

Lear only admirable

by Judith Pratt

Samuel Johnson, the unparalleled man of knowledge of the eighteenth-century, said of Shakespeare's *King Lear* that "there is perhaps no play which keeps the attention so strongly fixed; which so much agitates our passions and interests our curiosity" and which "fills the mind with a perpetual tumult of indignation, pity, and hope." As such, it is a play cautiously attacked by any theatre company and therefore is a credit to Neptune that Shakespeare's tragedy opens its 1977 season.

Opening upon Lear and his court, the play begins with the announcement of the King's abdication in favour of his three daughters. Before the kingdom can be formally divided though, Lear demands avowals of love from his 3 daughters. Goneril, here played by Patricia Gage, is poisonously sweet in her overflowing professions of love, while Regan (Denise Ferguson) is especially venomous in declaring her father the sole possessor of her heart. Janet Doherty as Cordelia is less than

convincing however as the noble-hearted and favoured youngest daughter who declares that her love for her father is that of an obedient daughter to a loving father.

In the play, this failure of Cordelia is to pledge her love entirely to her father excites the proud and arrogant king to fits of anger. But the stature of the authoritative king, accustomed to complete obedience and homage, is never accomplished by Eric Donkin. He enters the scene wobbling and hunchbacked from the weight of his eighty years and more, and speaks in a quavering voice which reflects none of the majesty of a king. His anger therefore appears merely the fretful infirmity of an old man. It is this failure to establish Lear as supreme authority in his kingdom that mars the climaxes of the play and diminishes the mandatory fall of the tragedy, a rule first established by Aristotle. The King who refers to himself as a dragon here is no more than a *papier-mâché* duplicate.

Cordelia, banished from the kingdom for refusing to articulate

more fully her love for her father, exists, now the betrothed of the King of France. Intricate dealings then emerge between Goneril and Regan, who agree to vex their father with complaints and thereby

pinnacle of regality. But the wrenching spirit which should con-tort the faces in the audience as it does the king's is almost absent. The fall has not been sufficient to kill the ideal authority and instead Donkin here represents only a maiming of his intially feeble-minded king.

In what should be a most moving scene, Cordelia's passion, is inadequately portrayed. This lack of



diminish his prolonged visits with them. Confronted with these abrupt disavowals of their once abundantly phrased love, Lear's anger pin-nacles in tears and rages, and irrationality grips his spirit.

The disguised Kent who has been banished for his defence of Cordelia, accompanies his master, along with the Fool, played with a delicate balance of wit and pathos by Richard Greenblatt. They encounter Edgar, the legal son of Gloster, who has fled for his life from his father who has been misinformed by a particularly con-ning and supremely cunning Edmund (Roger Barton). Edgar, disguised as an idiot, clad only in a loin-cloth, is adopted by the raging Lear as his muse. Due to the unsubstantiated regality of Lear in Act I, this scene on the stormy heath is contaminated with im-plausability.

The blasted heath, the scene of Lear's ultimate decline into mad-ness is noted by flashing lights and a convincing soundtrack by Alan Laing. But these are not saving graces for what should be the play's climax. This scene should portray the depths of madness the king has descended to from his almighty

pathetic substance renders this scene largely ineffective and robs it of theatrical value. When next we encounter Cordelia and Lear it is as prisoners of the victorious Albany, Edmund, Goneril and Regan. Ed-mund issues secret orders to hang Cordelia and is then challenged in battle by the outraged Albany. As a champion, the vengeful Edgar arrives, determined to avenge his father's blindness. Edmund is fatally wounded and blurts out his secret order, but it is too late, for Lear soon arrives, carrying his dead daughter. Lear, bewailing and truly pitiful, succumbs to his madness totally and, having died broken heart, collapses on Cordelia's body.

Largely representative of *King Lear* as it is normally conceived, the Neptune production manages to capture the aura of perhaps Shake-speare's greatest tragedy but lacks the intricate spirit needed to transform the written word into visible essence. The acting is largely efficient and at times excellent but the elements of the tragedy, so essential in giving this play its emotional impact, are subdued and hence what should be an exceptionally great stage play is converted to an admirable rendition of this timeless piece.

Fritz the Cat

by norma chapman

Fritz The Cat, R. Crumb's violent sex fiend, was back in town along with *The Nine Lives of Fritz the Cat*, (R) and *Heavy Traffic*, at the Casino Theater.

Fritz was first seen in the hands of R. Crumb on the street corners of San Francisco. Crumb had printed and distributed the premier issues himself.

Fritz's first adventure was a visit to his small town family, featuring an incestuous relationship with his sister. This was also one of the lives shown in *The Nine Lives of Fritz the Cat*.

The first movie was based on about three & a half strips from *Z A P Magazine*, published in 1969.

Steve Krantz, the producer of all three films, hired **Ralph Bakshi** from Paramount's animation department, and went after the film rights to **Annie Fanny**. Unable to secure the rights, they approached Crumb.

He was not enthusiastic, but finally said, "O.K., They want to do it worse than I don't want them to."

The films were done in 'full' animation. Neither background, nor characters in repose, were static. Nervous gestures, shifting in seats, those details which make animation believable, were all included.

And believable it was, the hype, dissatisfaction, and revolutionary attitudes of the late sixties, were represented on the emotional level; as effectively as on the intellectual level; conveyed by racial liberalism, student dissatisfaction, Hells' Angles, and the trek to "the West Coast."

As for Fritz's character, it can be summed no better than Jon Stewart; "Fritz is a phony student, a phony drop out, a phony poet, a phony black sympathizer, a phony liberal, a phony romantic, a phony revolutionary, and even a phony lover."

"All Fritz really wants is to get laid," says Stewart. And so he does.

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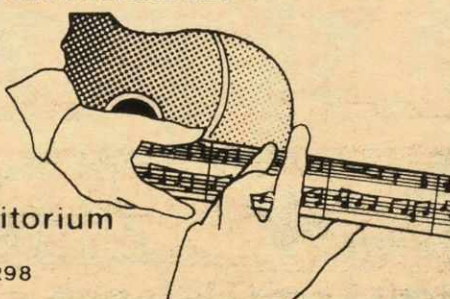
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