

# Play Deemed Pretentious

by Ron Norman

"Student" plays are incredibly difficult to evaluate, primarily because one doesn't expect them to be on a level comparable to professional productions, yet, at the same time one looks for that degree of professionalism that essence. Student productions are vehicles by which students may become familiar and, hopefully, adept with all the facets of the theatre.

Friday night I witnessed the first theatre department production of the fall term, "Hedda Gabler" in the Sir James Dunn Theatre. This play aroused mixed emotions within me as well as, I am sure, within others.

The play, written by Henrik Ibsen and set in Norway during the 1890's, revolves around a beautiful and romantic, yet very sterile young woman. "Sterile" in that she is caught between the ideals of her social class in which she does not believe, and her real emotions which she cannot accept. A set of circumstances arise which become overly oppressive and she eventually takes her own life.

Mary Vingoe plays this beautiful woman, Hedda Gabler, and she plays it quite well too - if for no other reason than because Ms. Vingoe is so physically imposing, just as Hedda is so personally imposing. This is not to say that Ms. Vingoe's contribution to the role terminates with the physical. Her portrayal of Hedda is harmonious with the fur-trimmed red velvet nightgown which Hedda wears when she is first introduced into the play. The nightgown and Ms. Vingoe both are suitably pretentious. I should also add that the movement of the eyes by Ms. Vingoe was a nice bit of work casting the illusion of Hedda looking through her antagonists or right past them.

The other female characters were "Miss Juliana" (Dale Pethick), "Mrs.



Mary Vingoe as Hedda Gabler

Photo by: Bill Jensen

Elvsted" (Patricia Vanstone), and "Bertha" (Coleen Logan). The character of Mrs. Elvsted was much less commanding than Hedda and Ms. Vanstone performed well enough to establish the contrast between Mrs. Elvsted and Hedda.

My only criticism lay in the portrayal of Hedda and Mrs. Elvsted, and the male roles of George Tesman (Jonathan McKenzie) and Judge Brack (Ian Carkner). These roles seemed to have been pushed to the point of stereotypes and no further. There is nothing wrong with stereotypes if they are played effectively and ingeniously. However the roles of these four characters were gaudy to the brink of overstylization. Hedda, as I have said,

does not really appear to be as bad as the others simply because the character of Hedda is somewhat pretentious. The other three roles however were overplayed.

I must admit that Ibsen is difficult for professionals let alone theatre students. It should also be noted that Ibsen traditionally created the stronger more dynamic roles for his women, often leaving the male characters flat and uneven. This, however, cannot excuse certain faults. The role of Tesman, played by Mr. McKenzie, was not well done. The lilting effect of his voice (someone behind me thought it a bad attempt at a Norwegian accent - I disagree) was a damaging device, and some of the

blame for this must lie with the director, Alan Andrews who it seems authorized its use. The effect of this patterned voice was much the same as running fingers along a chalkboard, and it appeared to be so anile that many of the better qualities of Tesman were marred. I shall reiterate that Mr. McKenzie's part was a difficult one but I cannot help but feel the role would not have detracted from the play had it been performed in a more normal, even voice.

The "Judge" too was a stereotype - tall, good-looking, well-spoken, well-dressed - however, Ian Carkner did enjoy the advantage of some fine lines

(something Mr. McKenzie's role lacked). Eilert Lorborg was played well by Michael Hovey. He did not overplay the role, but rather fit into it comfortably. Mr. Hovey proved to be a joy to watch.

The mechanics of the play seemed to have gone smoothly. The lighting was beautiful and the setting was quaint and slick. The backdrop however, was perhaps typical of my reaction to the play, namely I did not know how to react. "Hedda Gabler" played only a four night run and it is unfortunate if you miss it.

The next student play is entitled "Insect Comedy", which will run in the Arts Centre Dec. 5th to 8th.

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# Perth County Praise

by Tom Clahane

It seems that every time I write a review for one of Charlie Zed's productions (with the one exception of last year's VALDY concert), the major problem I encountered is coming up with able superlatives to describe the performance. This is probably due to the fact that quality, and only quality is the chief requisite used in booking these acts. Paul Horn, Lester Flatt and last Friday night, the return of

Perth County Conspiracy (does not exist).

Perth County were here last year for a concert in the McGinnes room and were excellent. Putting them in the Cohn was all that was really needed to peak that performance. With the return of Cedric Smith to the performing tour no more could be asked than to sit down and experience what was more than a concert.

Smith, the guiding light since the formation of the group, is a master of mime and theatre, and the performance was just that. A collection of scenes and sequences, stories and characterizations, all distinctly Canadian and all devoid of what has come to be determined hype. The music is honest, and for lack of a better word, PURE.

I get the impression that Perth County has succeeded in doing what Valdy has

attempted. They are singing of the simple life, of the rural life, but with a intelligent and concerned realization of that other world of development and progress that threatens them and in the long run, threatens us as well. They are socially aware of the problems confronting them, of the hypocrisy of government, the greed of business, and they express it in a manner that comes across as honest and unpretentious. They also reach out on a personal level, a one to one relationship, a plea for understanding.

The song that impressed me most perhaps sums up the entire performance, "What You Give Is What You Get". Perth County gave up there on stage, and from the audience's reaction, and theirs, I'd say that they got back. It's a mutual thing!



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