

reviews

Death of a Salesman

By JOHN LUMSDEN

After waiting two days to see the play due to cancellations because of a case of laryngitis, I was not only ready to let TNB entertain us, I was going to demand it. And it did. For the first time I've ever seen it, it produced a thoroughly professional, polished without being slick, play. This was selected in the usually poor audiences, they didn't laugh during serious moments, only clapped during one scene change, intermission prattle seemed to center more on the play, than on the weather, and surprise! I only saw one gentleman decked out with a copy of Coles notes on the play.

For once, my idea of what the sets should be, and Sheila Jaye's (set and costume designer) seemed to coincide. I've yet to see TNB do anything remotely resembling a picture stage, and anticipate the chance. However, he multi-level purpose stage was excellently tailored to this play, the many locales required. (bedrooms, porch, kitchen, offices, hotels) some real and some imaginary were well suggested. These were accompanied by a surprisingly effective job of lighting, from consulting my program, I guess our hats are off to Ted Williamson. The Gleaner, in it's review, made some disparaging remarks about the accuracy of the costumes, my girlfriend caught Linda with stockings under her nightgown once, but these remarks seem

trivial when compared to their effectiveness, and the fluidity of their changes.

So far, this review has read like a blurb from a TNB circular, all peaches and cream laudatory. Well, I'm afraid this is going to have to continue with the acting. Henry Beckman, as Willy Loman was good! And I'm not going to bore you with a three page dissertation on his virtues as an actor, suffice to say, after that play, he had destroyed any of my pre-conceived notions of what Willy Loman should be, he is to me now, simply Beckman's portrayal.

Doris Petrie suited her role superbly. Diminutive, but with a strength possessed by none of the others, she in turn seemed to capture the essence of Linda. Her transformation from a feverish, subservient thing to the prime sustaining force in maintaining Willy's life is almost frightening to watch. Credit it to the play if you wish, but I believe she was one of the few actresses I've seen around here that could have managed that last graveyard scene without the locals bursting out in laughter. Perhaps I'll break in now, and remark that each of the cast seemed physically superb for their part. Biff (Dona Allison) seemed happily hunking. Happy's constant referred to working off a few pounds, would seem to suggest a slightly more robust George Warless, yet this would only be at the expense of his alter-ego, the dashing man about town. However,

when they both were representing their childhood, (in Willy's mind) they captured the exuberance, and fawning affection for their father, well, caught it and amplified it to a point of comedy.

Dessication of each member of the supporting class would be a little lengthy to attempt here, but special mention has to go to Bernard (Barry Van Ellen) and Charley (Anthony Parr). Bernard was playing the proverbial brown-nosed mama's boy, almost to a point of caricature. Yet here, I disagree with what I could remember of the Gleaner, in a play his heavy, Van Ellen's milling of this role provided some sort of comparative comic relief. Charley, truly Willie's only friend, seems to bring the points of comradeship between Willie and himself, indeed, points where he takes advantage of Willie, than just a simple reading of the play would.

This is a heavy play, overloaded with theme upon theme, reading it ten times before seeing it certainly wouldn't detract from it. Yet I think, despite the complexity of this play, the easier recognition of "messages" from between the lines, an earlier readings robs some of the right-now of the play, of experience it as it comes. It returns to the Playhouse this Sunday and Monday, to make up for the cancelled performances. Miss it, and you'll miss the best theatre Frederickton's seen for a while, or will probably see for quite some time.

Romeo and Juliet

By JOHN TIMMINS

From the opening frames of a brooding, misted Verona, Franco Zeffirelli's production of "Romeo and Juliet" (one of the finer films of recent years) takes the play several light years from any typically Shakespearean rhetorical dangers.

His vital, energetic direction, the magnificent, life-breathing photography, and Nino Rota's score (which manages to be integrated — perfect Renaissance mood — and varied, yet without ever overlying on its well known theme) combine to create a superb Renaissance pageant that does stirring justice to the Bard.

The English Department may have a few qualms about Zeffirelli's severe paring of the text, but with the kind of visual and emotional compensation he has come up with, I think it's obvious the ends justify the means.

The actors playing the hapless protagonists were both under twenty when the film came out in 1967, and it must be admitted that in some of the stronger scenes, Olivia Hussey looks like a fish out

of water. But she brings a freshness to the role that is in perfect keeping with the vitality of the direction.

Leonard Whiting's performance however, needs no qualification; from the dewy-eyed innocent to the raging, impassioned lover, he is never less than superb and gives a surprising depth to the role's many sides. Moments like his scalding anguish in the tomb almost mask Hussey's intermittent inadequacy.

John McEnery, one of Britain's finest and least known actors (his Trotsky stole "Nicholas and Alexandra", for those who managed to stay awake long enough to catch him) crystallizes the haunted, ghost ridden Mercutio in a brilliant performance, but Michael York — better known from "Cabaret" and "Lost Horizon" over villainized Tybalt. Robert Stephens typically fails to communicate any emotion but anger in the very emotional part of the Prince.

Masterful here, Zeffirelli got lost in the silly lyricism of his next film "Brother Sun, Sister Moon". Comparison with future films of his should prove interesting.

Class of '44

By DANIELLE THIBEAULT

The Class of '44 was truly worth seeing. It is probably the only truly funny movie to be shown at the Gaiety since "Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex — But Were Afraid to Ask". But it was funny in a much different way. It made the audience respond as to an old home movie.

Did you see yourself in the Benjies, the Oscys and the Hermies of 1944, fresh out of high school, with only two options: the "Service of your country" or the "furthering of your education in colleges and trade schools"? Benj opts for the first, enlisting in the U.S. Marines because the uniform carries with it "Much distinction and a long history of bravery in battle". That puts him out of the picture for the rest of the movie (except for his occasional chocolate-stained letter from "somewhere in the Pacific") because war is nothing to laugh about.

And that leaves Oscy and Hermie on their way to college, because life in an "Institution of Higher Learning" is always good for a few laughs. From the profs to the fraternities, from the football team to cheating at exams . . . things haven't changed much since then, have they? There's the prof with marbles in his mouth, the "mile-a-minute" prof and the ego-tripping, self-acclaimed orator. There is also the dreaded initiation in the fraternity which requires the applicant to cram into a telephone booth with at least a dozen other sweaty bodies, walk around a room with an olive which was picked off an ice cube block with the ass, withstand air attack from an army of egg bomb throwers and run around with a bell attached to your "manhood" which extends a piece of string and a card saying "pull me" to hang over the belt buckle, in full view at all times.

As for the football team, well they gave a good demonstration of all the bungles one ever wanted to

see in a football game. And you thought the game in "MASH" was funny!

Oscy is forever in quest of the great sex thrill and his only complaint seems to be that the brains of his female conquests are "indirectly proportionate to the size of their tits". However, when he tries to cash in on his latest discovery (\$2 a shot) he is promptly expelled from College and leaves to join the Army.

And that leaves Hermie, who has fallen in love again, this time with a headstrong, spoiled-little-rich-girl who owns a sports car too small to permit any kind of fooling around. Except that Hermie doesn't plan to let a little thing like that interfere with his definite plan to seduce the blonde damsel. Will love conquer after all?

Getting there is half the fun but it can also cut into your study time (and your sleeping ration). And so, he is introduced to the intricate art of cheating and that's enough to keep him on pins and needles for awhile. Before his results are tabulated, he must rush home on the news that his father has died of a heart attack.

The whole ordeal is very hard on Hermie who has now lost a father he knew so little of. "I don't even remember what he looked like" he tells Oscy who has taken leave to be with him in his time of need. Soon, he will return to college where an unknown fate awaits him. Will he be luckier than in '42? Why don't you go and find out for yourself the next time the movie comes around?

Note: They're showing Franco Zeffirelli's "Romeo and Juliette" starting Wednesday, Feb. 13, and I think you should get your body down to the Gaiety, especially if you haven't seen it yet. If you've seen it, maybe you should tell your friends about it and take them down to see it. Remember: Valentine's Day can happen more than once a year if you want it to. Try it!

