

Sisters — play brings mixed emotions

Three Sisters — sometimes unsatisfactory, sometimes superb.

The enduring debt which modern theatre owes to Anton Chekhov is made evident by Three Sisters, now playing at the St. Lawrence Centre. Under the direction of Leon Major, the timeless appeal of this turn-of-the-century play, once more comes to life.

Murray Laufer's elegant and beautifully balanced set of the first three acts, dates the play to a particular time and class in Russia's pre-revolutionary society, although it is a class rapidly dissolving in a new era. But the life of the three sisters is one of internal dissolution.

They cling to a dream of returning to Moscow, an ideal as enervating as "waiting for Godot", and fill the monotonous emptiness of their lives with work, compromised love and the companionship of the soldiers stationed in the small, provincial town. The structure of their reality is as delicate and as transitory as all illusions, but it is not until the last act, when the set changes to an abstract definition, that the accumulative effect of this illusory quality, and of their tragic-comic existence, exerts its humanity.

After a slow start, and rather strained performances by Frances Hyland, Dawn Greenhalgh and Louise Marleau as Olga, Masha and Irina, the play finally comes into its own. The three sisters attain a stunning inter-relationship of their roles. Claude Bede as their incapable, unassertive brother, displays a moving, though untragic,



Louise Marleau as Irini and Frances Hyland as Olga in the Toronto Arts Foundation production of Chekhov's Three Sisters at the St. Lawrence Centre.

disintegration, and Tedde Moore, in an unsympathetic role, asserts her vulgar, somewhat shrewishly stereotype control. Her role is the hardest to come to terms with. She handles the excesses of her ambitious social-climbing and narrow-minded unawareness, with comic flair but the cunning and devious under-mining, necessary to take-over the entire household, are never achieved.

She is supposedly symbolic of the new society which is in the making, as the old one demonstrates its inability to cope. The soldiers, although distinguishable, do not portray any unique or individually interesting differentiation of their roles.

The play, partially unsatisfactory and over-long, has fine moments and the last act is really superb.

Glendon's The Country Wife is no bumpkin of a production

By EDNA NEWTON

The restoration comedy The Country Wife came off as a competent production in a weekend performance at Glendon College. The play is performed by the college's Dramatic Arts people under director Michael Gregory.

Playwright William Wycherley dealt with frivolous living and the immorality of an age that saw Charles the Second return to the throne. His court threw off the puritan stays of the previous era, in a copy of the French court with its intrigues and amours. It was an age where the business was the pleasure of living.

The plot of marriage, affairs and intrigues draws its title from the country wife, who loses her innocence and takes to the tactics and deceit of pleasurable living in London. The whole affair is tied with honor, but as one pseudo-virtuous lady comments, "a woman of honor loses no honor with a private person."

The more than competent performances by actors and actresses

in major roles, hold the play together. Jack Wetherall as Mr. Horner, the roguish maker of cuckold, Charles Northcote as Mr. Sparkish, the silly, would-be-wit and Ron Holgerson as Mr. Pinchwife, a frothing, jealous husband, provide good balance for one another. Rhonda Payne as Pinchwife's sister and finally the country wife herself, Rita Davies, extend this balance to the lead female roles.

No one person takes so much of a major role as to carry the whole play by the weight of his or her performance. The major roles are supported by several people giving excellent performances in supporting roles.

Steve Meek, as both a parson and bookseller, makes a brief but enjoyable appearance. Doug Knowles, as Horner's servant, is zany and wild-eyed in his role as announcer for incoming characters. Martha Deacon, as My Lady Fidget, carries her affectation just a shade too far, but she is the best in a virtuous gang of ladies who opt for sinful amusement in the afternoon.

A word about the sets and costumes which make the production visually stupendous, is not really enough. The production, staged in a dining hall at the college, is slated for Seneca College Mar. 4 and 5, and Brock University Mar. 25 and 26.

Set designer Rick Gordon had to adapt his stage to these various physical settings. He designed a portable revolving turntable with three portions, each a different setting. The costumes, by Caroline Gregory, are superb and authentic to the period, right down to the last lace handkerchief.

The slick technical operation of the play circumvents the main downfall of amateur productions, that of tedious waits and billowing curtains as stage crews move about backstage.

The play is a bit too long and the humor becomes a shade tedious because it depends so totally on one theme. But over all, The Country Wife is an enjoyable exposure to restoration decadence.

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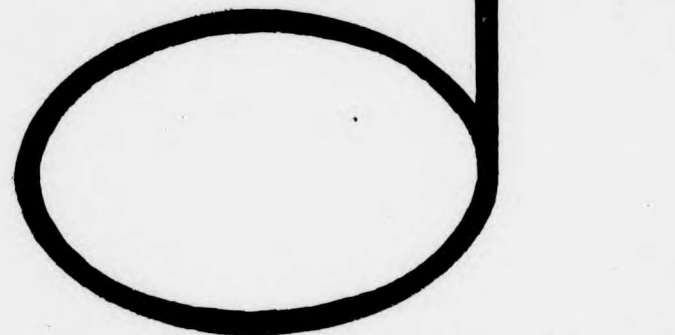
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