

Forever Yours Marie-Lou

by Lawrence Wargrave

Reviewing a well done production of an excellent play always seems superfluous to me because I seem to give only a blow by blow account of the play and nothing more. *Forever Yours, Marie-Lou* by Michel Tremblay at the Citadel is a few inches away from superb.

As one of Canada's foremost playwrights, Quebecois Tremblay has created an intriguing work which centres around the disintegration of a lower middle class family. While at the same time striking a universal note of the more or less fatal frustration and stifling confinement within the mundane lives of a large segment of Western society, *Marie-Lou* also dissects via analogy, a changing Quebecois society in the midst of tumultuous decay. The theme and plot are very carefully and creatively presented by the harmonic and disharmonic interweaving of the conversations between two sets of the members of the same family. The play is greatly enriched by the fact that while the conversations occur simultaneously on stage, they occur ten years apart in 'real time.'

Considering there is very little stage movement, Phillip Silver's set is excellent. Visually Silver has stated the insularity of the play's characters by creating three separate and well defined stage areas. With economy and suggestive exactness, Silver has given each small environment a life and realism of its own. A hazy tapestry-like backdrop which fades into an equally hazy flashback photograph of Marie-Lou's childhood, perfectly complimented the thematic intent of the play.

Guest director, Eric Steiner superbly captures all the poetic flavors and vapors of Tremblay's

disjointed dialogue. The Citadel was full of well timed harmonies of each actor's and character's voices as well as the effective use of selectively timed and audience binding pauses. Also while there are various themes running through *Marie-Lou* Tremblay does not emphasize anyone especially nor does any conventional plot stand out. Director Steiner wisely does not choose to force anyone idea nor keep some cohesive structure in the forefront for audience understanding but rather presents the play in a courageous collage fashion. All of which emphasizes the confusion and frustration in the characters' lives.

For enforcing the director's intent and for marvellously real and forcefully concentrated characterizations, the production's actors should be blessed. Frances Hyland as Marie-Lou and Mina Erian Mina as her husband Leopold, as well as Elan Ross Gibson and Karen Austin, as the couple's daughters, conveyed all the life long tortures of their characters and the family. For me perhaps the best summation of the

productions acting and also the best compliment I can give any acting is that it very rarely crossed my mind that the bodies on stage were actors. Whatever stage tricks and acting techniques used, the people seemed very real to me. Perhaps one nagging fault of the production was the persistence of Mina Erian Mina's American accent especially in contrast to Hyland's quiet and controlled Quebecois speech.

In my marvellously ecstatic fit about this production may I also compliment the Citadel on a fine program which as well as giving the usual blurb on the actors and upcoming events, also included a short but informative interview with Tremblay explaining his work.

Perhaps I have avoided any detailed explanation of plot and theme. However in its collage fashion the Citadel's production of Michel Tremblay's *Forever Yours, Marie-Lou*, gives the impression that both playwright and all those associated with the production somehow have an instinctually feeling that they know what is really shaking in life. A fine production.



Hotel Paradiso - escape comedy

Studio Theatre's production of Georges Feydeau and Maurice Desvallieres *Hotel Paradiso* - a smashing conclusion to a year of hard work for fourth year B.F.A. students? Hardly but definitely full of occasional good acting and quite definitely very funny situation comedy to farce. Unfortunately any lags in the production seem to be directly related to the less comedic and active moments of the play.

Paradiso is a late

nineteenth century French comedy which unfolds around the attempts of an affluent Parisian gentleman to conduct an affair with his best friend's wife. At his seduction hotel he encounters only several friends with the potential to reveal his adultery. Thus a flimsy set of alibis and some very funny lines are produced. Though the Studio actors never seem to miss a beat of the comedic rhythm, Frank C. Turner and Howard Storey could be noted for capturing all the stage magic of appropriately uttered humorous lines.

Yet however entertaining and humorous the production was, there is the question in my mind if the play or the actors should be credited. Frank C. Turner in the male lead of Boniface, while moving the production along, seemed to repeat hand actions, like open hand gesturing and holding his arms something akin to how a kangaroo does, along with contrasting his facial expressions from that of aloofness to raised eyebrows. Perhaps the same could be said about Christine Willes in one of the female leads (Marcelle) whose performance at times seemed to fluctuate from tears to a look of dismay and, however well endowed Miss Willes may be, from clutching her hankie at waist level to clutching her hankie at breast level. Also questionable is the vast energy output of Turner. Whether or not intended by director Jim DeFelice, Turner seemed at times to be running around the stage, not only in-exactly focussing his energy but also straining the play to levels of unmitigated farce.

While characterizations were well done, the acting especially in the area of facial expressions and tonal variety and delivery lacked variety and subtlety and most of the performances were like the viewing of slides. If a moving picture like presentation is to be complimented, then Howard Storey as the marvellously funny stuttering Martin and David Diamond as the staid but mischievous Maxime can be noted for subtly moving their performances beyond a jerky series of line recitations accompanied

with an appropriate emotion. Part of comedy may be sudden turns of events and emotions, but the actors failed to add variety, though slide projector shows are okay in comedies. So are unemployed actors.

Director Jim DeFelice, as well as his actors to some degree, should be kissed and hugged for striving to glean all the comedy of *Paradiso* and for giving the audience a highly hilarious night. Though DeFelice may have known where the audience's funny bones were, it is questionable at times if he knew where they were sitting as many lines were delivered to upstage corner, perhaps detracting from acting efforts.

Too much make-up highlight in proportion to the amount of lighting may also have weakened some performances with facial expressions being lost. While trite in specificity but significant when taken on a general scale, stage

make-up seemed to be inconsistently poor with Connie Kaldor (Angelique) failing to blend her shadows and Turner blending his as well as some of his base away once he had concluded his stage business of wiping soot off his face.

Designer Lawrence Miller's den set was notable for its 'easy' first intermission conversion to a number of hotel rooms. The production was thus provided with a highly functional multi-area set. The lighting for these switching acting areas was superbly executed, especially for a spooky but very humorous scene of a witches' convent in the second act.

Hotel Paradiso, while incorporating some of the suburbs of Baltimore, is many, many miles away from that Merry (so I have been told) Land city. This Studio Theatre production runs until April 5th and is a tremendous way to escape from exam and paper blues.

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Costa the Great

Mary Costa, who has been hailed as the greatest Strauss singer of our generation, will star in the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra pops concert *A Viennese Evening*, to take place April 4 and 5.

Mary Costa is at the pinnacle of a remarkable operatic and concert career. She has been acclaimed for her performance in MGM's *The Great*

Waltz and has made numerous television appearances, recordings and tours abroad. Early in her career she did the singing and speaking voices in Walt Disney's "Sleeping Beauty".

Music Director Pierre Hetu will conduct the concert. Mr. Hetu is a frequent guest conductor with major Canadian and American Orchestras and Opera Houses.

Madman and nun

The Madman and the Nun, an avant-garde play from Eastern Europe by Stanislaw Witkiewicz, opens this weekend in the Fine Arts Building. *The Madman and the Nun* examines

the efforts of poet Alexander Walpurg to use his friendship with ardent Sister Anna and escape from the Convent of Voluntary Lady Martyrs where Walpurg has been unjustly imprisoned by the disgusting Dr. Grun. The play paints a hilarious portrait of the contemporary artist, and his treatment by a hostile society.

This production is directed by graduate student Mark Manson, and is his final directing project for the year. Featured in the play are Philip Wagner as the madman, Tanya Ryga as the lascivious nun, and faculty member Jeremy Dix-Hart, remembered for previous performances on the Studio Stage and at Theatre 3, as the evil doctor.

The Madman and the Nun will be presented in the Fine Arts Building acting studio, Room 3-125. Performance times are Saturday April 5, at 9:00 p.m. with two performances April 6, 7:00 p.m. Tickets are free, and available from the Department of Drama office.

Dancing horses

Contemporary music apparently always has had a rather violent impact on its listeners - even in the early days of Greek civilization.

According to the Chicago music magazine, *Triad*, the Sybarites in early Greek life taught their horses to dance to the music of the flute. Their enemies, the Crotonians, took advantage of this fact. As Crotonian warriors approached the Sybarite horsemen, they took flutes from their pockets and began to play.

The louder their music, the harder the Sybarites' horses pranced. Finally, the horses became uncontrollable, and the Crotonians won their battle. Rock on.

rock notes

T-Rex split;

T. Rex have split up and lead singer Marc Bolan has decided on a solo career, according to the British music magazine *Melody Maker*.

The break-up came after co-founder Micky Finn recently decided to leave the band. Finn first joined Bolan during the days of the Tyrannosaurus Rex Duo. The name was later shortened to T. Rex when a drummer and bass player were added to the group.

T. Rex became the first major glitter rock band in Britain in 1971 and 1972. While some thought they would be as big as The Beatles because of the hysteria they created in England, T. Rex never came close. They had only one hit single in the U.S., "Get It On/Bang A Gong" and several successful albums. In England, however, they had 10 top three hits in a two-year period.

Bolan solos

Marc Bolan, who increasingly has become involved in solo projects, currently is making a movie - "The Obsession" - with David Niven. He then plans to begin recording under his own name later this year. Conga player Finn also plans to pursue a solo career.

Hunter solos

Ian Hunter, former leader of Mott the Hoople, is making plans for his first solo tour of England toward the end of April. Mick Ronson will be Ian's lead guitarist during the four week tour - unless, of course, Mick is offered a job with the Rolling Stones. According to various sources, Ronson remains a top contender to take over Mick Taylor's spot with the Stones. Meanwhile, RCA has just released Ronson's new solo album, "Play, Don't Worry."