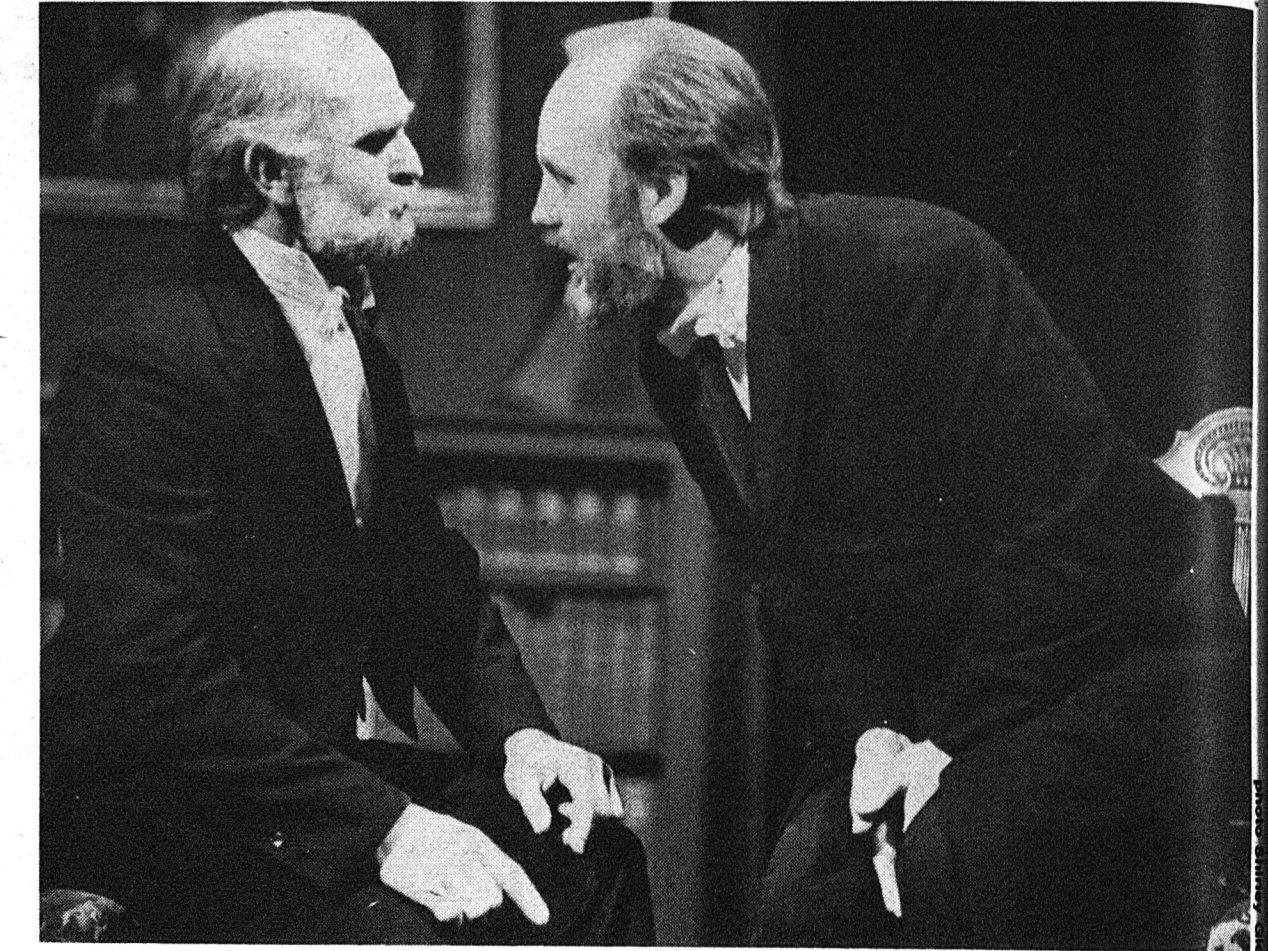


arts

Studio serves a mean Wild Duck

Review by Jeffrey Wildman

Ibsen was a playwright who hoped his audience brought more to the theatre than their attention. *The Wild Duck*, in some ways more than Ibsen's other plays, demands a sensitive, alert audience. The necessary receptivity of an audience, however, must be played upon and evoked, by a director of this difficult play, through the fine balance of intellectual understanding and sympathy in the creation of the characters. Frank Bueckert's paramount achievement as the director of Ibsen's masterpiece, as many critics have called *The Wild Duck*, is his tuning of the actors. The sympathetic and realistic creation of such main characters as Gregers Werle and Hjalmar Ekdal, whose basic personality traits it would be easy to overplay to the point of parody, are wonderfully realized.



The tone of this darkly thought-provoking play is intellectual and finely strung, elements which are often at odds with the kind of theater many audiences prefer. The sensitivity and integrity of works like *The Wild Duck* demand a creative and thoughtful response from the director and his company. An audience must be aware of the viewpoints of both the main characters and the deep internal conflict that goes on within each as the play progresses. Perfectly served by the entire cast, Bueckert captures much of the nuance and dimension of this rich, complex play.

The Wild Duck is a brilliant example of Ibsen's sensitivity of the theatricality and potential tragedy of ordinary human lives. It relates the gradual breakdown of the outwardly peaceful and love-filled homelife of Hjalmar Ekdal, by the disruptive reappearance of his boyhood friend, Gregers Werle. Walter Kaasa as Hjalmar Ekdal and David Barnet as Gregers Werle offer complex and accomplished performances. The character of Hjalmar Ekdal, the supersensitive evader of reality, could degenerate into whining, self-indulgence and one's sympathy for his dilemma would be lost but through Walter Kaasa, one sees Hjalmar torn and indecisive, humorous and tragic by turns. The pivotal role of Gregers Werle is almost too complex and dynamic for any definite characterization but a touch too much driven delusion or not enough sympathetic desire to do good through his obsessive

idealism and the play would fall apart. David Barnet somehow manages to establish enough basic goodness and humanity in Gregers to allow him to tread a fine line later in the play between excessive enthusiasm and overblown dementia. Barnet treads this fine line precariously but in the end, his faltering assertion that all was done with the best of intentions and his reassertion that "the claim of the ideal" is the only way to live in Truth, even after death and mental torture, have been the only results of his idealism is deeply moving.

There are numerous standout performances from Gloria Perks as Gina Ekdal, Hjalmar's wife and Orest Kinasevich's Haakeon Werle, Gregers' father to the wonderful, masterful work of Manus Sasonkin, as Hjalmar's broken father and Herman Tennesen as Relling, the realist doctor whose slightly cynical manner protects him from the full burden of his clear conception of the tragic human condition.

The Wild Duck is an inspired play about the need of individuals to free themselves from within, rather than allowing external forces to compel and control self-consciousness with confused and sometimes tragic results. The intellectual complexity of Ibsen's statement and the primacy of the symbol of the wild duck are competently realized by this production of the work.

Photo: Shirley Glew

Hits of the Decade: a Gateway series (VI)

Sadly, we have reached the conclusion of this controversial series.

To wrap it up, Gateway sports editor and closet-rocker, Johnny "Travolta" Stewart.

1. Bruce Springsteen *Born to Run* 1975

Finally, the best music of the decade was not a throwback to the sixties. Springsteen brings an urgency to music without relying on the maps and charts of the Stones, et al. His street tragedies purge us.

2. The Allman Brothers Band *Eat a Peach* 1972

This album defines the dual-lead guitar approach (compliments to Duane Allman and Dickey Betts) that no one else has dared to duplicate. Betts and Duane take turns pushing one another, powered by the most incredible rhythm section American rock has known. And Gregg Allman is one of the best white blues singers.

3. Derek and the Dominos *Layla and other Assorted Love Songs* 1972

Eric Clapton's finest effort before, during or after Cream. Clapton and his supporting cast (most notably Duane Allman, who plays the definitive lead on "Layla")

work up an intensity not found in E.C. recordings of the seventies. This album also displays an intelligence much of Cream's work lacks.

4. Santana *Abraxas* 1970

A product of San Francisco and a commercial success in part because of their appearance at Woodstock, the original Santana thrust one latin flair after another at you. *Abraxas* is more important, though because Carlos Santana's guitar is mixed way up front and its distinctive flavor and verve can not be ignored.

5. Mahavishnu Orchestra *Birds of Fire* 1973

Leader John McLaughlin took what Miles Davis taught him and popularized it by moving a giant step toward rock. This, the best of several excellent recordings by the Orchestra, features stunning solo interplay between McLaughlin, Jan Hammer (keyboards) and Jerry Goodman (electric violin).

6. Rolling Stones *Exile on Main Street* 1972

The closest rock and roll has come to an epic album; in both size and scope. The Stones broadened the horizons for themselves and rock as a genre with this release.

7. The Who *Who's Next* 1971

Arguably the 'best' group in rock and roll, the Who have remained angry men while all too many of their counterparts have become elitist pigs. When Roger Daltrey mouths Pete Townshend's message to the people ("Won't Get Fooled Again") rock has been given an anthem it should not forget.

8. Warren Zevon *Excitable Boy* 1978

Zevon looks like the new hope. American rock will continue to thrive if the excitable boy "strikes up the band" in the name of blood, booze, revolution and fun; again and again.

9. George Harrison *All Things Must Pass* 1970

The best release by an ex-Beatle, *All Things Must Pass* is unusual in that it boasts an all-star cast that lives up to its billing. Harrison must have saved his best pieces over the years so that he could stun the music world. It worked.

10. Jeff Beck *Blow by Blow* 1975

Music for guitar lovers who don't mind things a little overblown and pretentious. What McLaughlin did, Beck simplified, focussing in on one instrument (the guitar) and taking a stance closer to pop-rock than jazz.