

Dear Liar — letters for two

by Scott Neily

Shakespeare, in his immortal play *Hamlet*, said "Brevity is the soul of wit". George Bernard Shaw, one of the great playwrights of the theatre, wasn't (to my knowledge) known for being concise. However, he was known to be witty, even when he did go to great lengths to establish his opinion. This characteristic survived the transference into his personal world quite well and often showed up in his letters to friends. It is this personal record that reveals the true life of the creator of such memorable plays as *Arms and the Man*, and is the basis for a new play called *Dear*

Liar.

Dear Liar, Neptune Theatre's latest production in their 25th anniversary season, is currently showing until January 29. The play, written by Jerome Kilty, concerns the 'lustless' romance that was carried on between playwright George Bernard Shaw and actress Patricia Campbell, via forty years of correspondence. Starring Sean Mulcahy and Joan Gregson, the story is based on the intelligent, witty, and occasionally romantic letters that Shaw and Campbell exchanged during the years of their acquaintance, from 1899 to 1940. A thoughtful drama, the play characterizes the intimate bonds that can be forged

through letter writing, one of the most powerful and personal methods of communication known to civilization.

Logistically, this play is simple. There are only two actors, no major set changes throughout the show, and only a limited number of static props. However, from a dramatic standpoint, the show must have given more than a few headaches to director Tom Kerr. Having only two characters in a comedy requires the dialogue and pacing be tighter than the lid on an Aspirin bottle. Such a situation also requires that on-stage distractions be downplayed to focus maximum attention on the actors and the dialogue. Though the drama was well acted and the set was beautifully constructed, there were a few moments when the rhythm faltered and the audience's attention was momentarily lost. I am not sure whether this was due to the writing or some other cause but unfortunately, this flaw tarnished slightly an otherwise very fine performance.

Minor flaws aside, the show



Photo: Scot Campbell

Mulcahy and Gregson: 'lustless romance'

was highly enjoyable. Historical dramas are usually the most interesting, and this one is no exception. George Bernard Shaw was an intelligent and witty man and

his own plays are still considered to be masterpieces of the theatre. With luck, perhaps *Dear Liar* will one day be considered one also.

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Black-and-white reality

by David Mansvelt

What does a Vancouver bus driver think about while driving passengers around B.C.'s urban jewel? If his photographic works now on display at Anna Leonowens Gallery are an indication, his thoughts go beyond wondering if he can race the next yellow light. Amber warning lights appear to be flashing in his mind as well. They warn him that the B.C. government is more concerned with economic statistics than with the concerns of the people he meets on their way to work. Gill's works depict an ordinary man's view of this frustrating situation.

The exhibit, entitled "He was exceedingly perfectionist," combines photography and text to present a sarcastic yet humorous jab at social and environmental issues. The eight large black-and-white works are stark and disconcerting, but are still attractive because of their ability to capture emotions we can empathize with.

The most unsettling work, "Towards a lexicon of domestic crisis", depicts a dazed woman over an ironing board, stragely caught in the gaze of an extended television image of a scowling Premier Bill Vander Zalm. Big Brother Bill is not just watching: he is condemning and thus is part of the woman's problem.

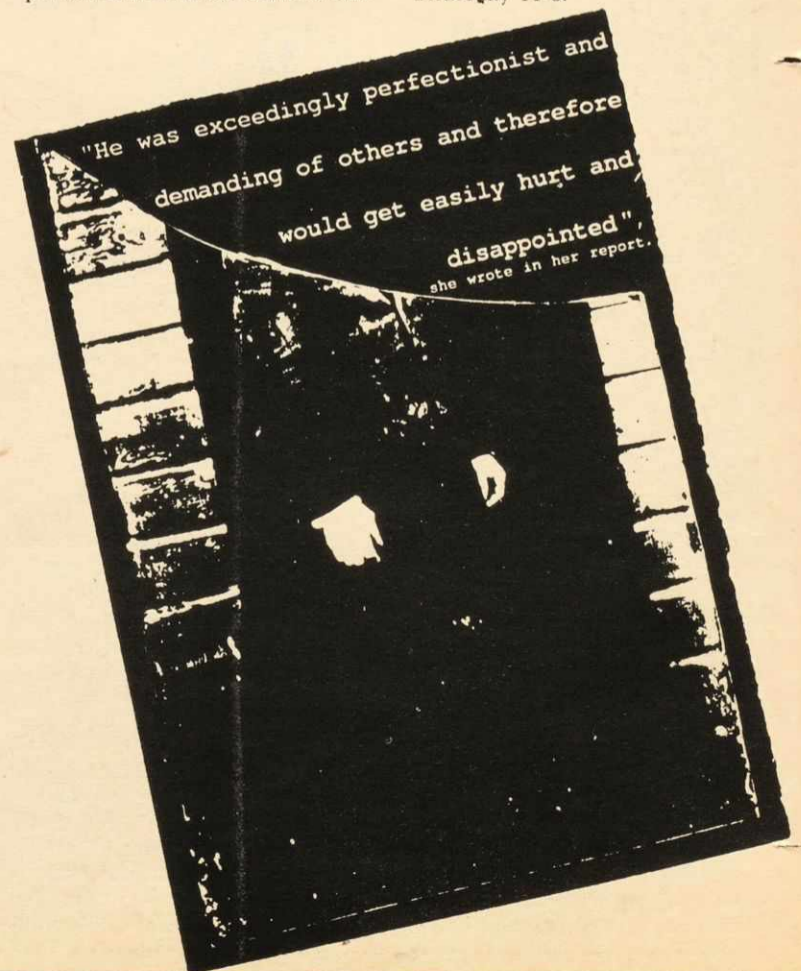
In "Before you get a chance to look around the picnic is over", Gill contrasts the "picnic" of the

forestry practices of the past with the destructive clear-cutting methods still employed today.

"Squid, the most intelligent of invertebrates" emphasizes the responsibility we have as the most powerful animals on earth to care

for those whose survival depends on our handling of their homes.

Don Gill's works will be at the NSCAD Gallery at 1891 Granville St. until January 28. hours are Tuesday-Saturday, 11-5, and Thursday 11-8.



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