

Frustration and confusion

Mirror Game mirrors life

by Sally Teodoro

Mirror Game
by David Foon

David Foon's *Mirror Game* opened at the Young People's Theatre on Wednesday February 27. This expose delved into the psychological and physical abuse within the family, with its main focus on the lives of four teenagers—Bob, Maggie, Sara and Luke.

Each character has a specific problem, stemmed from a history of abuse, both verbal and physical.

The characters were typical of teenagers of our day. Bob was your average "nice-guy", the type of guy whom you could confide in, but never, absolutely never date.

Bob suffers from an unrequited love for Sara, who is portrayed as an extremely well-liked girl, especially by the opposite sex. Unfortunately for Bob, Sara is dating Luke, the school jock and all around nice guy on the surface.

To complete this picture, we have Maggie, who is seen as the typically perfect student, student president, environmentally aware and basically your girl next door.

These of course, are the qualities that are seen on the surface. As the play progresses, the



Alison Sealy-Smith (Maggie) and Oliver Dennis (Bob), star in *Mirror Game*, a play by David Foon. The play focuses on the lives of four teenagers and

the experiences which they survive. Foon uses this theatrical vehicle to make us aware of the emotional and physical abuses prevalent in our society.

character's innermost secrets are shared with the audience. This is done quite effectively.

Interspersed between scenes of the teenagers and their relationships are vignettes of their home life. The parents are seen as shadowy, silhouette figures,

that come to us behind a screen. This interesting special effect forces the audience to connect the home life with the personalities and behavior patterns the kids have.

The theme of abuse is obviously not an original one.

When *Mirror Game* first started, I felt like I was watching Degrassi High on stage. The only difference was that *Mirror Game* took longer than thirty minutes to resolve their problems and many of them remained unresolved.

Although the theme of abuse is a serious topic, I left frustrated and confused.

The reason for my frustration and confusion was probably due to the way Sara is performed by Deborah Drakeford. Sara is seen as a very popular girl, who is dating the perfect guy, however, in the relationship, Sara is physically abused by her boyfriend. Although Drakeford is convincing enough in her portrayal of Sara, considering the difficult role she is playing, I found myself angry with Sara for staying with Luke. No one can forgive Luke for what he did to her, but she was the one that I got mad at.

Luke does eventually get what he deserves, especially when he tries his moves on Maggie. What she does to him has to be one of the highlights of the entire play.

My sense of frustration and confusion is exactly what Foon wants us to feel. This play leaves a message for anyone caught up in their own personal mirror game.

David Foon uses *Mirror Game* to bring the awareness of abuse into the lives of teenagers and their parents. Although some of the issues remain unresolved, Foon gets his point across. The play runs until March 10.

The master returns with a vengeance

by Ron Howe

Septuagenarian Stew
Charles Bukowski
Black Sparrow Press/Firefly Books

The master returns with a vengeance.

Unlike 90 per cent of artists, success has not spoiled or softened the self-described "low-life poet", alcoholic/horse player/writer/traveller/adventurer/ex-postman Charles F. Bukowski.

Quite likely the most talented writer on earth, at the ripe age of seventy, he offers no compromise, no apologies, no bull-shit, just the straight ahead prophetic prose and poems his growing disciples have come to expect through thirty years of, and about thirty-five books of, published works.

Bukowski, for years, wrote about his drunken, poverty assumed existence in skid row rooming houses until his screenplay for *Barfly* finally gained him the belated recognition and financial rewards, he deserved. This was, I guess, about five years ago, after almost half a century of scraping out an existence.

This success however, unlike most animals in captivity has not spoiled or defeated him. He writes with the same degree of contempt, misanthropy, unconventionality, slightly left political ramblings he always has.

Septuagenarian Stew is just that. At seventy Bukowski reflects upon his legendary life, beginning with some childhood impressions and madness during the Depression and finishing with his present life.

The format mixes poetry and short stories, with about three or four poems between each of the twenty stories, some having a degree of continuity, some not.



Charles Bukowski, born in Andernach Germany in 1920, and arriving in America at the age of three is alive and well and as relevant as ever.

Since it would take me considerable time to review each of the poems

and since I'm not the biggest fan of poetry (except Bukowski's, of course) I will concentrate on the format I think he has mastered better than anyone else, the short story.

Reading Bukowski is not just a past time or diversion from complacency. You find yourself repeating certain lines over and over as you walk through the slush in worn out sneakers looking for discarded cigarette butts. Or sitting inside your four walls (give a man four walls and he can do anything he wants) wondering where your next meal will come from. You pick up a book and begin reading stories you've read hundreds of times and it makes you feel a little better, that pain exists and everybody is crazy; just find a way to deal with it and go from there. For Bukowski, chronic alcoholism is what he deals with, or how he deals.

This man has certainly helped me over some bad times, made it all

seem almost laughable, when it gets so ridiculous... the whole brutality of it all.

Okay, I realize I can't write about each and every story, as much as I would like to. (... as much as I analyse and incorporate them into some sort of meaning in my own life.)

One of the implicit things in Bukowski's writing is that we're all doomed and by taking that as a given we can somehow, MAYBE, alter the outcome or at least deal with the pain of the reality.

By not buying into the dream may well be the only way we can truly achieve it. I would also mention that Bukowski does not just appeal to the marginalized. Obviously they don't have the money to support a living legend. It only took the snooty literary establishment about thirty years to realize the man's importance.

As he has proven to me once again, Charles Bukowski is a master

of the short story, and that he's alive after sucking back the booze so heavily for so long is a sheer victory of determination in itself. I certainly hope he fulfills his prophecy of living to eighty and look forward to any accessible morsel of literature he has written, past, present and future. To finish off, I will cite a quote from a poem entitled "Gold in your eye" (p.298) about him getting a Gold Card which proves to his many detractors that he never lost his talent or his credibility.

this poem is for those that think that a man can only be a creative genius at the very edge even though they never had the guts to try it.

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