

The Gateway fine arts

furiously felicitous felinity

Studio Theatre has presented an excellent production of Tennessee Williams' "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof." The performance's greatest merit was the tension which is inherent in this violent play and which each of the leading actors successfully makes the basis of his characterization.

Fran Belzburg portrays Maggie's anguished longing for her husband, her fear of poverty and her nervous "catty" camouflage magnificently. She injects a desperation into the role which makes it completely credible that she should create a fictional pregnancy to gain an inheritance and then calculatingly dupe Brick into making yet another lie come true.

Robert Mumford and Tom Peacocke give the most outstanding performances. Mr. Mumford as Brick succeeds in a most difficult role: he forces the audience to understand his compulsive drinking. He does this not so much by dialogue as by his powerful stage presence and his self-imposed isolation from the others.

Mr. Peacocke as Big Daddy dominates the stage all the time he is present. The scene in which the hating, dying old man confronts his son Brick becomes the most powerful episode in the play. It is at this time that Brick is forced to realize that he became responsible for the death of a friend by refusing to recognize or feel compassion for the homosexuality the friend found in the relationship.

Brick retaliates by telling Big Daddy his truth: he is dying. This moment becomes the dramatic climax of this production. Which is unfortunate since the last act is yet to come.

Mickey MacDonald plays Big Mama, the querulous, stubborn old woman whose marriage has been irreparably tainted by greed and who, in spite of her greed and her husband's rejection of her, does love him. Miss MacDonald incorporates all these traits fairly successfully in her characterization, although she rarely realizes the full potential of her role.

Mae (Elan Gibson) and Gooper (Ken Argyll-Smith) are effective at the beginning of the play; however, as they take a more prominent part in the action, Miss Gibson especially tends to overplay the sarcasm in her role.

Director Franck Bueckert has failed to maintain an even pace throughout the performance. It lags very badly after the Big Daddy-Brick scene. He does, however, make excellent use of a well-designed set to both form and complement the actors' interpretations of their roles.

—Shirley Neuman

dinosaurs democracy and destiny

The critic is nothing but a seasoned spectator and with a modicum of discernment can distinguish the good from the bad. But it gets tedious, for lately one gets the feeling that the trend is not to the good, or to the bad, but simply to the mediocre.

And who cares? What differences does it make if Canada never produces a Louis Sullivan, or a Piet Mondrian or a T. S. Eliot?

Let the seminal influences spring up where they may—we'll follow in thirty years. We are the new world dinosaurs; we lumber along, supporting our enormous bulk in the waters of American and European economic and cultural investments.

But we do try. Even Academy Six tries. We go to art shows, write collegial reviews and ask in despair, "What is missing?"

Clive Bell said it: SIGNIFICANT FORM. There does not exist and has not existed since the Bauhaus a unified, directed attempt to evolve a new form as a vehicle for meaning.

In the existentialist vein, life consists of imposing form upon a meaningless universe. Perhaps this is too dramatic, but without form, expression becomes Rilke-like, "a howl among howls."

We have howled long enough. Is there an answer?

The answer lies in genius, some obscure Aladdin, exchanging old lamps for new.

And it lies in history, for we are creatures of the ages. We have emerged from the Stone Age of Freudianism; the dark ages of the Decadants. What next? A new Gothic perhaps?

Whatever, the new form, it must be one of significant, nourishing concern. Concern with what is HAPPENING: Not just to "us," to you and I, but to the world at large, "an involvement in the rites of the universe," if you like.

This is not an advocacy to some quasis-mystic, airy-fairy outlook, but simply a plea for the awareness of one's own significance and potential, in relation to the world at large.

History has taught us that all great movements (and keep in mind that this is what we are anticipating: the new movement; the new form; the new direction in the arts) have been dictated by events. Genius, although a universal, is also dictated by history.

The relevant, historic fact is this: the arts are stagnant; society is forging ahead. To close the gap will be an exhausting process, but it can and will be done.

The first step is education. Not in the snobbish, BA sense of the word, but in a simple cultivation of good taste.

Ortega Y Gasset has reached the nexus of the problem: he maintains that the cultural activities which in the past have been reserved for the elite have now been pre-empted by the masses who do not have the cultural background to fully appreciate them. This is one of the very real evils of the fully democratic system, for it fosters a prostitution of the arts.

This must cease, and will with

the emergence of the new elite. For aristocracy is not a question of blood lines, but one of an intuitive sensitivity to excellence. It is the responsibility of the educator and the educated to respect, cultivate and, YES, rely upon this sensitivity.

The intelligentsia is in position to demand excellence. At present they don't. We are not "dissociated man," to quote Fromm; we are undemanding man.

Once we learn to demand quality, we will prepare the way for the artisan, the Whooping Crane of the art world.

With the resurrection of the artisan will come, inevitably, a certain degree of de-urbanization, for the city is, and rightly so, devoted to rapid, voluminous production, a preoccupation mutually exclusive with the artisan mentality.

The craftsman must precede the artist, in the social and in the individual sense, for the artist without craft is "but a paltry thing."

We can justifiably lament the condition of the arts, but we must consider that maybe what we need right now is not a Michaelangelo, but a REALLY GOOD jingle bell designer.

—Jackie Foord

priestman's boys do it yet again

It comes as somewhat of a surprise to me that I am not the embittered cynic I thought I was. This distressing realization suddenly struck me sometime between the Sunday concert of the ESO and the time of writing.

The program for the ESO concert was made up of long German music: Richard Strauss' tone poem "Don Juan," Hindemith's "Mathis der Maler," and the B-flat Major Piano Concerto of Brahms.

Although the orchestra does not have the whiplash virtuosity required for a really mother's-apple-pie performance of, "Don Juan" it presented a coherent reading, and came up with the necessary moomph-aah for the conclusion.

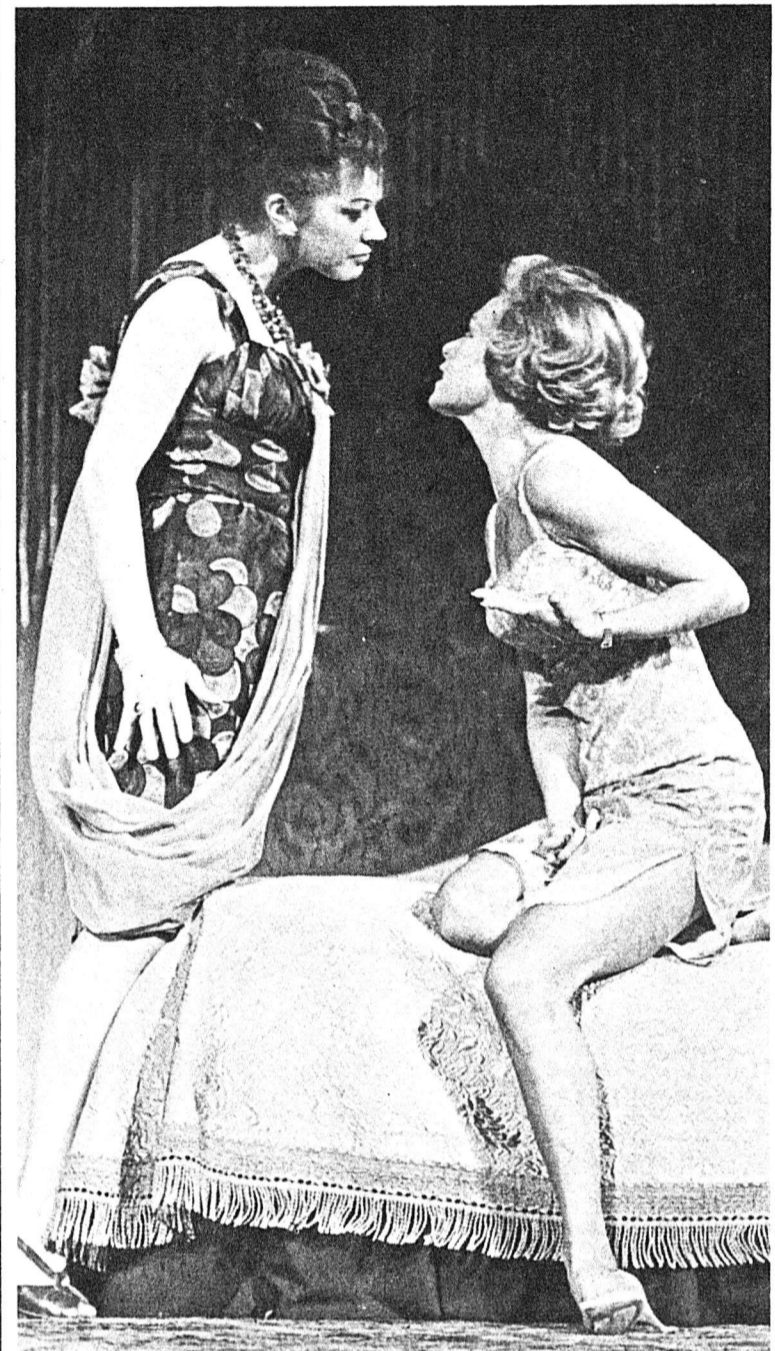
Despite the presence of an imposing soloist (Eugene Istomin) in the Brahms, the real highlight of the afternoon was the Hindemith symphony. Never has the orchestra played more movingly, and never with such technical skill. The brasses were for once almost note-perfect, and Mr. Priestman provided a thorough and understanding conception of the work.

The Brahms Second has been called by somebody or other "a concerto for orchestra with piano obligato," and in every performance of the work that I have heard, the soloist has more or less had to struggle valiantly to cut through the heavy orchestral texture in order to be heard in the first two movements.

But Eugene Istomin is a strong and immensely skilled pianist, and the ESO seemed somewhat cowed by his reputation, with the result that on Sunday the orchestra more or less had to struggle valiantly to be heard over the piano in the first two movements. But the renditions of the andante and the finale were completely unexceptionable, save an occasionally off-key solo cello in the former.

The Music Division Chamber Orchestra had its 1965-66 coming-out on Nov. 22 in Con Hall.

The ensemble has been increased this year to about 25 flamingly-inspired musicians, and the sheer virtuosity of a group so young and inexperienced is quite stupefying (witness this review). Much of the credit must go to



—Blackmore photo

SHOWING THEIR CLAWS—In a scene from the Studio Theatre production of "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof," Maggie (negligee'd) is confronted by Mae (overdressed). The two ladies are, off-stage, Fran Belzburg and Elan Ross Gibson.

Thomas Rolston, the conductor of the orchestra, who has moulded it, and exerts a dynamic control over it.

The program consisted of works by the Divine Quatrumvirate: Bach, Handel, Mozart and Beethoven. The evening opened with a Handel Concerto Grosso, the fourth of Op. 6. Its performance was full of bounce and good fun, and achieved that lucidity and optimism which few composers but Handel could effectively express.

Likewise, the Bach A minor Violin Concerto was lively and exhilarating in its orchestral sections. I thought that the soloist (Ernest Kassian) could have been a little more cheery, but his rendition was more than decently accurate.

The concluding work was Mozart's A Major Piano Concerto, K.414. Of course, everyone knows that Mozart had no peer in the realm of the piano concerto, and the K.414, like most of the others, is sufficient to convince all but the most soppy of sentimentalist that Mozart could lick any Romantic in the house.

As a sort of bizarre change of pace, two soloists were used for the concerto, Linda Zwicker in the first movement, and Margaret Jamison in the last two. Both, I am happy to say, are excellent budding Mozartians, and the performance was most satisfying.

—Bill Beard

fine arts calendar

Citadel Theatre is offering a special rate for students on tickets for Monday-through-Thursday performances: \$1.50 each. Tickets cannot be reserved; pick them up at the door of the theatre. Bring your ID card.

Jeunesses Musicales: Dale Bartlett, pianist—Wednesday—Alberta College—8 p.m.

"Under the Yum Yum Tree" (comedy)—from Wednesday—Citadel Theatre—8:30 p.m.

Male Chorus—Friday, Saturday—Con Hall—8:15 p.m.

"The Tiger" and "The Typists" (one act plays by Murray Schisgal)—Friday through Sunday—Yardbird Suite—9:30 p.m.

Art Mart—Friday, 7-10 p.m.; Saturday, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.—Edmonton Art Gallery.

Film Society (Classic): "Metropolis"—Monday—mp 126—8:15 p.m. (Members).

R. W. Sinclair: paintings and drawings—from Monday—Fine Arts Gallery—7-9 p.m.