

Entertainment

Separate Tables

Theatre students give final performance

By MICHAEL CHRIST

The York Theatre Department is currently presenting an engaging production of Terrence Rattigan's *Separate Tables* in Atkinson Studio.

The play is in fact two separate playlets, "Table by The Window" and "Table Number Seven", linked together by a common setting in a small, slightly seedy private hotel in Bournemouth, England; the time is 1954. The main characters in both playlets are outsiders, rootless and lonely people which a self-righteous society has driven into the isolation of "Separate Tables". The hotel is also inhabited by a collection of endearing human failures who have sheltered themselves from reality behind a protective wall of illusions.

The "Table by The Window" is inhabited by John Malcom, played competently by David McCann. Malcom is a once-successful politician whose unhappy marriage drove him to drink and to committing an act of violence on his wife which ended his political career in scandal. He is now under the wing of Miss Cooper, the hotel proprietress, and their luke-warm relationship continues until the disruptive arrival of Malcom's ex-wife, Mrs.

Shankland, a domineering narcissist whom he still loves.

FURTIVE OVERTURES

At "Table Number Seven" sits another of Miss Cooper's charges, aging Major Pollock, played by Stephen Litchen. The Major is some what less than he pretends to be and has denied himself the experience of love, except for a few furtive and unfulfilling overtures made in darkened movie houses. A young spinster, portrayed by Debbie Stenard, has similarly denied herself love and has been content to hide behind her skilful neuroticism and a domineering mother — until she finds companionship and the awakening of long-submerged feelings as she becomes drawn to old Major Pollock.

Separate Tables is a realistic social drama which presents absorbing character studies in the service of both entertainment and social commentary. As a tribute to its ability to please, the play was the biggest hit of the London season of 1955, and was 'commercial' enough in its appeal to warrant being made into a successful movie with Deborah Kerr, David Niven, and



The cast of *Separate Tables* at rehearsal

Burt Lancaster. The current play is no less entertaining. Directed by Hutchinson Shandro the play far exceeds the expectations of a student production.

Third year Performance students who make up the cast are coached to treat the exercise as an opportunity to take chances which they could not professionally afford outside a university environment. This freedom to make mistakes without penalty is very important in encouraging a student to stretch himself to the fullest extent;

Separate Tables is therefore not offered to the public as a finished product, but merely as an opportunity for the young actor or actress to experience audience participation. If this sounds like an apology it clearly must be said that no apology is needed for the polished quality of the production, instead I would like to ask the Department why they insist in making a spectacle of their false humility with their "work in progress" disclaimers when they work obviously so hard to make each

production a success for all involved.

With the play set in England, Mr. Shandro took a real risk in attempting to recreate an authentic English accent with his cast. It's hard enough for young actors to grasp the character behind the lines without perverting their chances for realism with the introduction of a foreign lilt. Still and all, weighing the losses with the gains, the risk paid off and the English accents contribute greatly to the humour in the play.

The females in the play managed the most engaging performances. The casting seemed to gain a solidarity with Jeannette Lambert playing the hotel-keeper, Miss Cooper, and her personality pervaded every corner of what was obviously her hotel. Lisa Reitapple with her natural talents made a most decorative Narcissian and Mr. Malcom had my fullest sympathies for his difficulties with her. Harriet Applebaum was by far the audience's favourite old biddy.

CREDIBLE SETTING

In this production, a great deal of the realism in the characterization originates in the credibility of the setting. The veracity of the stage design makes it almost impossible to doubt the truthfulness of the entire theatrical illusion. Designer Craig Thomas has skilfully recreated an interior of a typical English private hotel and then, in what must be a first this year in lighting design for the Department, has proceeded to illuminate it with all due attention. Costumes, designed by Paul Harris, compliment the whole and recreate the fashions which inspired our parents when we all were just a glint in our fathers' eyes. It is a pleasure to attend a play of such noteworthy craftsmanship.

Stong play portrays anger crisply

By BOB POMERANTZ

Just over two decades ago, a young playwright named John Osborne breathed new life into the English theatre by writing "Look Back in Anger", a play which startled and shocked London audiences. Osborne's play introduced Jimmy Porter, the ultimate in angry, young men — angry at his wife, angry at his friends, but most of all, incensed by the way the 'system' works, or better, by the way the traditional British class system has ceased to work for him and many others like him.

Last week in Stong College, some fourth year theatre students and others in the theatre department attempted to recreate Osborne's work.

WORKING CLASSROOTS

The play, in effect, deals with the life and times of Jimmy Porter, a man of working class roots who has married a girl from an upper-class military milieu. Alison Porter's father is Colonel Redfern, a loyal member of the old British Empire on whom the sun never seems to set. Porter has become cynical of the old system, which he views as an anachronistic monster which works to intimidate him and derive him of his ability to lead a happy and fulfilling life. It is towards his daughter, Alison, that Porter channels the bulk of his resentment, the remainder of which he directs at his chum, Cliff Lewis, and at Helena Charles, who stands in for Alison when she returns home to Daddy to have her child.



David Nairn captured the gleamy-eyed boyish impatience and self-righteousness of Porter but never succeeded in articulating his anger and confusion. Rather, Nairn was at times mildly complacent and always overly theatrical. His mood-changes, though intended to be erratic, were inappropriate,

jumping from jealousy to joviality with a lack of timing and sensitivity.

Margaret Butterfield, playing Alison, succeeded in resembling the limp, helpless 'squirrel' that she was intended to be. However, Butterfield's rendition of the part lacked the proper facial expressions and gestures which are necessary to distinguish between resigned and dormant.

MADE OF JELLY

Douglas Barnes was good as Cliff Lewis. His slouching, lethargic movements convinced one that Barnes is made of the same 'stuff' that his character is — jelly. When he came alive in rare moments of delight or despair, Barnes conveyed the character changes realistically. However, when he 'spoke up' to Helena about her bitchy, shameful behaviour, Barnes did not succeed in releasing his heated anger to the proper degree. Rather than delineating the gut responses of inner tension and sorrow, Barnes provided Helena with a wheezing admonishment.

Amanda West Lewis was facially correct as Helena Charles. However, Lewis frequently lacked the energy needed to convincingly portray her lust-hate response to Porter. When she slapped Jimmy on the face and then proceeded to hungrily embrace him, one wondered whether she had meant to hit him or wipe the saliva off his face.

CONFUSED COLONEL

Malcolm Black quickly marched through the role of Colonel Redfern. Though his lines were professionally timed and crisply delivered, Black never took the necessary time to dwell on the confused nature of his character. Rather than illustrating an attitude of "spending time looking forward to the past", Black seemed to look forward more to the play's finish.

Anna Campioni's 'designs' were cleverly conceived. The set was accurately furnished and logically laid-out. She captured the claustrophobic feeling of the play but left room for the actors to lounge around. Her costumes were well selected and suited each character accurately.

The music and sound effects were

always on time and provided the necessary blend of jazz and church bells. The lighting was less effective. Fade-outs and black-outs were sloppily thought-out and ill-timed. In particular, the change-over in the final act from scene one to scene two was much too fast and lacked subtlety.

FOCUSED BUT NOT TIMED

For this, blame must lie with the director, David Chater. His lighting, like his actors, turned on

and off at the wrong times, and were too swift in their deliveries. However, Chater never lost sight of the play's focus and with the aid of choreographer Ellen Berman kept his characters physically in tune to each other's actions. His scenes were well blocked too, and for this Chater deserves credit. Altogether, Chater and cast were able to bring to life Osborne's message and provided for a reasonably thoughtful rendition of the play.

Fellini enslaved by imagination, Casanova film moralizes poorly

By MICHAEL CHRIST

From its conception to birth, Federico Fellini's *Casanova* has taken three years and some \$12 million. Beset by problems both mountainous and miniscule, including the theft-for-ransom of many days exposed film, Fellini was able to look back on the experience and exclaim, "Ah, but don't you think that disaster is indispensable to rebirth? I love shipwrecks. I love it when everything is capsizing... ideologies, concepts, and conventions being wrecked!" The recent reception of his latest film should prove a good test to the sincerity of these remarks.

While *Casanova* is a disappointment in itself, it may be valued in retrospect as the stimulus which started the three-time Academy Award winning director back onto the road of rebirth and improved artistic creations.

FELLINI'S DISTINCTIVE STYLE

In the 25 years since Alberto Lattuada gave him his first directorial opportunity with *Variety Lights* in 1950, Fellini has evolved a distinctive film style which has delighted the cinema aficionado with its striking images and its structure which builds on thought associations in the manner of Joyce and Proust. The director: works from a mutable, elastic script; claims that dialogue is totally unimportant; eschews superstars; never goes to the movies; avoids cocktail parties like the plague; has remained happily married to actress Giulietta Masina for 33 years; and refuses to box himself into artistic or social commitment. Laughs Fellini, "I am committed to non-commitment".

Despite that protestation, *Casanova* is probably one of Fellini's most socially committed films on the subject of moral decadence. Earlier side-stepping comment in his film version of Petronius' *Satyricon*, a chapter in the decline of the Roman Empire, the director has been unable to stifle the moralizing tone in his life study of Giovanni Jacopo Casanova de Seingal.

The message of the film isn't in its sparse, well-groomed dialogue by Anthony Burgess, but in the actual visual depiction of Casanova's affairs of the flesh.

PRIVATE STOCK OF WHORES

Casanova's women are drawn from Fellini's private stock of whores and miscreants, their flesh is cadaverous and bestial, their features are either skeletal and haunting or fleshy and obsessive. The women, with their faces painted with the thick white powder of the fashion, look like they were made-up by a mortuary assistant; the whiteness of the powder brings the yellow of their teeth and redness of their eyes into perfect contrast. Nowhere evident is the conventional cinematic beauty that could inspire a man to love.

Casanova's conquests, though equally cinematic, inspire only enervating lust and access to the post-coital state of living death: *Casanova* finds in union only a mechanistic release, he is as lifeless as the mechanical bird which is his mascot or the doll woman who is to be his most exotic mate. Though sex in the movie is performed in stylized mime, the sexual morale is frankly explicit.

CHARACTERISTICALLY VAPID

Like *Casanova* himself, Fellini's film opens with a visual feast of highly saturated images: After the debauch, the film follows a declining course which leads to dissipation and another one of Fellini's characteristically vapid endings.

In many ways Fellini is a slave to his imagination as *Casanova* is to his desires. Both have a tragic tendency to make love to themselves and to forget their obligations to their audience. While we can appreciate Fellini's fertile imagination, he has spent \$12 million dollars on details he alone may appreciate and created a film which frankly doesn't hold interest to its completion.