### Big Blue Angel treacherous; Small Shoemaker prodigious

The Shoemaker's Prodigious Wife Federico Garcia Lorca Theatre Baraka at Chinook Theatre through November 19

Treacheries of the Blue Angel
Gyllian Raby
Northern Light Theatre at Jubilee Auditorium
through November 26

by Mike Evans

"Art above all else. From the smallest theatre to the most eminent, the word "Art" should be written in auditoriums and dressing rooms; for if not we shall have to write the word "commerce" or some other that I dare not say." - Federico Garcia Lorca

In this currently insane period in Edmonton theatre there are at least two productions that play fast and loose with conventional notions of theatre. The first is a collective production of a fifty-plus year old surrealist farce at the Chinook Theatre; the second is a new play which grew out of serious, latenight discussions playing the Kaasa Theatre at the Jubilee Auditorium. There are valuable lessons to be learned in the comparison of the two. First, the new play.

Northern Light's Treacheries of the Blue Angel, a video musical written and directed by Artistic Director Gyllian Raby, is an ambitious project of potentially daunting complexity. The play attempts to critically examine the effect of and assumptions underlying film noire and the femme fatale, sexual stereotyping in rock videos, an imagistic culture predisposed to fifteen minutes of fame, sexual obsession and, to a lesser extent, the traditional envelope of fourth wall, naturalistic theatre.

Muchacha Granadina En Un Jardin, by Federico Garcia Lorca. A play by the same dude plays the Chinook through November 19.

The story concerns the manipulation of a young, potential superstar seductress named Rosa (portrayed by Chantelle Jenkins) and her boyfriend/manager Rene (Daniel Libman), by a sexually decadent Argentine filmmaker, Maximillian Sancerre (U of A professor Carl Hare), who is haunted by the ghosts of his wife Maria (Frances Kushner), who he murdered in a fit of passion, and his mentor/competitor Andy Warhol (Randy Birch, video, and Richard Tandrup, live) with

—[Treacheries]
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whom he had a bet as to who would first achieve fame.

What's next? Well, the production intersperses "contemporary" video with live action "history" until the one catches up with the other and the two become synchronous. In between are periodic serenades by the seductress, a kind of tacky film noire MTV sex kitten (or sex goddess?) that are intended to be reminiscent of Marlene Dietrich's singing in the film The Blue Angel.

Eventually, it is made clear that sexual obsession, in this case Sancerre for Rosa, is a reflection of the obsessed imposed upon the object of his/her fantasy. Deflecting the corrupt will of Sancerre and his corrupt plot to render his life as a piece of dissolute, twisted cinematic art, Rosa manages to debunk the femme fatale mythos-"homme fatale" she exclaims — and forces Sancerre to resolve his obsession alone. In a startling rendition of "I think: therefore I am" Hare provides the play with its only real drama as he adopts the disguise of the filmic succubus and pleads to be murdered in his turn. The actual outcome of his final confrontation with Rene is pathetic and unsettling, but by that time the audience is restless and disappointed. Unfortunately, with the exception of Hare and the second act Libman, the play founders in a quagmire of lukewarm performances, thematic confusion, too many unrelated styles and incomprehensible structure. It is too long by half and needs serious attention from a physician.

In contrast, Theatre Baraka's production of Lorca's The Shoemaker's Prodigious Wife is a marvelously inventive, wildly entertaining theatrical spectacle. It too is concerned with the impact of fantasy on reality, but in contrast to Raby's play, Lorca asserts that fantasy is an essential component of life, that it allows men to bear the weight of banality



This treacherous Femme Fatale can be seen at Kaasa theatre in the Jube during the run of Phoenix Theatre's Treacheries of the Blue Angel.

which oppresses them between moments of high drama. The primary difference between this production and that currently offered by Northern Light is nothing less than politically correct pretension. Lorca, assassinated as a subversive leftist revolutionary by the fascist forces in Spain in 1936, knew that simplicity is

wonderful, surprisingly touching examination of peasant life applicable to anyone.

From the play's opening moments, the extraction of a two inch by three inch letter of welcome from the author from a three foot by six foot envelope, the audience is in for a dazzling and continually surprising treat. The company's five actors portray a dozen characters, animate puppets, move scenery and create magic. All of them, Patricia Darbasie, Arne MacPherson, Rebecca Starr, Davina Stewart and Raul Tome deliver engaging, compelling performances, though Stewart and Tome must be singled out for the virtuosity they display in creating several characters, their precision, and economy of movement. Tome also enchants with his sense of comic timing and unusual vocal work. It would be a profound disservice to mention any of the play's finer details but director Karmali deserves special praise for enlivening in a witty and entertaining way ("art must never bore!"), at once heart rending and very funny, an otherwise simple

It is a terrible shame that this play, mounted entirely on the personal resources of the company, has been plagued by small, inconsistent houses while the dismal avant garde of *Treacheries* was sold out at its premiere. Theatre Baraka's *Shoemaker's Wife* is an infinitely more pleasant and rewarding production. If you have even the slightest interest in good theatre or foreign film, patronize this production. You will not see its like again in the near future.

—From[The Shoemaker's] opening moments... the audience is in for a dazzling treat.—

the essence of dramatic power and this play does not collapse under the weight of its own ideals.

The story is simple: a newlywed couple, an aged shoemaker and a vivacious young girl, encounter marital difficulty resulting in the husband's desertion of the wife. In the second act he returns, disguised, discovers the depths of his bride's love for him, and they are reunited. Within this framework is a

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