

Backstage at the Festival



JASNA STEFANOVIC

HURRAH! The enthusiastic Desna Dancers, representing the Ukrainian students' club, were one of the best received acts in the multicultural show last Friday. The men's aerobic eight foot leaps generated loud rounds of applause.

Hispanics raise eyebrows

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ing of the discrepancies.

On the more curious side was a performance by Torkel Olsen, a Swedish exchange student. He made a nonchalant entrance waving the blue and yellow Swedish flag and then proceeded to demonstrate his musical ability in a solo recital of three folk songs. His presence added a certain refinement to the evening's proceedings. Olsen should be commended for his personal initiative in wanting to participate at the festival, without being formally invited.

Honourable mention should go to Donnette Miller with her captivating Jamaican dialogue and song. The audience immensely enjoyed the humour of her actions though it is questionable as to how many people actually understood her lingo. This particular piece added a definite variety to the show, and Miller even offered the audience an encore.

The flavour of the festival was brought out with the detail and authenticity of the costumes, all of which were excellent.

The item which created the most controversy was "A Play of Sad Hope" by the Hispanic Students' Association. The content of the play dealt with the oppression of Latin Americans under the present American foreign policy. While this may have been a rather strong statement,

people's views of the skit and its place within the Multicultural Festival were mixed. Audience response ranged from "Let them make a statement if they want to" to "they should know what they're doing . . . came off as insincere, an ill-thought event."

In response as to why the Hispanic students decided to make a political statement at the festival, the narrator, Sandy MacIntyre said, "Multiculturalism focuses on non-cultural aspects; dance, food, etcetera. We look beyond that and would like to see unification of cultures on campus."

Although the first half of the show was wrought with technical difficulties which ranged from program changes to audio-visual problems, the audience seemed to be forgiving in its critique of the lack of cohesion. Another flaw was the apparent dis-interested attitude of some of the performers. One of the performers even chewed gum throughout his performance.

All in all the program was a great improvement over previous years. Much of the credit should go to Michael Latchana, the Social and Cultural Director of the Council of the York Students Federation (CYSF). He has proven himself to be worthy of his position. Hopefully in future years the CYSF should hold off increasing the size of the festival and maybe work on fine tuning the details.

Excalibur reporter Meiyin Yap took part in the Malaysian/Singaporean presentation at the Multicultural Festival. Here she offers her insights on the backstage excitement.

By MEIYIN YAP

"Come on, you have to be kidding. You want to get changed in the Ross building?! I'm going to trip over my sonkette (a traditional Malaysian long, straight skirt with gold thread weaved through it) all the way across to Burton," I exclaimed.

The loud chatter in the women's bathroom provided an atmosphere of excitement as we scrambled about trying to put on our costumes for the 3rd Annual Multicultural Festival.

"You know, I never even wear this at home. Pants are so much more comfortable," commented Helen as she fastened her belt over the sonkette.

"Better make it tight! One of the girls back at my old school had her sonkette slip off during the dance!" warned Suzi.

"Drat. How do you make the folds in this sonkette? Liza, can you help me do this?" I asked as I waddled over in the oversized skirt. The sonkette is a large piece of material sewn together to form a wide tube that one steps into—since its width is approximately three times the size of the wearer, a special folding method is used to arrange the skirt properly.

After changing into our costumes, some of the girls wandered over to Burton. Our hard-sought guys (due to the reluctance of the men to dance, one of the instructors had to disguise (?) herself as a male dancer) had yet to show up to change into their costumes. In groups of two or three, participants for the Malaysian-Singaporean Students Association Folk Dance event trickled into the official change room downstairs at the Burton Auditorium. Next door, the Italian-Canadian Association members were changing into their costumes. A few of the younger boys tried to peek through as we finished adding the touches to our make-up.

"Where's the guys? Where's the guys?" exclaimed Liza as she rushed into the room.

"I'm so nervous! My hands are all clammy," wailed Helen. Her parents were going to watch her performance.

It seemed like everyone was running about doing "last minute" things as the first couple of events were performed.

"I can't find the spears for the guards."

"Where's the cushions for the King and Queen?"

Suddenly, our little instructor, Suzi shrieked, "Hey! Find everybody . . . quick! they changed the order of the performances!"

"Who's got the tapes? Who's playing the music for us?! Shit, we're

going on soon. Where's Nana?" exclaimed another dancer.

"Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to . . ."

A deep bass drum thumped out a majestic beat as we began to assemble ourselves on stage to perform the coronation of the King. The event was to be a serious affair but some of us found it quite hard to keep a straight face. Our "King" usually bopped about campus in his perpetual sweats yet here he was looking ever so regal as he accepted the dagger.

"Gerald looks so majestic!" tittered one of the dancers.

A somewhat belated clap announced the beginning of the entertainment for the King. As we filed onto the stage, the focus of all the eyes seemed to hit us like a sledgehammer. Frozen smiles and nervous eyes faced the audience. Added to the stage fright, we realized that the guy that was playing the tape had already started the music. Our smiles seemed to be carved into our faces as we realized we didn't know who to catch up to the music. With frantic waves, I finally got up and asked the audio man to re-start the music.

Within a few bars, we started relaxing . . . a bit.

"Smile!" I whispered out of the side of my mouth. Some of the girls were still a little stiff . . .

The audience rewarded us with a loud round of applause as we finished the first dance. The lively beat of the following dance got the whole audience clapping and whistling. The practices over the last two weeks paid off as the guys even performed their steps to the beat of the music. The enthusiastic audience finally encouraged a few of the guys to smile with their loud clapping.

I sat out for the second dance so I was able to watch the crowd's reaction. I noticed that our "Queen," Siew Fung, had trouble keeping a serious look on her face. Around York, she was the social director for the Malaysian-Singaporean Students Association and responsible for organizing the whole effort. The audience was so receptive that all of us were enjoying ourselves immensely as we finished our performance. The surge of adrenalin energized us so much that we screamed and laughed as we left the stage to the loud applause. It had been worth every minute of practice!!



PLASMA PRODUCTIONS

PIG FACE: An anonymous Excal foodaholic gets her just desert, collapsing after four smorgasboard platefuls of Festival entrees. Yet after this scene, she returned to the Iranian booth for yet another helping of "zereshk polo", (zaphron rice), her favourite dish that evening.

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