

A REVIEW

"THE BOYFRIEND" A HIT

By MIKE WARREN

In an endeavour to alleviate the pangs of cultural starvation in Halifax, D.G.D.S. presented an admirable production of Sandy Wilson's "The Boyfriend" before crowded houses, who demanded and received gay diversion to lighten the darkness of their winter spirits, or dispel their mid-term blues.

This show, designed within the conventions of the musical of the twenties — the Charlston for the young and the Waltz for the middle-aged, the unfortunate rich who can enjoy their money, the French as French as only the English can imagine them, the sad ending to the second act, the happy conclusion with multiple engagements—reveals how far the musical has moved as an art form, when it is compared with the contemporary proletarian musicals, such as "Guys and Dolls," and "West Side Story." However, such developments often appear to be of doubtful virtue if Sandy Wilson's backward look is true.

The play itself gave a wide opportunity for the members of the cast to excel, and they took their opportunities. Maura Morton's performance as the poor little-rich-girl was notable for its gentleness and poignancy amid the revelry of the rest of the cast, and she was admirable partner, particularly in their duets, by Duncan Murray as the Oxford undergraduate who rusticated himself prior to examinations. This central plot, if so serious a word may be used for it, retained the attention of the audience, in spite of the more obvious restraint of the activities of the less restrained members of the cast. Of the Bright

Young Things, the palm must be given to Ruth MacKenzie who stood out among the supporting cast by virtue of the combination of grace and gaiety in her dancing, and her poignancy in behavior in which she eschewed all the obvious faults of excessive boisterousness and vulgarity. Ken Clark's previous experience in British roles gave him poise and just sufficient dignity as a worthy veteran of Paris on Armistice Day his elegance was notable, especially in his dancing with Penelope Stanbury who, as Madame Dubonnet, acted and sang a difficult role with charm and humour.

It was, however, in these sequences that the director appeared to have missed an opportunity. The essence of the scenes between Mr. Brown and Madame Dubonnet lies in the nostalgic atmosphere which they project, especially in the first act waltz, "Fancy Forgetting." In seeing the show as a "spoof"—is it possible to render "pashs" by "spoof"? "Initiation" surely is more exact—the production tended to reveal the twenties as a period when moronic girls twittered and postured incessantly, rather than a period with some curious affectations, just as the Fifties will be characterized in some way in later years; surely the original aim was

to re-create an atmosphere of the twenties with its manners and costumes?

The tendency among one or two members of the cast towards exaggerated posturing frequently suggested the mannerings of a post-Monroe, post-Bardot era, not the innocent coy gaiety of perfect young ladies wearing those delightful dresses which surely emphasized the wearer's sexuality by the theoretical endeavour to conceal it. Certainly the origins of this musical would suggest that it was an attempt to create a British musical which would avoid the masculine bad taste of South Pacific and the slangy realism of "Guys and Dolls", and replace them by gentler emotions and an opportunity for romantic, escapism, hinting of a past which was perhaps absurd, but absurd in a pretty way.

Still, what the production may have lacked in emotional tenderness was compensated by the sheer energy and enthusiasm with which the whole cast attacked the melodies. Frank Cappel's Lord Brockhurst — the "typical" Englishman abroad — was lacking in delicacy but his singing of "It's never too late" with his pert, gerontophile acquaintance Colette Young was a high point in the third act. In fact,

NEW DAAC HAS GOOD PLANS

ATHLETIC PROGRAM TO BE IMPROVED

If the Athletic Board and the DAAC can carry out all they have planned for next year, Dalhousie male students are in for a tremendous athletic program.

The Gazette attended the Board meeting last week and some of the ideas brought up for consideration were:

- (1) Develop the Junior Varsity teams to give assistance to the varsity squads;
- (2) Give aid to varsity athletes in the form of jobs around the campus and free residence in season;
- (3) Organize a freshman league to aid the varsity teams and to acquaint the frosh with athletics on campus;
- (4) Expand the present interfac program.

Regarding Point No. 1, the only sport in which there was sufficient interest to have a JV team last year was football. In basketball there were barely enough players to form a varsity quintet. The hockey team had sufficient turnouts to have a JV "farm club" but The Gazette feels that the present interfac system does a good job of supplying players for the varsity when Coach Dargie feels like "pulling up" a player or two for the team. An advantage of JV in any sport would be to have players waiting to make the "big leap" to senior varsity competition. Then

the varsity participants would not be able to take their jobs for granted and would have to put out their best at all times in order to remain on the Varsity roster.

Aid to student athletes is a topic that has been hashed over time and time again. This would be a great asset to the athletic program, we feel. It would be a stimulus for top athletes to come to the university but one thing should be taken into consideration. Academic standing cannot be thrown aside and forgotten. These athletes must have the scholastic standing and ability to remain in university. When a student is in the upper bracket athletically and average academically he could receive aid.

Another type of assistance for student-athletes would be free housing in season. For instance, house the athletes in residence (out-of-town athletes, that is) and during their particular season they could have their room and board free. During the remainder of the school term they would have to pay the same fees as everyone else.

Another mode of student aid would be jobs around campus. For example, the new Men's Residence will require monitors on each of the floors of the building. This is the way other student residences operate and it can be taken for granted that our residence will do the same. The older athletes on campus could be invited to hold these positions which would probably offer either free room and board or a small salary. Other types of jobs on campus would be waiting on tables in the new dining room, selling programs at football games and other athletic functions, etc.

The third point on the Athletic Board "platform" is the freshman athletic program. The frosh are not well acquainted with athletics on campus but, if during initiation the frosh were better introduced to sports at Dal, a special program in athletics might not be necessary.

Finally the interfac program needs a change. There are some interfac sports that do not draw participants as well as they might. One example would be Cross-Country. Last year this event drew 6 participants, all from Arts and Science. We feel that this could be dropped and very few students would shed tears. In its place could be put interfac Track and Field. On campus are many T&F enthusiasts who would gladly get out to aid their faculty in piling up points for the interfac trophy. This event could be held on two days.

On one day could be the track events, these would be held on a day in the fall when interfac football leaves the field free. On another day the field events could be held. We feel this would draw more fans than the cross country.

Another sport that could be introduced is interfac softball. The season could be at the same time as the interfac football and could be held during the same hours. The only problem would be location but we feel that a compromise might be able to be made with Kings for the use of their field seeing that they use our rink for hockey. The players participating in the softball league would be prohibited from playing football and vice versa. There are some faculties that could-

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"The Boyfriend" took us back to the 1920's and gave us some wonderful views of the years' behind. (Photo by Acker)

the last act was notable not only for John Chamber's colorful setting, but also for the delightful range of costumes in which the whole company appeared, to provide the contrast with the simple black and white of the principals' clothes. In this act particularly the chorus excelled itself, dancing with a disciplined verve which was characteristic of their whole performance; so much of the charm of this piece lies in the dancing, since the plot is so tenuous, and the chorus and their choreographer deserve

high praise, supported as they were by an orchestra which entered wholeheartedly into the spirit of the performance.

Since this is the third musical comedy that DGDS has staged with apparent success—I judge the first two by heresy—I am not surprised that those ghosts from a Victorian nightmare, Gilbert and Sullivan, may be laid to rest forever, and that DGDS may continue to perform in the one theatrical tradition in which even Europe acknowledges North American mastery?