



l-r: Frans Rijnbout, Mary-ellen McLean, Christian Murray, Shelley Wallace, horizontal: Sherry-Lee Hunter.

Physical Theatre

By ELLEN REYNOLDS & BETH CUMMING

Preamble is a low-key description of the energetic opening skit of the comedy mime, Jest in Time Theatre.

The five member troupe put on an entertaining one hour matinee and a ninety minute evening performance at the Dunn Theatre on Saturday January 10.

The nine skits which made up the matinee were a showcase of talent in mime and comedy acting requiring incredible flexibility and physical manipulation. With few props and not much dialogue, the meaning of 'physical theatre' came to life during the fast paced hour. At one point in the

'preamble', Mary-ellen bounced Christian across the sage like a basketball, and I half expected her to pick him up and take a shot at a basket. Their attention to detail made even a simple idea amusing.

In 'Autumn' an elderly couple come inching across the stage, one pushing the other in a wheel chair and trading places half way.

The matinee was geared more for children than the evening performance but it was entertainment for any age.

One skit we thought was questionable was 'Samurai' about a couple of Japanese Samurai exercising their egos. The questionable part was the parody of Japanese, which was a mixture of some Japanese words with gibberish. Sherry-Lee Hunter explains it isn't meant to offend anyone and they have performed it in front of a Japanese audience who "loved it". Hunter says they have had a similar response before about 'Samurai' but only from "uptight whites", so she's not worried.

Saturday's show was Halifax's first glimpse of Jest in Time with new members Frans Rijnbout and Shelly Wallace. Both are from the Celebration Theatre Ensemble in Maine which just disbanded.

Jest in Time started out in 1983 as a trio after Sherry-Lee met Mary Ellen and Christian at a mime workshop and saw their potential. When they performed that year at St. Mary's Lunch With Art series, their pieces were very experimental, using unusual props like soap bubbles and empty shoes that walked. Also Sherry-Lee seemed more prominent. The present Jest in Time is very much an ensemble of equal talents. Everyone takes part in creating and directing. There is more emphasis on characters that are down-to-earth but have a vaudevillian sense of exaggeration

Government support has been minimal but the moral support shown by a standing ovation Saturday night is enthusiastic and growing. They are becoming well known across Canada for their comedy-mime but Hunter says "the fresh east coast feeling" so called by B.C. audiences is somewhat condescending. "They see us as a have-not province while for talented people we are a have province."

Jest in Time is proving that N.S. need not only be a showcase for outside talent but has a talented community to develop here. They are a touring troupe but Hunter says they also want to nurture the local community. Hunter is setting up workshops through the Halifax Dance Association hoping to inspire perhaps a youth mime group. "One major problem" she says "is that Halifax doesn't have many places to perform."

Jest in Time are going on tour across Canada again and have hopes for a U.S. and European tour in the near future. The 1988 World Fair in Australia is also in their sights. "As for Halifax," says Hunter, "we'll be back again in the spring."

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