

Carmen — an engaging performance

by John Berrymore

The curtain failed to rise this past Monday at Dalhousie Theatre's open dress rehearsal of *Sainte-Carmen* of the Main. When you entered the theatre the action had already begun. Montreal's Boulevard St. Laurent was alive before you, with hustlers, hookers, bums, and drag queens all out and waiting for you to come and hear their story.

Throughout the course of the evening their story unfolds and we are forced to see the fate of one who tries to rise from her rank, Carmen! She is the patron saint of all those downtrodden by society and is, of course, condemned for being virtuous.

This play was written by Quebec's foremost playwright, Michel Tremblay. It is, in essence, a Greek tragedy and the hookers and hustlers are an updated version of a Greek chorus chanting as their tragic hero, Carmen, fights her fate. The whole concept is interesting in theory, but Tremblay's form presents some major flaws which cloud the message and direction of the play.

The first dilemma to arise what is the playwright trying to say with his hero. Her symbolic role is constantly in question. Is she the Messiah for the underworld of Montreal, or the oppressed voice of Quebec screaming at the rest of Canada? When we first meet

Quebec. We never really become clear what direction the play is headed, leaving us a little unclear about the message.

The second problem with the play is the ending. The fate of Carmen is a mere footnote in the wings. In a play which shows

the antagonist, and robs the audience of seeing what the entire play has been moving towards.

The play itself was engaging, regardless of the problems which Tremblay has ingrained in the script. It is filled with grotesque images that play on the mind. The

on the story of their patron saint, and once you look towards her they keep you focused.

The actors directly involved in the action of the play were all strong. The performance particularly outstanding was from Regina Fitzgerald, who plays Herelip. She was absolutely stunning and there were moments when the stage seemed to shrink around her creating an atmosphere of intimacy. This energy was beautifully contrasted against the intense energy of the chorus. The performances of Carmen and Maurice, played by Raquel Duffy and James DeGazio, were also engaging. They had a lot to live up to with such a strong supporting cast around them. The scenes which they played together were intense and must have been extremely difficult to perform in front of a live audience.

Dalhousie Theatre Productions first show of the the 90/91 season is well worth seeing. It will be showing at the Sir James Dunn Theatre October 16 - 21. For tickets, or ticket information, see the box office on the main floor of the Dalhousie Arts Centre.



photo by: Karry Doubleday

Carmen she casts a shadow of a cross on the back wall, leading us to go with the Messial image. Yet, later her constant references to her voice leads us to believe there is a deeper symbolism here. She might very well be a walking manifestation of the province of

pimps, hookers, and hustlers strutting the street followed by graphic acts of sexual intimacy by two of the main characters, it is not a lot to ask to see the destiny of a "saint". The ending completely undermines the tension between Carmen and Toothpick,

mere sight of Gloria, played by Joy Renzi, dancing on the stage usurped from Carmen made my stomach turn. The movement of the chorus and their relationship with Carmen is a driving force behind this production. Their collective energy forces you to focus

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