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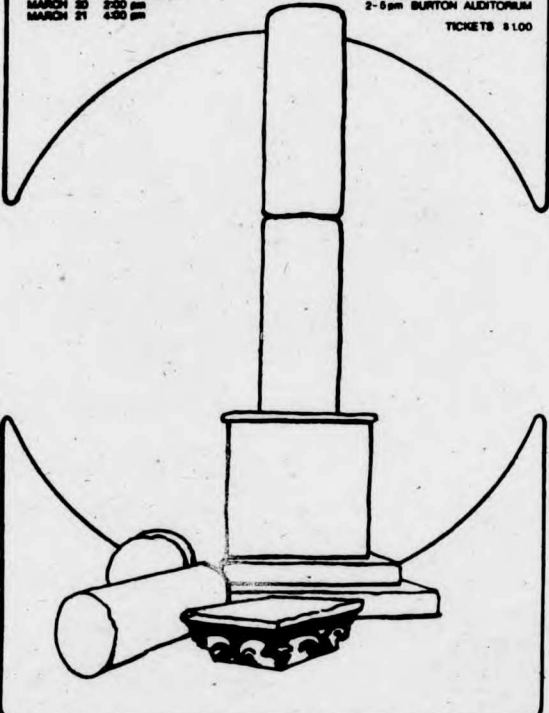
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**THE TRAGEDY OF
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TICKETS \$1.00



YORK UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE

Munro's blown muse

Ronald Ramage

Don Munro's play *Shortages* resurfaced at Stong Theatre last weekend. It has greatly improved since its premiere a year ago, yet it remains deeply flawed.

The play lacks clarity and focus. Is it about life as an educated bum, or interpersonal relationships? Is it about Hart, the highly educated dropout, who is given the lion's share of attention, or about Penny, believer in the corporate feminist dream, who undergoes personal-ity changes?

The play attempts to straddle the polar opposites of a sharply satiric view of life with a warm compassion for its characters, and falls into the gulf it creates. The play delivers weighty messages, but at the level of high-school profundities. It sets up some very funny jokes, but milks them far past dry and tired.

The directing, by Ross Skene, compounds these faults. The actors' energy remains constant throughout, melting their voices into ignorable drones. Instead of dialogues, the audience witnesses simultaneous monologues. There is rarely a sense of interaction—the characters hearing and responding to each other. Rather, the actors wait for their cues to start their speeches each time.

The use of a very shallow, very wide stage creates problems in focusing audience attention—problems that are not successfully solved.

Despite these flaws, there are many redeeming qualities. The author has a knife-edge wit that is entertaining. The director's

thoughtful stage choreography enhances the play's messages.



Most of the acting is first-rate, the supporting ensemble adding

an extra polish to the production. Mary Lawlis, as Penny, is tearfully earnest, pulling at the heartstrings and Gerald Parwinchuk, as Duncan, is the epitome of the cynical, drunken professor.

But Gerry Quigley plainly steals the show. He plays his role of Piggens, the mop boss-man, to the hilt. The delight he takes in telling Penny he has met another woman, and "I like her better", is a great moment, one of the play's treasures.

If this play comes up for a third gasp, I hope Don Munro takes shears to its over-written dead-weight.

Films by the sea

Roman W. Pawlyszyn

The work of the National Film Board is world-renowned for its inventiveness and consistent high quality, something native Canadians are all-too-unaware of. Harbourfront's month-long retrospective of award-winning NFB films will give us the opportunity to join the world in recognizing the board's stature. The retrospective opened last week with a screening of the six shorts submitted for the 1981 Academy Awards.

Four of the films featured the board's speciality—animation. *Getting Started* is the uproariously comic tale of a goofy-looking pianist who can't seem to get down to the necessary business of practising. Roch Carrier narrates *The Sweater*, an adaptation of his short story, "The Hockey Sweater". *A Sufi Tale* uses an

unusual technique: drawings are made in black plasticine on a brightly-lit translucent background, creating stark visual effects that resemble moving woodcuts. Both *The Sweater* and *A Sufi Tale* will be screened again March 17 and are highly recommended.

The remaining films of the evening were live-action documentaries. *Black Ice*, a short on iceboat racing, exhibited some dazzling vantage-point cinematography that had the capacity Harbourfront audience gasp.

The NFB series continues through the end of March, Mondays to Wednesdays at 7:30 p.m. Admission is free. Animation fans should also note that *Special Delivery*, the Board's 1979 Oscar winner, will be shown as part of the REEL & SCREEN's gala free extravaganza coming March 19.

Sooner or Nader...

Michael Monastyrskij

If you don't laugh during the Open Circle Theatre's production of *We Can't Pay, We Won't Pay*, its ad promises, the theatre will give you your money back. After last Friday's performance of Dario Fo's play it's obvious that the Open Circle wasn't risking a single centavo.

We Can't Pay, We Won't Pay is a wild comedy with a strong political message. The story is based on a true bit of current affairs involving enraged Italian housewives who rioted against rising food costs, but it'd be safe to say the story is not a letter accurate account of the revolt. Somehow it doesn't seem likely that while hiding stolen food from police, someone would K.O. a policeman and then use a helium pump to make him pregnant. It is only slightly less credible that a

husband would be convinced that his wife is five months pregnant but didn't look it before, because bandages were keeping her belly in.

The Open Circle Theatre gets away with this and other oddities giving new meaning to the term 'Theatre of the Absurd' because it has no pretensions of presenting the story as factual.

The play is full of amusing incongruities. Alan Booth, playing a Maoist policeman, quotes the Great Helmsman this way: "Where the broom does not sweep, the dust does not vanish of itself." Not a funny line, you say. Well, it becomes one when the cop finishes the quotation with a nonchalant "know what I mean."

There are other political jokes. When a cop points a gun at Giovanni and his buddy Luigi

(Domenic Cuzzocrea) one of the pair warns the officer to be careful because "every time you trip, a guy gets killed."

The play's political orientation is evident in that Giovanni, a member of the Communist party, is one of the story's Establishment figures. His wife Antonia (Roxanne Moffet), along with Luigi, spends much of her time criticizing Giovanni for being too law-abiding.

While it is obvious at the end of the play that everyone has had a good time, it isn't clear whether the onlookers have accepted the play's left-wing politics. Although the plot contains enough political humour to make the one serious speech relevant, you have to wonder if the politics weren't overshadowed by the slapstick.

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