

Cast crown jewel of *Albertine*

Albertine in Five Times
Northern Light Theatre
til Oct. 5

review by J. Keene

Do you ever feel vaguely dissatisfied with 'new' theatre — too much image and too little impact? Then, for you, Tarragon Theatre's touring production of 'Albertine in Five Times' will be an uncommon luxury.

The play is Michel Tremblay's most recently produced work, and it concerns his most common theme: the everyday lives of Quebecois women. Tremblay illustrates, once again, that a male writer can reach deep into the soul of women and produce a voice that is distinct and, at times, deeply tragic.

As the play begins, Albertine at 70, has just arrived at a home for the aged. Here, she confronts her memories that materialize as four other actresses represent Albertine from the ages of 30 to 60. Albertine's sister, Madeleine, plays confidante to each.

Albertine is a simple woman of little education and low economic status. Yet her tragedy is consummate, for it is the tragedy of a wasted life. As each Albertine speaks, her life's puzzle is reassembled. But there is no solution to the puzzle; there is no catharsis allowed. There is only a sense of withering and the "impotence of her rage."

It is a relentless piece of theatre. Tarragon's production does not melt in your mouth; it sticks in your throat as if you'd swallowed a ton ball.

'Albertine in Five Times' is directed and

co-translated by Bill Glasco, the founding artistic director of Toronto's Tarragon Theatre. His direction is subtle but precise, and he displays a pure and reverential understanding of Tremblay's words. The emotional interplay of the six women reveals the nuances of fine subtlety acting. Their physical interplay is efficient and meaningful.

Glasco makes good use of a spare set and lighting design. The scene consists of chairs (in various forms), and an imagistic background. The set is evocative, changing with the mood of the play — sometimes soothing, at other times, menacing.

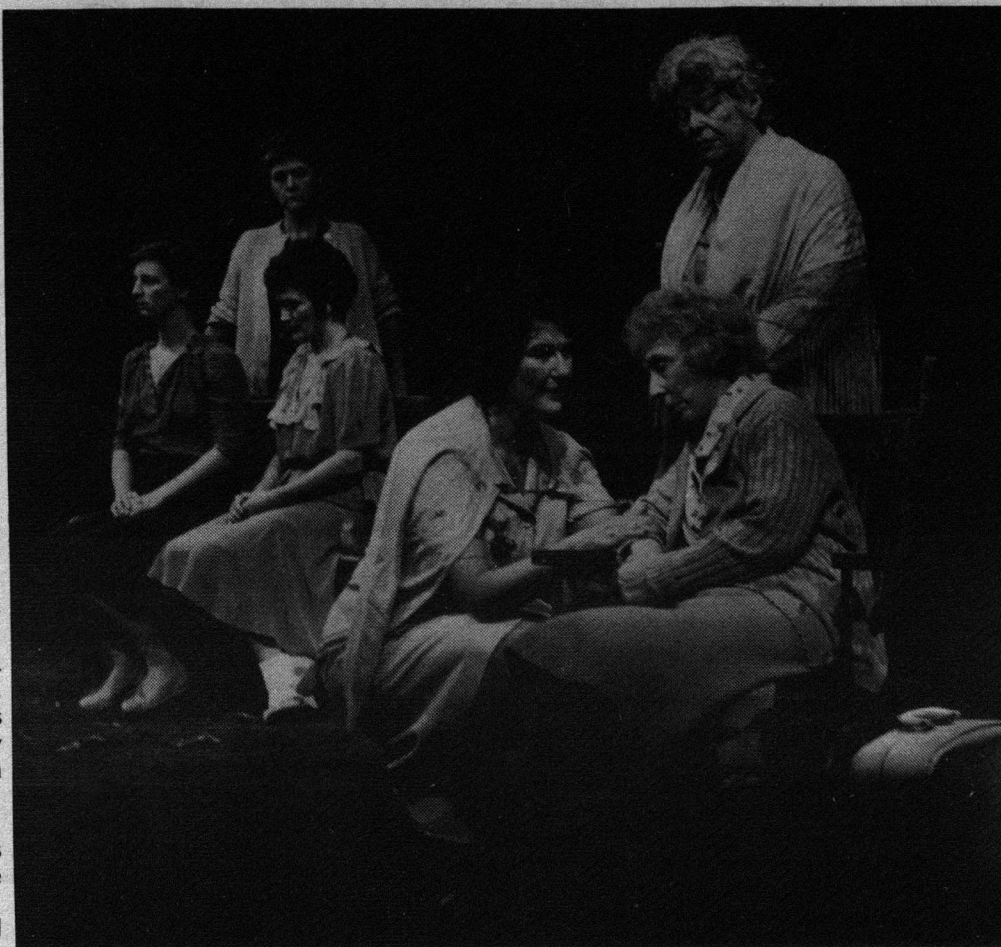
The cast of 'Albertine in Five Times' however, is the production's crown jewel. The six actresses comprise some of Canada's best talent. They are: Diana Belshaw, Joy Coghill, Clare Coulter, Susan Coyne, Patricia Hamilton, and Doris Petrie.

To single out one or two performances is primarily a matter of degree. Each actress has an apparent respect for her art, and all are fascinating to watch.

Clare Coulter, Albertine at 40, is consumed by fury, and always seems about to explode. But still she stays self-contained. Her presence is forceful, and, at times, she takes unequivocal command of the stage.

Also, Joy Coghill must be mentioned for her portrayal of Albertine at 60. In her narcotic-induced haze, she is poignant and unforgiving. Her voice, above all the Albertines, cries out with the true poetry of her own tragedy.

Northern Light Theatre presents 'Albertine in Five Times' at the Kaasa Theatre until October 5.



The five faces of Albertine

photo by Nir Bareket

Live line on

by Philip Eckert

"Good afternoon, Live-Line", says operator John Armstrong into the telephone receiver. This caller wants the times for the Roger Whittaker performances at the Jubilee Auditorium. Armstrong calls up the appropriate file on the computer, finds the times, and the satisfied customer is on his way.

The Live-Line, a free arts and entertainment information service with live operators, opened its lines on June 16th. It provides info on just about any activity going on in Edmonton — theatre, nightspots, art exhibitions, concerts, etc. The dream of the Live-Line (424-LIVE) is, according to Marketing Manager David Hull, "to become as common a number as 411."

hour period! Hull hopes that other events, such as the Fringe, will also make better use of the Live-Line next year.

One of the major reasons for the success of the Live-Line is almost certainly the live operators. "A lot of people first say, 'Oh, I thought it would be a machine'", says Armstrong. This personal touch makes it easier to find just the right event for the caller, rather than forcing him or her to wade through a barrage of data from an answering machine.

Both Hull and Armstrong see the Live-Wire as supplementary service to the other entertainment information services in the city. They foresee people reading the



While that goal may be a bit far off, the Live-Line is definitely headed in the right direction, with over one thousand and sixty-five calls received. They broke the 1000 call mark on September 16th at 12 noon — the exact moment designated as a minute of silence for peace by the United Nations! The lucky caller (Debbie Warunky) received a package of theatre tickets and other goodies.

As Hull says, "a thousand calls might not seem like much, but..." it actually is quite a notable achievement. Similar services have been tried in Ottawa and Toronto and have failed, but Edmonton's is doing well after an initially slow start in June and July.

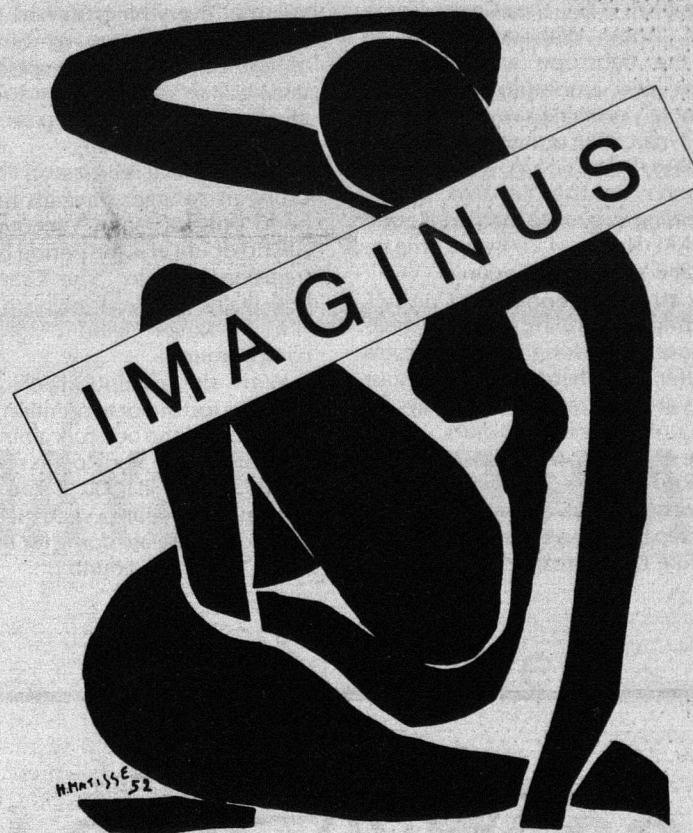
Things really began to get moving for the Live-Line at around the beginning of August, when the Heritage and Folk Festivals prompted a lot of calls. In fact, the Folk Festival listed the Live-Line as their official information number. On the Saturday of the Folk Festival, they received 96 calls in a six

"Edmonton Alive" section in the *Edmonton Journal* or calling up a radio station answering machine for the basic information on what's happening, and then calling the Live-Wire for the specific information — the times, the dates, the prices — that you need for a night on the town.

Any really interesting calls? Well, according to Hull, they did get a half-hour long-distance call from New York a little while ago. Gary Sandy (of "W.K.R.P. in Cincinnati" fame) was in Edmonton recently to act in Stage West's "The Foreigner", and his girlfriend called to find a good place for an evening out. They found her something, says Hull, but the guy who wanted a tea leaf reader and the people who called to find a good place for dim sum were out of luck.

The Live-Line is open to callers from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Friday and noon through 6 p.m. on Saturday.

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