

Neptune inspects English class behaviour

BY SOHRAB FARID

"Fire, blood and anguish" are the words used by Sheila Birling (Burgandy Code) to describe her household in J.B. Priestley's *An Inspector Calls*. Set in an industrial English city in April 1912, the play is a social critique of the pretentious nature of middle-class English families during the Age of Elegance, and the facades they put on.

The dining room of the Birling's home constitutes the setting for the play's entirety. The patriarchal Arthur Birling (Robert Berson), self-described as a "hard-headed practical man", is a factory owner and former town mayor who aspires to knighthood. On this particular evening, Gerald Croft (Gordon Rand), the son of Mr. Birling's chief business rival, has announced his engagement with the aforementioned Sheila, Arthur's daughter.

Also present are Mr. Birling's wife, Sybil (Donna Belleville), and their son Eric (Darren Keay).

Arthur, smug and possibly a bit tipsy, proves to be terribly verbose,

and advises the three young adults on a variety of topics over dinner, wine and cigars.

The two children, convincingly played as both spoiled and idealistic, appear annoyed at the endless advice. Meanwhile, Croft and Mrs. Birling bask in what appears to be the most comfortable of settings: a family united, indomitable and anxious to accept a new member into their respectable home.

At this point Inspector Goole (Roger Rowland, last seen at Neptune in Agatha Christie's *And Then There Were None*) enters, and brings with him an exposition of what lies beneath this portrayal of comfort. Goole, direct, tactful and intrepid, interrupts their dinner with the news of the suicide of a beautiful young lady, Eva Smith. The news disturbs the family, but they pass it off, stating that they had nothing to do with her death, since none seemed to know her.

Goole then proceeds to prove, using his direct method of questioning, that each person present had a great deal to do with her death. One by one, dark secrets

are revealed about each person's character and history. The charges are simple, their effects far-reaching, and each person is affected in a profound albeit distinct manner.

With only seven characters, the seventh being the maid Edna (Andrea McCulloch), the audience is allowed to become quite familiar with the characters.

The experienced cast helps to develop the audiences' understanding of the characters: Arthur is pretentious with a contemptuous manner. Sybil is blindingly elitist and insensitive, but undyingly loyal. Gerald, whose desire to run a factory has him acting like Arthur. Sheila, selfish

and spoiled, but smart; and finally, Eric, at times a bumbling alcoholic, at times an idealist with compassionate, if not undignified, tendencies.

Rowland plays Goole as a sly but stubborn inspector, determined to break down this bourgeois family's aura of invincibility.

Critically acclaimed since its debut in 1945, *An Inspector Calls* is both entertaining and determinative, both clever and cognizant. Priestley's play is successful in its discussion of a topic familiar in latter-day English literature — class and social behaviour, and is reminiscent Dickens.

Sand on the tracks

Sandbox rocks Locofest

BY LYNN DECKER

As part of the Festival ECMA, New Glasgow's Sandbox headlined at *Locofest* on Saturday night. When the opening acts, Shyne Factory and the Grace Babies, played the venue was only half-full. But the evening wore on, the beer flowed and the crowd grew. The place was almost full by the time Sandbox hit the stage.

They started with two songs from their latest disc, *A Murder in the Glee Club*, "...to red" and "Spin", to warm the crowd up. For the rest of the nearly hour-and-a-half set, the band played songs from the new album and their first album, *Bionic*.

Lead vocalist Paul Murray chatted with the crowd throughout the show. At one point he told the audience a story about how the group wrote a song years ago about a little boy who got a puppy and one day threw a ball for the puppy to catch, only to watch the dog be hit by a car. "This is a sad song," he said, and

the band broke into "Curious" — their big hit. They also played their current radio-friendly release, "Carry".

But the highlight of the evening came as they were performing their last song of the encore, "For You". The crowd went absolutely wild when, in the middle of the song, the band suddenly started playing Blur's "Song 2". Everyone started jumping up and down and singing along. As people were leaving the building after the show, all you could hear were shouts of "Woo Hoo" from Blur's hit single.

I have seen Sandbox perform several times over the past three years and I have to say that they have steadily improved. The songs are better, the band is better, and even though I didn't think he could get any better — frontman Paul Murray is sounding even more wonderful than before.

At one point in the show Murray thanked the old fans for sticking with them throughout the years. No problem Paul, you paid us back tenfold Saturday night.

Locofest reaches low heights

BY NATALIE MACLELLAN

The thirty-something bleached-blond woman sitting across from me was trying to pick up a forty-something short bald man. I found myself wishing

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I was anywhere but at the Train Station.

The majority of people who showed up for Thursday night's Highland Heights concert were at least 30 if they were a day. Many were considerably older. That is not bad in itself, but consider a room set up with very little seating and a large dance space. What resulted was a bunch of old people standing around with their beer, looking with patronizing amusement at the few younger members of the crowd who decided to take advantage of the good music by dancing and singing in front of the stage.

Highland Heights were technically the headliners of the night, but unfortunately for them, the ticket buyers seemed a bit confused. Newfoundland's the Punters opened the

night with an hour long set to an empty room. But by the time Signal Hill, another Newfoundland band, took the stage, the station was rocking.

The crowd — which seemed to be overwhelmingly Newfie — jumped, screamed and cheered through the hour-and-a-half set, comprised mainly of cover tunes from 70s rock. When Signal Hill finally left the stage, they took most of the audience with them.

Highland Heights was left with the fun task of closing the show for an almost non-existent crowd. They played well, but couldn't fill the nearly empty room. Perhaps Signal Hill should have been kept to a shorter set, or perhaps Highland Heights should have been able to play first, while there was still an audience to listen.

And the winners were...

a complete rundown of ECMA winners

Country Artist of the Year: Julian Austin

Bluegrass Artist of the Year: Exit 13

Pop/Rock Artist of the Year: Great Big Sea

Classical Recording of the Year: *Late Romantics*, Symphony Nova Scotia conducted by Georg Tintner

Video of the Year: "Building a Mystery", Sarah McLachlan (Director: Matt Mahorin)

African-Canadian Artist of the Year: Four the Moment

Dr. Helen Creighton Lifetime Achievement Award: Don Messer

Instrumental Artist of the Year (Tie): Richard Wood, Scott Macmillan

Group of the Year: Great Big Sea

Single of the Year: "When I'm Up", Great Big Sea (Producer: Danny Greenspoon)

Dance/Hip Hop Artist of the Year: Jamie Sparks

Female Artist of the Year: Sarah McLachlan

Male Artist of the Year: Lennie Gallant

Album of the Year: *Play*, Great Big Sea (Producer: Danny Greenspoon)

SOCAN Songwriter of the Year: "Building a Mystery", Sarah McLachlan

Entertainer of the Year (sponsored by President's Choice): Great Big Sea

Roots/Traditional - Instrumental Artist of the Year: Richard Wood

Francophone Recording of the Year: *Liberee*, Michelle Boudreau Samson

Alternative Artist of the Year: Super Friendz

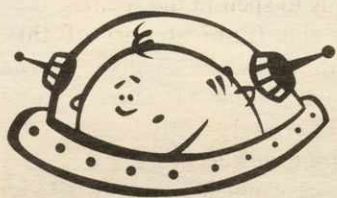
Jazz Artist of the Year: Johnny Favorite Swing Orchestra

Roots/Traditional - Vocal Artist of the Year: J.P. Cormier

Blues/Gospel Artist of the Year: Glamour Puss Blues Band

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