really entertaining final piece.


This was an extremely worthwhile evening, a learning experience in dance, and I would highly recommend taking in Dancemakers on any return engagements.

Ahem, ahem.

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