



Alice (Colleen Millar) and Tony (David Kelly) revel in domestic bliss in *You Can't Take It With You* at the Walterdale Theatre.

You can't do that to it

You Can't Take It With You
Walterdale Theatre
Through October 8

review by Elaine Ostry

I love the play *You Can't Take It With You*. I just don't like what Walterdale Theatre did to it.

You Can't Take It With You won a Pulitzer prize for playwrights Moss Hart and George S. Kaufman in 1938. It's a funny, light-hearted play full of one-liners and hardly a mention of the Depression. A family of eccentrics while their time away writing plays, playing the xylophone and making fireworks. Grandpa is the head of the family, espousing his (and their) philosophy: relax, follow your bliss.

His granddaughter Alice, however, has some trouble with this attitude. She is the only "normal" character — in fact, she's the only one who is employed. Her problem: how to bring home a potential fiancé, Tony Kirby Jr., the boss's son, and his sternly conservative parents.

Well, of course the misunderstandings get cleared up, if only after a disastrous dinner that ends up with mass arrests and a ruined basement. But the plot is not the

focus of the play; the characters are more interesting.

Or rather, they're supposed to be more interesting. But the main characters need a shot of adrenalin. They all have their moments, but these flashes of inspiration are not sustained. Instead of being madly enthusiastic about their zany hobbies, the characters seem only mildly interested. They do not project originality, strangeness. They are also irritatingly coy about anything vaguely sexual.

Alice (Colleen Millar) and Tony (played by Dave Kelly, who bears an uncanny resemblance to Robbie Benson) are particularly colourless, failing to obtain the audience's concern.

The Sycamore family minus Alice simply needs more energy. The timing is especially faulty: comedy shouldn't ever seem to be taking place in slow motion.

It is the minor cameo roles that give the play needed pizzazz. Mr. DePina, the fireworks freak, played by Chris Allen, is one of the few consistently funny characters. The two Russian emigres, Kolendhov (Alan Salzl) and the Grand Duchess Olga (Barb Weater) are the most energetic — and funniest — characters in the play. They relish their lines like, "Life is chasing around inside of me, like a squirrel," as

Plutocrats is humourous, enlightening

Plutocrats
Northern Light Theatre at the Kaasa
through October 16

review by Grant Winton

Northern Light Theatre call themselves "Thinking Theatre for Exciting People." In their production of Paul Goatzee's *Plutocrats*, they succeed in their ambition of making the audience think. The play is a hilarious farce, and in true farce fashion, has an extremely complicated plot, numerous twists in the action, and an underlying seriousness belying the constant humour.

The action begins at a plutonium reprocessing plant, where our hapless hero Jack (Robert Astle) is involved in an accident with a smouldering canister of plutonium and gets "The Ultimate Buzz" from inhaling it.

The rest of the play involves intricate dealings amongst various pressure groups about what to do with Jack. The ideas portrayed of management, unions, the medical profession, organized religion, and international terrorists are hilarious to watch, but also are disturbingly close to public opinion. Incidentally, they defend their mischevious double-dealing by professing that "We have a duty to the people

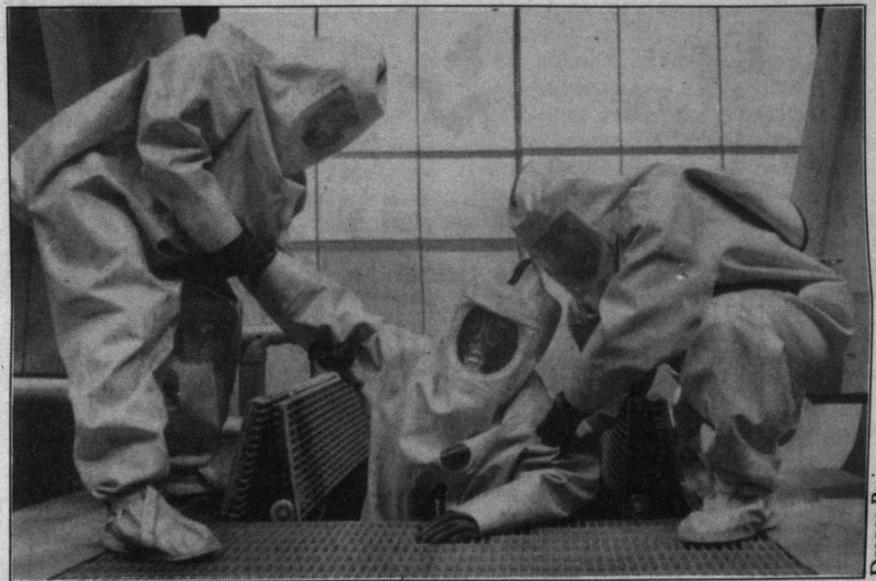
of Canada, well... the government, anyway."

Another dimension is added to the play when Jack's wife Kath (Christine MacInnes) attends sessions with a paranormal psychologist (Alison Wells) and discovers a previous life in 16th century England, and her involvement with the breeding of plague rats. The parallels grow between the spread of the plague and the proliferation of plutonium, and the two time-periods of the play begin to merge.

The staging of the play is amazing. The set that appears at first glance to be the inside of a nuclear reactor becomes Jack and Kath's home, numerous offices, and the cellar of Master Bartholomew's house in Olde England. Doug Paraschuk has done an excellent job of enabling several location/time periods to exist at once.

The actors deserve a lot of credit, also, especially Christine MacInnes as Kath/Kate, and Yves Mercier as Johnson, the donation-soliciting Mormon ("could you spare, perhaps 10 kilos of plutonium, sir, to help blow up all the communists?")

This play will enlighten you, make you think, and make you laugh more than any movie in town. Add to this the fact that it's nice and close by at the Kaasa and that the cost is reasonable, and you have no more excuses.



Fellow plutonium plant workers help Jack Pleasance (Robert Astle) out of nuclear trouble.

Kolendhov booms melodramatically.

Surprisingly, the dreaded Kirbys join the friendlier cameo roles in overshadowing the Sycamore family. Beth Dunbar is particularly funny as Mrs. Kirby, exuding the dry humour of which the sweet Sycamores need a good strong dose.

The director, Laurie Cain, failed to bring out the humour of the script and the

zaniness of the characters. She also did not allow the natural, quick pace to develop, and some elementary blotching errors were made.

Although *You Can't Take It With You* increases in interest and pace as more characters get involved, the entire production is uneven and fails to live up to the vivacious script.

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