

MacIvor's *Jump* is exciting and innovative theatre

by Harry Rudolfs

Attempting a dada performance entails a great risk. Art has to be comprehensible to some of the people some of the time — the avant-garde too often leaves too many out in the cold.

However, director Daniel MacIvor and composer Tom Walsh have done a superb job in putting together *Jump*, an exquisite minimalist work which should appeal to all theatre goers.

The multi-layered comedy spoofs marriage and examines the facades inherent in life and love. *Jump* manages to transcend normality while tugging strongly at the veins of social consciousness and mores.

MacIvor makes every bit of the stage, lighting, score and choreography work together, developing a series of highly-textured vignettes that fit together like a hand and glove.

The story revolves around a couple and their interaction with the rest of the cast, including two young girls dressed in identical private school uniforms, an older mother-in-law figure, a greasy Valentino-type M. C. and a technician/caretaker dressed in coveralls.

The entire plot unfolds without narrative or dialogue — the only three words spoken belong to the girls. But the text is jammed with jokes: visual, musical and theatrical. The curtain

THEATRE

Jump
written and directed by Daniel MacIvor
Theatre Passe Muraille
until February 23

goes up but flaps a few times; the actors perform a ballet between curtained doorways that is reminiscent of the three stooges.

The roles are deeply stylized caricatures, but this enhances rather than detracts from their believability. They appear caught in the audience's eye, but at the same time they maintain their self-conscious identities. The result is a performance which seems to overflow the bounds of reality.

MacIvor manages to break situations into redundant patterns which have the effect of a skipping record. This takes the motions out of their regular context, making them visual fetishes. Tom Walsh's musical phrases shift along with the repetitive dances, melding from disco to tango to country or polka and often drift to sound like Cage or Scriabin.

MacIvor manages to turn a bridal shower into a hilarious tribal folk-dance. He treats the stag similarly as the groom and M.C. swing each other around in a type of cartoon dance while the husband-to-be consumes vast quantities of liquor with inevitable results. Luckily, the technician, who has a moderating and

orchestrative influence over the players, hustles the groom off-stage before he has a chance to spray the audience with vomit.

The parade of toasters which follows is a brilliant iconization of the wedding gift cult and a good piece of ballet. Afterwards, the female members watch a toaster image on video. Eventually two pieces of blackened toast pop up. The less adventurous of the two girls then steps up and touches between her and the image, which turns into a blue field.

This leads to the most hypnotic of MacIvor's scenes: the two girls stand face to face in profile in front of the screen and assume the classical gestalt shape of a goblet and/or two faces. Of course, we all know it's impossible for the mind to hold more than one image at the same time, don't we?

Stylization and sparsity makes the play successful. There are very few props. After the marriage ceremony, the husband and wife both try to climb a ladder which appears behind a curtain set further back in the stage. Both of them rely on their partner to catch them, but the husband freezes part-way up and is carried, as if in the grip of rigor mortis, and placed in a toy wagon which the technician has provided.

The play ends with the two girls playing on the ladder, but I won't spoil the climax. *Jump* is one of the most exciting and innovative pieces of experimental theatre to be staged in Toronto in some time.



Jump for Dada theatre

Caroline Gillis and Ken McDougall share an exciting and innovative moment from Daniel MacIvor's new play, *Jump*. Almost without dialogue, the play is a superb, minimalist work which should appeal to everybody who loves original theatre.

The Miser not stingy entertainment

by Sara Singer

It's Wednesday night...halfway through the week. I'm stressed, tired and not too keen on having to review a play. Despite this poor attitude, Vanier College's production of Moliere's *The Miser* managed to amuse and entertain me for two and a half hours.

Fred Thury, a Vanier College professor and director of previous Vanier productions, once again lent his talents, directing a strong musical adaptation of the comedy.

The story, simple and timeless, is about love prevailing over avarice. Elise loves Valere. Her brother Cleante loves Valere's sister Marianne. But Harpagon, the selfish and bitter father of Elise and Cleante, forbids both the couples from uniting. Harpagon's excessive greed is avenged in the end, to the delight of the audience.

Space is employed well in the Vanier cafeteria-turned-theatre, where the play was performed. Thury and his cast, using a simple set and

THEATRE

The Miser
written by Moliere
directed by Fred Thury
Vanier College Hall

costumes, made this practical space visually rich.

Shane Jeffery, offered an exaggerated satirical performance as Harpagon, a greedy old miser. Fiona MacCool gave a hilarious, somewhat anachronistic interpretation of Frosine the matchmaker, epitomizing the nouveau rich woman with no class or taste. Other comical types appeared throughout the play, performed with equal skill.

The music, written by Robert McCarroll and Fred Thury, was happy, playful and pleasant. It contained many clever and satirical lyrics. The singing was consistently strong throughout, with Theresa Brown (Elise) and Sara Marlowe (Marianne) revealing vocal talent.

The Miser was an enjoyable and uplifting theatrical experience. It was a pleasant surprise for a Wednesday.

Kicking Bear talks about his culture

by Josh Marins

The Trial of Kicking Bear is a gripping example of great Canadian theatre. The play's powerful ability to make the horror of the destruction of the North American Native at the hands of the White Man is both mesmerizing and bitterly entertaining.

The play takes place at a time when most Natives had been driven off their land and were being systematically destroying by the US government.

One part of Native life was the Ghost Dance Movement. Followers believed that when they performed the dance, the Lakota people would regain their traditional way of life.

The play is a series of monologues that Kicking Bear, famed leader of the Ghost Dance Movement, delivers to an agent of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show while in jail. The agent

THEATRE

The Trial of Kicking Bear
written and performed by Michael C. Lawrenchuk
directed by Robert Smith
Factory Theatre
until February 23

offers to get Kicking Bear out, provided he agrees to perform the dance in the Show's European tour. The monologues take place over time; we see Kicking Bear rapidly become a shell of a man as he relates the destruction of his tribe, his friends and his way of life.

At times, his descriptions were so shocking that I felt tears and shame for the injustices committed by the White Man. Images such as a baby trying to nurse from his dead mother's breast moments before the Army throws him in the air and shoots him fill the story. Fortunately, Michael C. Lawrenchuk, the author and performer of this one man production, intersperses mild humour to blunt the edge of these horrors.

The saddest part of the play is watching Kicking Bear come to grips with the loss of Native traditions. He

occasionally talks about the missionary who comes to advise him to let go of his religion or burn in hell. It becomes obvious that the cross, which he always respected as being holy, has come to represent pain, as do the bars of his cell, through which the first light of the play emerges in the shape of a cross.

Lawrenchuk's ability to fill the black cell with vivid pictures of Native life is fantastic. For a one person show to work, it needs a strong actor and a great writer, and Lawrenchuk proves to be both.

Robert Stevens' lighting design is also excellent. As Kicking Bear walks around, black stripes of shadow representing the bars of his cell hit him. As he dances, a red light comes up, representing a campfire at first; but, as he lets his body be enveloped by it, the light makes him appear to be covered in blood.

The Trial of Kicking Bear isn't just another story about what happened to North American indigenous people. We might even glean some insight into the great injustice that is part of our history.

Cohen theatrical adaptation a Loser

by Prasad Bidaye

Not many can deny the unique passion of Leonard Cohen's writing. Similarly, only a few have the ability to recreate it. In a current adaptation of his experimental novel, *Beautiful Losers*, the Threshold Theatre Group has forgotten that and failed.

The role of the nameless author (Glenn Rea), is played like a stereotypical American college grad who desires to expand his mind with the darker sides of life. Unfortunately this is totally unlike Cohen's character, a corrupt intellectual whose passage through the novel involves his inevitable absorption into those darker shades.

Cohen's character is further destroyed by director Mark Cassidy's decision to represent him as two personas: the first Rea, the second Katy Scaife.

The acting is also poor. None of

THEATRE

Beautiful Losers
based on the novel by Leonard Cohen
The Theatre Centre
until February 16

the actors seem to "feel" their lines, rendering them unable to give the play the sensuality one experiences when reading the novel. However, this could be the fault of Cassidy's script.

This month's trend seems to be for directors to adapt twentieth century literary icons (ie. Burroughs, Kafka,) into more visual media. Like *Naked Lunch*, it would be impossible to transfer everything from *Beautiful Losers* into a script. It makes even less sense to adapt it for theatre; Cohen's writing is far too cerebral to be dramatised. Much of his text is lost, summarised and loosely connected, draining the story of its excitement.

Although this adaptation of *Beautiful Losers* is disappointing, it contains a few things to be enjoyed. The lusty moments are believable and sincere; I commend the actors and actresses for their artistry and commitment in those scenes.

Considering Leonard Cohen was one of the most credible and unique artists of the sixties, the theatre adaptation of *Beautiful Losers* is disappointing, merely a psychedelic adventure. The sixties' connotations are obvious, and stereotypical; passive, lame, the play lacks the sensual destructiveness so crucial to Cohen's novel.

The psychedelia got desperate at the end: as the darkness dawned, a dual-patterned lightshow flashed on and off. But if the theatre hadn't filled with the subtle scent of marijuana, I'm sure the bohemians in the audience would not have enjoyed the show as much.



Michael C. Lawrenchuk stars in the title role of *The Trial of Kicking Bear*. The play has the ability to make the destruction of Natives both mesmerizing and bitterly entertaining. It will be performed at the Factory Theatre until February 23.