

Ominous tale of Nazi persecution

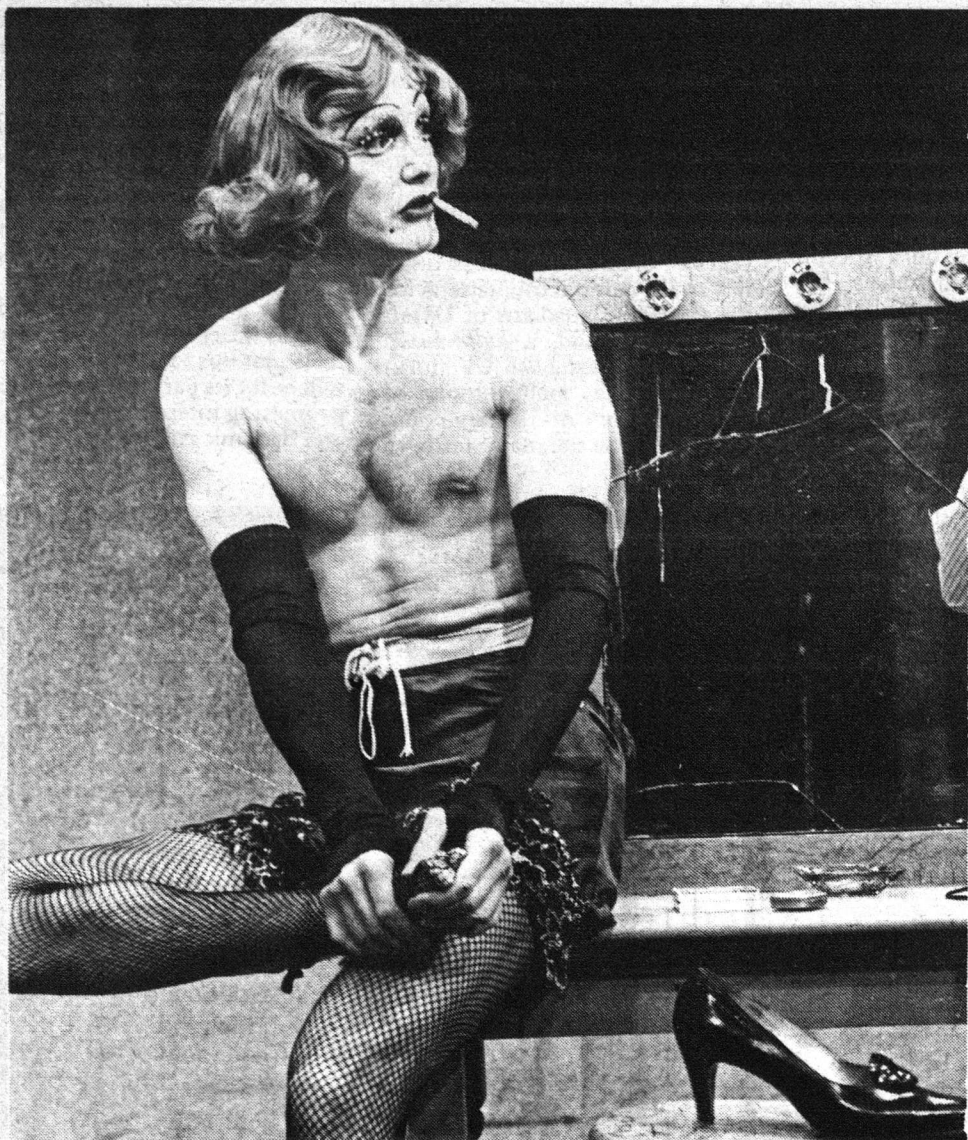


photo Ray Giguere

Minor flaws barely mar excellent play.

Bent
Theatre 3

review by Pat Murphy

Bent is a difficult play to ignore. It deals with the political repression of homosexuals in pre-war Nazi Germany, and raises important questions about sexuality and the rights of the individual. But William Sherman has avoided sensationalizing his subject matter and reducing it to social dogma. Instead, *Bent* is a provocative and disturbing drama, brilliantly conceived and powerfully written. That the play is still effective despite the many flaws in its current staging at Theatre 3 is evidence of the work's quality.

The play opens on a tranquil, even humorous note, Max (John Peters) discovering that he has spent the night with a man (Wolf, played by Jeff Tripp) he doesn't remember meeting.

Max's apologies to his roommate/lover Rudy (played by David Lereany) climax with the arrival of a group of SS men whose knock is mistaken for that of an irate landlord. The scene is at once hilarious and ominous. Unfortunately the appearance of the SS is almost too funny; while the murder of Wolf is still shocking, it loses its impact.

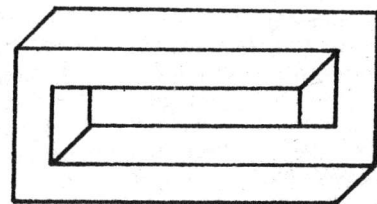
Director Raymond Clarke fails to take advantage of the sense of impending calamity in Sherman's script. At this point, the protagonist is on the run, fleeing for his life. Poor timing and weak acting dissipate much of the energy of the opening events; tighter more concentrated direction seems necessary.

Sherman uses a number of quiet scenes to develop the plot and foreshadow the terror that follows. John Novak as Greta, a sympathetic transvestite, is both touching and believable. Max's clandestine encounter with his uncle, Jeremy Hart, an elderly homosexual content to lead a double life as a family man and a procurer of young men, captures the tone of the times.

Allan Stichbury's starkly realistic sets and Robert Hawrelak's sound effects (train whistles and droning mechanical hums) give Max's flight, capture, and imprisonment all the more dramatic impact.

John Peter's portrayal of Max is brimming with vitality and relentlessness, avoiding the mire of self-pity and desperation that he could have bogged down in. Similarly, Brian Taylor provides the perfect foil as Horst, the personification of the despair and absurdity of camp life.

Bent is worth seeing. Sherman's social commentary is as relevant as ever and his dramatic sensibilities are awesome. One cannot help but be moved by this play.



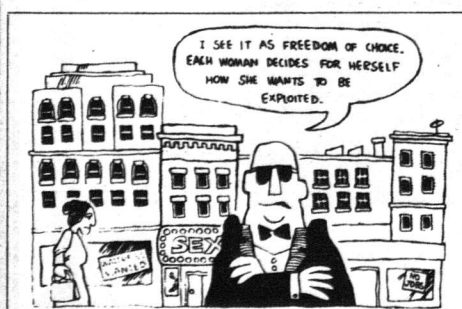
THE CHOPPING BLOCK



Another aesthetics problem

The current firestorm raging in the Gateway offices is the subject of prostitution. Never mind why; suffice it to say that most of the interesting news in the world never gets into newspapers.

But why discuss prostitution in the Arts page? Well, like many problems the prostitution problem has its roots in aesthetics (e.g. if architects got off their butts and designed housing for Garneau that was as pleasing to the eye as the existing houses, there would be no furore).



prise, surprise) lust, an aesthetic affinity so palpable that only aesthetics professors have missed it. Not all of this affinity can be accommodated by lawful monogamy and adultery, since there are, and always will be, men so foolish or unappetizing they can get nookie only by paying cash. And there will always be women desperate enough or shrewd enough to take advantage of these poor fish, and their aesthetic affinity.

Stating these facts and drawing the conclusion that prostitution is ultimately insoluble leads local feminists to conclude that I approve of the practice, and that I have doubts about the upcoming millenium when, through the miracle of consciousness-raising, engineers will behave like divinity students and every scrubwoman will earn \$50/hour like the lowliest hooker, and will not be lured or forced into the street. The latter conclusion is certainly well-grounded.

Exhibitionists

A gentleman just whisked into the office and plopped down a poster announcing the upcoming appearance of the St. Cecilia Orchestra at Convocation Hall.

"There," he said, "Now it's official." Whereupon he added that we had ignored the world's greatest flute player who had been on campus last week, mumbled something about our coverage of the Good Brothers downtown (?), and swooshed out the door.

Since, like Pontius Pilate, he would not stay for an answer I must reply here. First, what gets covered depends on volunteers, as I said two weeks ago. Or myself. Since the St. Cecilia Orchestra appears on a layout night the latter option is out.

Second, what gets into "Up and Coming" announcements depends on many factors, the first being space.

Second, related to space, is my policy of not announcing well known events (e.g. Citadel and Theatre 3 plays).

Third, notices appear only once, with few exceptions, and usually during

the week before they occur.

Fourthly, too large a selection of notices is daunting to the reader, so I chop a good deal of the incoming baloney. A guesstimate puts the elimination rate at about 90-95%. The Music Department which averages about six events a week is usually reduced to one item, which I, in my infinite perversity, decide is the most important. Virtuosos don't rate - the architect is more important than the draftsman - so the flutist was axed in favor of a wind ensemble performing Strauss and Mozart.

Lastly, the complainant should console himself with the fact that classical music devotees are a rather fixed elite, and advertising attracts very few newcomers from punk and rock circles. I know. Every time I tell someone that Bach is better than the Clash or a puff of Columbian they stare at me as if I was insane.

Miscellaneous

A *Who's Who in Music* directory of musicians, instructors, retailers, marketers, promoters, instrument repairmen and designers, etc. is being drawn up for the Edmonton area. If you want to blow your horn in the guide phone Larry Wanagas at 451-2321 or 454-8434.

Warner Brothers phoned us last week, long-distance from Toronto, to ask if they could send us a press release. No wonder record prices are going up.

FILMS

Solzhenitsyn's *Children are Making a Lot of Noise in Paris*; April 2; 7:30 p.m.; Humanities AV L-1; Free. The traffic on the road to Damascus is always pretty thick; atheists getting religion, Christians mutating into Marxists, Marxists going mystic, vice-versa, et cetera and ad nauseum. This film, the third in a series by Michael Rubbo and the National Film Board, deals with one such gang of converts - French communists jumping to anti-communism via the latest prophet of spiritual values, Solzhenitsyn. Sounds

interesting, unless of course you are tired of the endless about-faces of philistines. Added bonus: Rubbo himself will be present for a discussion after the film.

It's a Third, Third, Third World; April 4, 5; Saturday 4-11, Sunday 1:30-7:30; Lister Hall; Free. This film festival sounds like the usual sentimental left-wing bilge to me, but, as Alison says, this may only indicate my small "f" fascist leanings. Take a tip from a cabbie - the working class is just as swinish and greedy as the capitalist class, just less successful.

MUSIC



Doug

Leo

Leo Kottke and Jesse Winchester; April 14; 8 p.m.; Jubilee Auditorium; Tickets: Mike's, HUB, West Den, Bullwinkles. I don't know about you, but I'm going to be there.

Leon Rosselson & Roy Bailey, Bernie Evans; April 4; 7:30 p.m. South Side Folk Club; Tickets: Keen Kraft Music, HUB.

Doug and the Slugs; April 9; 7:30 a.m.; SUB Theatre; Tickets: Mike's, HUB and all BASS outlets.

U of A Stage Bands; March 31; 8 p.m.; Convocation Hall; Free. Music by Thad Jones, Count Basie, Woody Herman and others.

READINGS

Robin Jenkins; March 31; 12:30 p.m.; Humanities Centre 1-15, Free. Mr. Jenkins is a Scottish novelist, praised by the *Scotsman* and the *Glasgow Herald*.