

Is 'The Dollar Woman' worth it?

By ROSEMAIRE HOPPS

There is some good news and some bad about Walter Learning's and Aldan Nowlan's newly written play "The Dollar Woman" which is appearing tonight and Saturday at the Playhouse.

The cast of "The Dollar Woman" contains some well known actors. Most were well chosen for their roles. Warwick Learning and Sean Sullivan both gave convincing portrayals of their characters but both, especially Warwick, were difficult to hear. Several lines they each had were delivered with their backs to the audience, which I do not query on aesthetic grounds, but it did make their respective small boy and old man voices almost inaudible. Barbara Stephen's character seemed forced occasionally.

ACT 1 contained too much dialogue and not enough intention. The middle of the act became a mass of information which had to be assimilated but which did not seem to have a direction. Consequently audience attention began to wander. The final part of Act 1 successfully interested the audience again, and led them willingly into Act 2.

ACT 2 was the most successful act as far as speed, dialogue and purpose are concerned. The main fault, as in Act 1 was that there was a great deal to assimilate and no breathing space in which to do it. Specifically, Train's diatribe on slavery in the "court" required thought since it was the first opportunity given to the audience to perceive a view opposite to Lewis White's. (Train's speech, incidentally, was too long. The point was made by the second example.) The addition of the argument between Alice and Lewis White detracted from Train's important speech. Alice's final taunt at Lewis that she and their son would find themselves in the pauper's auction should he go to jail was important — perhaps

even central to the play — but Lewis's reaction to it was not explored properly. The two ideas thrown together were surely meant to impress the audience with the sordid side of the pauper auction, but they detracted from each other and much of the impact was lost.

In ACT 3 it transpires that Train was merely searching for a cause, that Maggie only took in the poor and sick because it made her feel strong, that an almshouse is to be built so that the pauper auction can cease (even though the horror of an almshouse has been cited as a reason for the auctions). It seems too that young Jake, Lewis's son, does not want to follow his father and grandfather as overseer of the auction but also that he climbs the auctioneer's block as his father has done and readily agrees to visit the pauper with his father, seeming to imply that he would indeed follow his predecessor's lead and become an overseer.

The final act was confusing. There was neither a condemnation of the pauper auction nor an approval of it. Maybe the confusion was deliberately created.

I have heard advertisements for "The Dollar Woman" proclaiming it reveals a side of New Brunswick history so dark it has been hidden, and that it exposes the "white nigger" sales of the late 1800's. I also saw, on the programme, that "The Dollar Woman" is essentially a story about people, like Lewis White and Maggie Harvey, who did their best for the poor. To quote the programme "They did not destroy the will to live or — just as important — the will to work. Those they helped kept their essential dignity. Can our current welfare schemes claim as much?"

The best that can be said about the play is that it does present all sides of the issue, the worst that it creates such a confusion over the

revealing that one is not inclined to ponder the question once one has left the theatre.

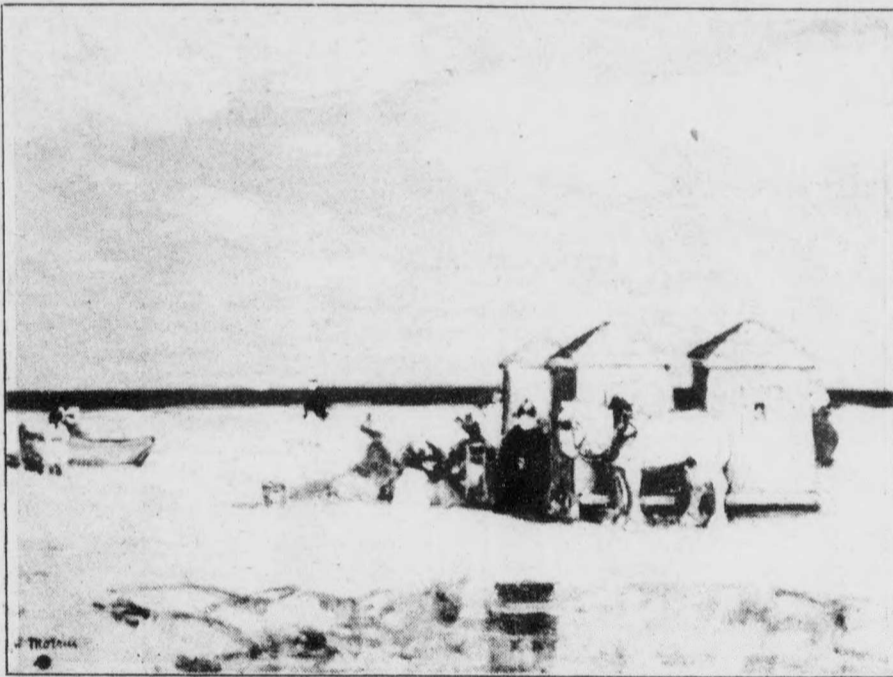
In ACT 3 the predominant figure was the woman sold for one dollar. Denise Goleblaski, though she said nothing and was not included in the cast list, was perfect. Though she suffered the indignity of having her dress ripped from her back by Train, who claimed the men should know what they were buying, her expression remained unchanged.

In fact, her countenance (that of a simple-minded 15 year old who had been raped by her previous "owner") so enthralled the audience that many missed the action of White, Train and company until it was realized that they had moved completely to the opposite side of the stage.

As a whole the play was, as it claimed to be, a good story. It is not yet an excellent play. With some revisions it could be. I am tempted, to wonder what the actors themselves thought of the

play and their performance in it as I was struck by their apparent lack of enthusiasm as they took their bows. Whether or not this play will be successful elsewhere remains to be discovered also. Most of the audience response was to regional and political jokes.

Mr. Nowlan and Mr. Learning are to be praised for their decision to write this play. I am optimistic that with some more work it could become a valuable addition to theatrical repertoire in New Brunswick and elsewhere.



Examples of Morrises' work exhibited

The son of a wealthy Montreal merchant, James Wilson Morrice, left Osgoode Hall, Toronto, for Paris at the turn of the century, where he soon became an important member of what was to be known as 'Le Chat Blanc' society consisting of such painters and writers as Charles Conder, Maurice Prendergast, Somerset Maugham and Arnold Bennett.

From the time of his arrival in Europe about 1890, his work evidenced the influence of a succession of masters beginning with the Barbizon painter, Henri Harpignies, under whom he studied and from whom he derived his early sombre, olive green palette. In 1892, he visited Dordrecht, Holland, where Whist-

ler was painting and immediately adopted the great American's 'art for art's sake' philosophy along with his monochromatic palette and technique of applying large areas of one hue well brushed into the canvas. The first significant influence on his work resulted from his discovery of Matisse with whom Morrice spent two years in Algiers creating brightly hued compositions of loose, spontaneous brushstrokes.

All these periods are represented in this major exhibition of the work of Morrice by the loan from The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts of the complete contents of the Morrice Gallery. Supplementing this will be the Beaverbrook Art Gallery's own significant collection of Morrises along with

selections from one of the most important private collections of the oeuvre of this Canadian impressionist. The last time these works were seen together was in the Morrice exhibition organized for The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts by William R.M. Johnston in 1965.

Also included in the exhibition will be "View from the Window, North Africa" c. 1912 - 1913, which Morrice executed at the same time as Matisse was painting the identical view.

Examples of Morrice's Canadian landscapes, Dutch canal scenes, St. Malo beachscapes, West Indian and North African landscapes are all present in this exhibition of perhaps, the most internationally recognized of all Canadian artists.

'Creative Art Event' features violinist

The first UNB-STU Creative Art event scheduled for 1977 is violinist Masuko Ushioda, acclaimed by critics on four continents as an artist of exceptional lyricism.

Miss Ushioda will perform Tuesday, Feb. 1, at 8:15 in the Fredericton Playhouse. The program consists of Beethoven's Sonata in G major, Opus 30, No. 3; Bach's Partita in E major; Bartok's Sonata No. 2 for violin and piano and; Fantaisie, Opus 159 by Schubert. She will be accompanied by Irma Vallecillo.

Tickets are free of charge to UNB and STU students and subscribers and may be picked up after Jan. 24 at the Art Centre, Memorial Hall.

Miss Ushioda won the Tchaikovsky Competition in 1966, the year after she made her European debut. Since then she has played with virtually every major orchestra in Europe and the U.S., including extensive tours with Zubin Mehta and the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

She has toured the Soviet Union twice and South America as well as the Orient where the response by critics has been phenomenal. Two Chicago newspapers said the performance was a seldom encountered level of musicianship and understanding. In Paris Les Beaux-Arts critic said he had rarely heard such magnificent purity of sound, and playing with such nuance.

New York Times critic Harold Schoenberg called her performance with the New York Philharmonic, conducted by Seiji Ozawa, a sympathetic and brilliant performance. Amsterdam's Algemmen Handelsblad said "she let us hear the purest poetry, and put new life into Tchaikovsky's violin music."

Miss Ushioda began her study with Mme. Anna Ono and graduated from the famed Toho School of Music in Tokyo. She continued her study at the Leningrad Conservatory under Michael Weiman, and more recently, in Switzerland with Joseph Szigeti.

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