

Masquers miss the mark

The Bacchae is dull and unimaginative

By LYNN SLOTKIN

The production of *The Bacchae*, directed by Cliff Collier and presented by the York Masquers, was dull, unimaginative, and at times, misinterpreted.

Euripides was never keen on the divinity of the gods and in several of his plays he portrayed them as human-like, that is, with frailties, jealousies, and impetuous passions. This was never more true than in *The Bacchae*.

Euripides showed Dionysus, god of wine and fertility, to be a spoiled-brat bully, who tried to prove he was a god by punishing the

people who questioned his divine birth. He casts a spell over the women of Thebes; had them kill Pentheus, a prime disbeliever in him; and then he banished them because they committed a crime.

Collier directed the obvious in the play and therefore nothing new was learned. At one point in the play, Pentheus commented on Dionysus' good looks and long hair. Collier went for the obvious and misinterpreted Pentheus to be a homosexual. Collier failed to acknowledge the insult following the complement. For example, Pentheus said to Dionysus, "You are attractive, at least to women." Or,

"Your curls are long. You do not wrestle, I take it." In other words, Pentheus was also a spoiled brat trying to show his strength by insulting Dionysus in the best way he knew how, by attacking his masculinity.

Werner Herterich as Dionysus looked imposing enough. His finely chiselled looks were right for the part, and he enunciated well. But

what he enunciated were lines that were lifeless, without energy or force. There was no abandon, no wildness. Indeed, all his energies seemed to go into insuring that he didn't stub his toe as he walked barefoot from one end of the stage to the other.

Ken Brown had moments of rage and spark, but only moments. Most of the time he was forcing himself to

show genuine feeling. G. Edward Somonett did a reasonably good job as Cadmus, the old sad, follower of Dionysus, as did Alison Smith, the half-crazed, remorseful Agave.

However, the damage had already been done and a few good performances couldn't help. The only way to describe this production is to quote Bette Midler: "The pits, honey, the pits."

Culture Briefs

York artists on display

A group collection of a half a dozen York artist's works will be on display March 6-9 in Winter's Gallery. The works by the artists include photographs, boxes, post cards and many others pieces. The gallery is open from ten to four and the preview takes place March 5 at 7 p.m.

Cabaret has something new

The Cabaret is planning something new. Barbara Budd, ably abetted by a group of equally talented York students, will present a program of songs and gags of the 30's and 40's tonight and tomorrow in Absinthe Coffee Shop, Winters College. Show times are 9 p.m. and 10:30 p.m. Admission is free and everyone is welcome.

The Master is very absurd

By DANNY ZANBILOWICZ

It seems that one of the simplest tasks facing a modern artist is for him to be absurd.

We all know how some members of the creative ranks, without trying, are remarkably successful; and it is truly incredible what heights of inanity a writer can achieve when he sets half a mind to it.

Phillip Hopcraft has devoted all of his energies to creating a work to confuse and alienate an audience with its blatant absurdity. That he has succeeded with his play *The Master*, is as clear as the play is a tedious and theatrical exercise offering little, if anything, of value for audience consumption.

It is not easy to criticize a play that deals with the absurd, especially if it succeeds in proving its nihilistic point. Because every time the audience protests: "What the hell's going on? This play doesn't make any sense!", the playwright can retort: "Of course it doesn't make any sense. The point is that there is no point, neither to this play, nor to your pathetic lives."

Hopcraft's play is anything but a reflection of our lives. He has thrown a gang of real and fictional

characters among whom are Moll Flanders, Chopin, Michelangelo, Charles II, and the Virgin Mary, into a setting of deliberate ambiguity. The characterizations are all treated stiff and vapid. The audience is treated more to a dull costume party than an evening of stimulating theatre. The actors while away the time by singing, dancing, playing charades, and relating to each other in monumentally trivial exchanges. Before long, we are indeed convinced that the actors on stage are involved in a pointless, absurd situation, but for Hopcraft to expect us to relate this artificially created limbo to our own lives, is both unreasonable and presumptuous of him. We are not given pertinent characters from whose absurdity we can draw parallels to our own existence. Instead we are told: "Look at these characters. They are absurd. So are you."

It doesn't work.

In spite of one or two brief moments of theatrical flair, *The Master* is a silly bore. Assert the validity of your existence with a good meal instead. It's at Theatre Passe Murraile.



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