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The Brunswickan • 11

In the Shadows of the Night

by Jethelo E. Cabilete

The first of Theatre UNB's drama productions began January 26, 1995. The bitterly cold night didn't keep the few theatre-goers from attending the opening night of two production companies, that presented the theme of night and things that occurred during this time of shadows and shades.

Brockley Productions presented the first of the evenings performance, 'Night, Mother. Directed by Matt MacCallum, this gripping drama tells the tale of a daughter's decision to end her life and the conflict she has with her mother during the final moments of her life. Jesse Cates (Holly Ward) is a woman who suffers from epilepsy, which has controlled most of her life. Her husband divorced her, her son is gradually becoming a juvenile delinquent and she has had enough. Ms. Ward provided an insightful performance in her role as Jesse. Jesse's tight control of her situation and obvious love for her mother could be seen in Ms. Ward's occasional refusal to look at her

mother, light-hearted banter laced with softly spoken, emotional reminiscences of Jesse's past and feeling evident in Ms. Ward's body language and speech. The perfect contrast is of course, Jesse's mother, Thelma (Catherine Atkinson). Thelma is a no-nonsense, opinionated woman who is protective of her daughter. Ms. Atkinson delivered a remarkably strong persona of seniority (albeit a feisty senior at times!) without losing herself too much in the portrayal of the elderly. Whereas Ms. Ward's performance was one of tense, shaky control, Ms. Atkinson's delivery brought out much of the compassion and rawness of a mother's gradual realization that her daughter is going to die. Throughout the play, Jesse goes about her business of preparing her mother for her eventual death. Meanwhile, Thelma gradually realizes that Jesse is not joking when she states that she is going to end her life. Time and again, the audience is brought to the brink of emotional catharsis, ending in an explosive and heart-rending finale. A strong perform-

ance was given by Ms. Atkinson and Ms. Ward, who graced their respective characters with plenty of passion and energy; some members of the audience were actually crying during the finale.

After a brief intermission, Morpheus Productions presented the second performance, The Actor's Nightmare. Directed by Kathleen Grady, this piece is a convoluted exploration of one man's journey into his dreams. George (John Powers) is apparently an accountant whose name isn't really George. Mr. Powers' character finds himself placed in a dream(?) wherein he is an actor replacing another actor who has had an accident. Unfortunately George doesn't know the lines to the plays that he is acting in, nor do the plays stay in one piece (the plot moves from Noel Coward's Private Lives, to Shakespeare's Hamlet, then Beckett's Checkmate and so on). Mr. Powers is a study in comical confusion, as he strives to portray a nonactor acting vainly in a play in which he has no idea what is going on. The shifty glances to the audience, rising and falling speech

real, blend to create a form of "bad" comedy. He is not alone, however, in his waltz through this bizarre maze. The stage manager, Meg (Lisa Smith) is a perfect example of frustrated and harried emotion. Ms. Smith conveys her exasperation and irritation with plenty of fire and poise. The rest of the dream plays' "cast" are well known performers in their own right. Sarah Siddons (Rachel Jones) combined haughty allure and aloofness in an almost vaudevillian style. Her foil in the first "play", Dame Ellen Terry (Alysha Godin) oozed snobbery with a touch of bitchiness; quite a contrast. George's male counterpart, Henry Irving (Alex Key), brought out the farcical, and somewhat droll nature of a character who was full of himself. Last, but not least, the executioner (Andrew Sheppard) played one menacing S.O.B. His great size and loud, penetrating voice brought a round of giggles and guffaws from the audience. In one sense, this play was one mixed up soap opera with a twilight zone ending. It certainly was amusing, and the performers certainly seemed to enjoy themselves in their respective roles.

patterns and refusal to believe that this is

Both plays continued till Saturday, with an increasing audience each evening. Both directors should be applauded for taking such complex pieces and doing justice to them. And of course, the performers deserve the applause that they received for a job well done. Need something to warm a long winter's night?? The Harvest Jazz & Blues Festival is once again bringing the south to Fredericton for Mardi Gras - this time they've gone all the way to Rio! This latin dance party featuring *Salsa Picante*, will warm the Boyce Farmer's Market on Saturday, February 25th.

Harvest Jazz & Blues Festival

Thick, Chunky, saucy, mild, medium or fiery hot whatever your style, bring a jar of your own homemade salsa for the Salsa Contest - no, not the dance?? Try your recipe out on the judges who will sample the offerings and award the winner. This contest is one of many highlights of the night.

Tickets are available at Mazzuca's, Tony's Music Box, Magic Forest Music Store, Purple Haze (60 Regent St) and at the Festival office.

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