

Spring a long time coming

by Jeff Round and Kamal Chopra
Frank Wedekind's *Spring's Awakening* was this year's first production for the Dalhousie Theatre Department. This was rather a grand undertaking in that it called for a large cast, a many-faceted stage setting and some complex technical aspects, including a revolving stage and a real rainstorm.

Wedekind was a German dramatist and actor prominent in the late 19th and early 20th century. One of his earliest dramas, *Spring's Awakening* deals with the growing awareness of adolescent sexuality and the attempts made by the youthful characters to adjust to the adult world.

On the whole the play is overly melodramatic and self-indulgent. The world these adolescent characters inhabit is a world in which adults are consistently portrayed as stiff, hollow imbeciles who mask emotion and truth in the name of morality, a world in which youth struggles against the titans in search of truth and reality. Very commendable, admittedly, yet one grows weary of grandiloquent statements coming from the mouths of 14 year olds. "Fate makes no sense!" they cry. But, "oh, pity me-see how wretched I am," is what they seem to be saying, pleased with the fine sense of their own tragedy.

The play itself reveals a number of strange dichotomies as well, straining noticeably under the stylistic tensions of the old school of realism and the newer expressionism. As a whole the play has not come to terms with its dual nature. An odd mixture of tragedy and farce, these two elements serve only to work against the overall concept.

The relationship between Moritz (James Moreira) and Melchior (Rob Finley), the two young friends around which the play revolves, was well presented, the two actors

giving a convincing, realistic portrait of their strong friendship. Wendy Magahay as the young Wendla Bergman, had an ample reserve of petulance and coyishness, while Lindsay Empringham, as her mother, touchingly communicated the anguish and remorse of Mrs. Bergman facing the truth of her daughter's pregnancy, realizing the implication of her own guilt in the matter through negligence. Suzanne Rowan, in the role of Mrs. Gabor, typified the stiff-backed, self-deceiving adult mentality, which posed the biggest threat to innocence and youthfulness.

In general the acting was spirited and imaginative, but a flaw shared by almost all (excepting Judge and Mrs. Gabor) was poor projection and general lack of clear, crisp diction. ("Words, when cut, should bleed", Mr. Shaw tells us. This should apply particularly to the speakers of words.)

The scenography, as stated, was a complex affair consisting of a number of uncomplicated sets augmented and varied with projections evoking a variety of moods and places. The only drawback was the use of a scrim downstage which alienated the audience from the intimacy that the play offered.

One particular note regarding costuming was the use of a series of amusing masks, made by Pam Hill, which were combined with book covers during a farcical scene involving a board of professors, suggesting the bookish, yet clown-like idiocy, of their behaviour.

All in all this was an interesting theatrical experiment. It is always nice to be allowed the opportunity to see such plays as these. For where else are they to be seen? Surely not at the professional theatres in the city who have a hard enough time maintaining their subscriptions on a steady diet of Neil Simon and Shaw.

Endless Moroccan sand

by Cheryl Downton

A young and near sighted student; a suave womanizing jewel thief; a hulking former protector of royalty; a finely chiseled musician; an embittered war hero; all are individuals who make up the French Foreign Legion in the first quarter of this century. They are characters in the latest epic which tries to relive (once again) the adventures of "the greatest fighting force of all time": *March or Die*.

Gene Hackman, the universal not so tough tough guy, portrays Commander William Sherman Foster, leader of the legionnaires in Morocco. Foster, named for the General Sherman, was drummed out of the American fighting ranks for 'speaking his mind'. Although he admires a certain degree of insubordination in his men, he can not and does not permit such acts to go unpunished. He is respected, loved and hated; his orders are acted upon without question.

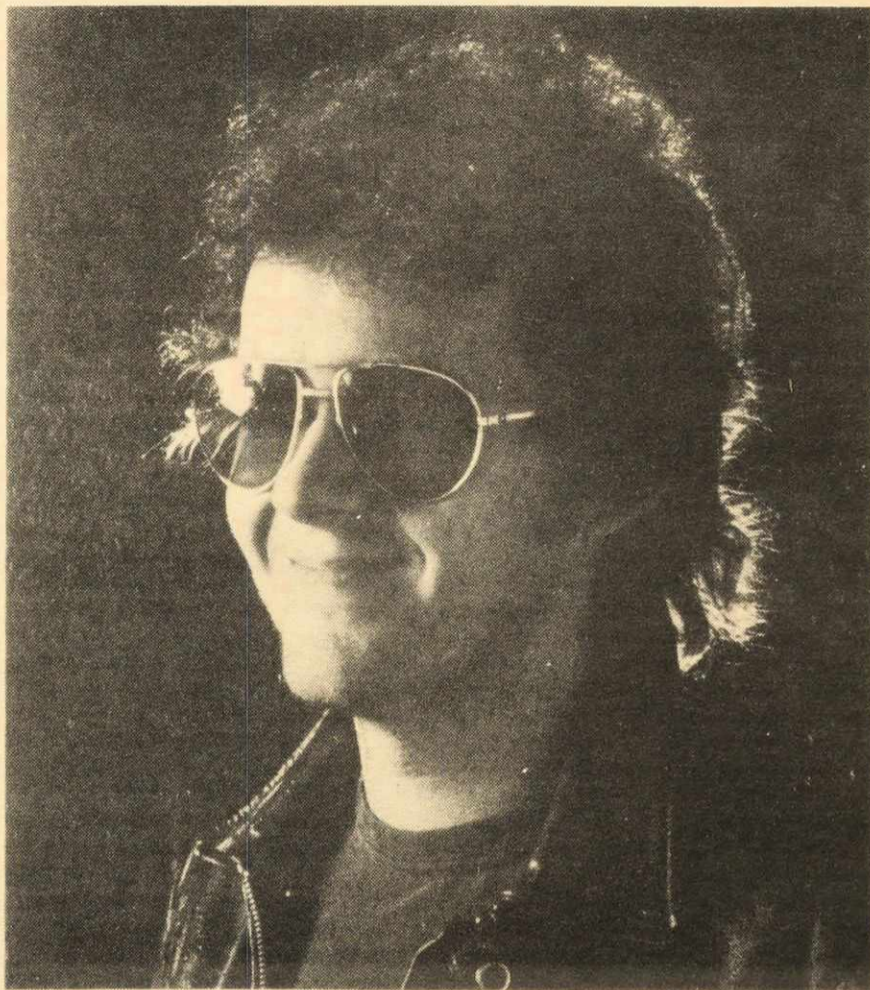
Marco, the baby blue-eyed jewel thief played by Terrance Hill, was

more or less 'press ganged' into the service. The character he portrays is somewhat akin to a swashbuckling Errol Flynn, leaping, swinging and climbing in the prescribed manner. Marco is the sceptic turned true blue legionnaire who succeeds Foster as chief.

Catherine Deneuve (of Cahnel fame) is cast as the eternal mystery woman, Simone Picard. She travels to Africa in search of her father, the curator of an historic dig who has been carried off by roving Arabs. Deneuve provides the feminine flavour for the film, but her purpose is not always clear.

Max Von Sydow is not given enough room to expand on his portrayal of the replacement curator at the Moroccan site, and Ian Holm as 'El Krim', leader of the Arab reprisal party, finds himself in the same situation.

The plot is disjointed; the acting mediocre. The movie was filmed, in part, in Morocco and the shots of endless sand and more sand do have that realistic flavour.



No more *Farmer's Song* for Murray—since the recent breakup of his backup group, The Silver Tractors, Murray McLaughlin has been appearing solely with bassist Dennis Pendrith. They will be at the Rebecca Cohn Auditorium on November 25 for a double-concert performance. Tickets available at the Cohn Box Office.

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