

When you comin back to Corbett?

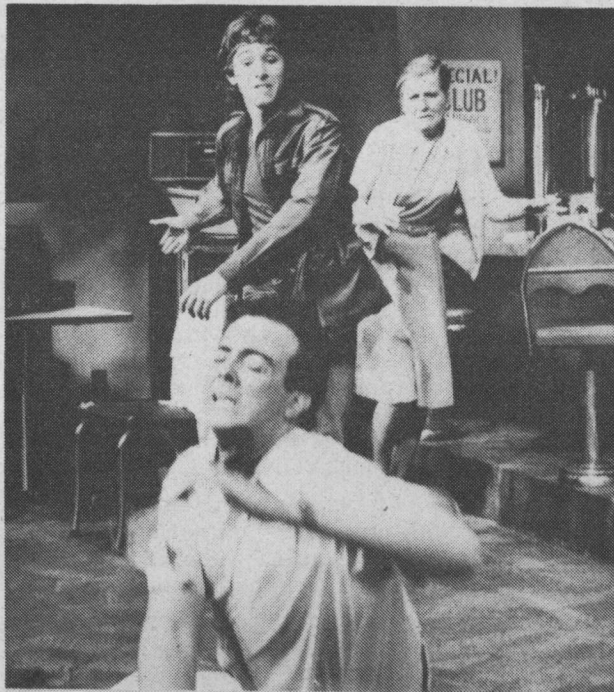
It's six o'clock Sunday morning in a small off-road diner. It's southern New Mexico. It's the end of the sixties. As the lights go up Stephen (Red Ryder) is waiting for his graveyard shift to end. A girl named Angel, runs into the small diner to start the day shift. This is how Mark Medoff's *When You Comin' Back Red Ryder?* begins. The Studio Theatre season opener is a success in a number of ways.

Plays with themes concentrating on those turbulent and still tangled years at the end of the hope-filled sixties have an immediate attraction. *Red Ryder* touches on most of the issues and disillusion that brought the generation of love to its knees. There are no more heroes. Somewhere through the years people forgot or rejected the values of the hero together with the hero.

Mark Medoff's play says things that have been better said in other places, but retains the interest of the audience through the combination of clever text, thriller action and fine acting. It is the acting that usually makes or breaks such extremely verbal and action packed plays as *Red Ryder*.

There are six characters who dominate the action and another two who add twists to the thrust of the action. Life teaches some hard lessons and creates some very strange products: products like Angel or Stephen or Teddy. Stephen York plays Teddy, the intelligent and perverse young man who upsets and terrifies the customers and occupants of the diner. He manages to convey menace, but has some difficulty in sustaining the inner conformity of the character's anger and amorality.

The difficulty in maintaining a tight characterization that has no lapses in its integrity is also a problem for the other young actors. Gerard Lepage, (Stephen



Richard (Kelly Henderek) cowers beneath the blows of Teddy (Stephen York). Richard's wife, Clarisse (Laurie Blakeman), looks on.

alias Red Ryder) conveys the sensitive appeal of his character, but lacked some of the quality of the runt who would wear a tattoo like 'Born Dead' on his arm. Lepage was at his best when reacting to another character, or in revealing the admiration that he feels for Teddy despite the fear that Teddy inflicts on all the

characters.

Kelly Henderek and Laurie Blakeman play a couple who stop at the diner for a quick breakfast that soon turns into a traumatic personal experience for themselves and their relationship. As Richard, Henderek captured very well the breezy self confidence of a successful, supposedly well-adjusted business man. When the self confidence begins to be destroyed by Teddy, Henderek plays his character's falling apart with a strident, fear-filled performance. Laurie Blakeman's Clarisse explodes as a character in the second half of the play. Her performance is right on at times; harrowing in its interpretation.

The most sustained and impassioned performance was Michele Goodger's Angel. As the overweight, mild, ingenuous waitress and cook, Goodger provides some of the most moving moments. One realizes that while there are wolves like Teddy in the world there are also lambs.

The presence and voice of Bill Meilen as Lyle contributes experience and professionalism to a play whose ultimate success is determined by its good points out shining its bad points.

All the elements of a first class play are evident in this production. The set is excellent and the lighting very effectively and minimally utilized. Production decisions (the use of music, real props, etc.) subtly advance the themes of the play. The blocking is very tight, in keeping with these other technically tight aspects of the production. A word should be mentioned about the program notes which enlighten the play's theme of heroes and the lack of heroes. They are very interesting additions to the overall effect. And the overall effect is very entertaining; go and see the production which plays at Corbett hall until this Saturday, October 27.

There's no bard like the old bard

Theater review by Lasha Seniuk

It is indeed a joy to see a traditional performance of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. The puritans of the world will agree that there is enough updating of Elizabethan drama. Shakespeare's plays were intended, and certainly written, to be enjoyed on their own merit. The plots are universal and modernizing them only proves to somehow dampen the atmosphere and destroy the magic that Shakespeare so painfully created. Henry Woolf, the director of *Twelfth Night*, certainly reflected this opinion, and allowed the third year Bachelor of Fine Arts students to feel the pains

and joys of a true Shakespearian performance.

The play was well paced, energetic and extremely well cast. It moved with ease, and the audience, a packed house, was dazzled and caught in the magic that only the stage can create.

However, there were some aspects of this performance of *Twelfth Night* that were rather puzzling.

Firstly, there were two added scenes, one depicting a ship voyage and the other a hypothetical meeting of two of the characters. Although these scenes were very charming and witty, they were

unnecessary and tended to confuse the setting. One could not tell if Viola (Kathy Neilsen) happened to meet up with Antonio (Michael Vander Lee) in the deep woods, or near the town, or even when this scene took place. Perhaps the fact that there was no set, only a platform, created a slight confusion of atmosphere. This could have been prevented by a sound effect or light change clarifying which scenes were indoors and which weren't; possibly the sound of birds or crickets, or perhaps a moonlight effect. As with many Shakespearian plays, the plot revolves around the mistaken identity of the characters, and in this regard there must be as much clarity as is possible.

There was one scene between Malvolio (Dugald Nasmith) and Feste the Jester (Paul Gross) that tended to stick in the mind. Malvolio, the only character in the play that is not involved in the joke of the plot, later becomes the joke. His mistaken intentions lead him to be arrested as a madman. The Jester, who has contributed to the misconceptions against Malvolio goes to visit him posing as a judge. This scene takes place with Malvolio far above Feste on a sort of balcony. Consequently they both delivered their speeches in an oblivious way directed towards the audience. If the positions were reversed and the tormentor was far above looking down on the tormented, the visual effect would have been much more pointed.

Hamming is not necessary in Shakespeare and the greatest example of this was Sir Andrew Aguecheek (Alan Penty). He was played as extremely gay, which is fun for a while, but the joke depletes later on (he even had yellow bows in his hair). However, the actor himself played a very versatile role. He was energetic, well paced and very enjoyable.

Sir Toby Belch (Francis Damber), Malvolio, the Jester and Orsino (Neil Foster) were excellent. Francis Damber played the perfect drunken, scheming slob. It is very difficult to play a drunk but Francis Damber made it look simple. He was delivered extremely well and had a strong stage presence. He perfectly complimented Malvolio who played the ideal scape goat. Malvolio can be a role that tends to be hammed but Dugald Nasmith rose above this stereotype and gave a refreshing performance. The Jester and Orsino foiled each other beautifully. Neil Foster's strong dramatic speeches weaved themselves charmingly through Paul Gross' supreme and versatile buffoonery.

And saving the best to last, Kathy Neilsen as Viola was superb. From the moment she entered until the time she left, she gave an air of "Saint Joan." She was young, fresh, well delivered, flexible and stern. As she went into her dramatic scenes the audience was in her power. During her moments of comedy she was light and charming. Neilsen is an inspiring performer, and if she were ever to play Saint Joan, you could bet that you would find me front row center.

All in all it was an enjoyable performance with few flaws. It was very refreshing to be allowed to enjoy Shakespeare for what it is. Bravo B.F.A. students for showing what they're made of rather than hiding behind updated trivia!

Too bad they were passin thru

Concert review by Alan Lucykfassal

The Heath Brothers were in town Friday and Saturday night at the Centennial Library Theatre. Jimmy Heath on Tenor, soprano sax and flute, Percy Heath on bass, Stanley Cowell on piano, Tony Purrone on guitar, and Keith Copeland on drums performed some of the most entertaining, highly musical and accessible jazz you could ever hope to hear.

Each member of the group is a monster on his instrument; mixing a well versed history of jazz tradition with modern styles and playing the resultant mix with beautiful tones. Each night they performed standards, but it was when they performed Jimmy Heath's compositions that the group really jelled and became extra special.

Jimmy Heath has a very personal compositional style that is most appealing, almost commercial, but displaying an individuality and depth that is often lacking in more commercial music. The songs are clearly written and arranged for this group. Heath's use of counterpoint between different groups of instruments was most effective. Many of the numbers performed are from their two albums on Columbia Records, *Passin Thru* and *In Motion*, but if the albums seem a bit restrained, the songs are most memorable when heard live.

There were no ego trips in this band, with everyone getting plenty of solo space. Percy Heath played two numbers and one of his compositions featured his baby bass. If, after 20 years of playing with the Modern Jazz Quartet, you don't think Percy has impeccable credentials, than no one does.

Stanley Cowell performed a piano solo each night, interspersing stride with his own modern percussive style. His comping behind the other band

Tony Purrone is a new name to most, but he is a most impressive guitar player. He has been listening to Charlie Christian, Wes Montgomery and George Benson, but he has certainly remained truer to the jazz tradition than someone like Benson. With a beautiful rich tone, exciting solos and fine sense of rhythm, he was consistently one of the highlights of the show.

You couldn't ask for a finer rhythm section, and

Keith Copeland kept it hot with an economic style which gave the group a nice, relaxed sound. That leaves Jimmy Heath who is sort of the leader of the group. He has an appealing, gorgeous sound on his instruments and he plays with great confidence; his solos exciting in the way that they developed logically into a number of high points.

The group had a good time on stage and their good nature rubbed off on the audience. Jimmy and Percy ribbed each other while spurring on members of the band. The Heath Brothers are a fine band, and the compositional and solo strength and professionalism of the band made their performances memorable.

However, one thing must be said about the poor turnout for the first night's performance. I trust that



were it not for Allan Kellog's favorable review in the Saturday edition of the *Journal*, then Saturday evening's turnout would also have been poor. If we wish to continue listening to live music of this high calibre in Edmonton, then it must be supported. After all, that's where the magic is.