

Dal theatre

Lots of glitter-doesn't mean gold

by Elissa Barnard

The Dalhousie theatre department has done this before and will do it again. In its effort to emphasize all the aspects of play production it expands to loose all sight of the play's core. Such was the case, with the department's latest production of Molière.

Despite the ability of prominent American director Brooks Jones, provided for with a grant from the U.S. embassy in Ottawa; the competence of noted American actor Richard Kneeland and the talent of Dalhousie drama students, Molière was no more than an empty though lavish display.

The substance of Russian Michael Bulgakov's play simply did not come across. The theme deals with social and individual madness and ties in well with Pascal's words quoted in the program, 'Men are so necessarily mad; that not to be mad would amount to another form of madness.'

Bulgakov chose the reign of the infamous sun king, Louis XIV to illustrate a mad society, rife with corruption and completely void of justice. Molière, who during this period performed his own plays at the Palais Royale, comes under the attack of the archbishop and the state, partly because he has written and produced an atheistic play and partly because he has unwittingly married his own daughter.

The reasons are never entirely certain but his persecution is very real. Molière tries to perceive the situation in logical terms and protest it by appealing to reason. His failure drives him to his own madness.

Kneeland, who put his performance together in an amazing 10 days, presented a well rounded character with professional flair. However, although excellent at portraying the lusty, rough yet generous gentleman, he was unable to reach the depth of emotion required during his downfall. The audience could not understand Molière, especially in his lack of anguish

when he discovers he had married his daughter. One could neither pity nor despise him.

Molière's scandalously young bride, Armande, and rebuffed mistress, Madeleine, similarly lacked emotion. The scene in which Madeleine confesses to being Armande's mother and in which the daughter is abruptly informed of her true identity, contained the signs but not the substance of distress. Janet MacEwen was poised and capable as Armande but one-dimensional.

The play could have been deliciously mad if the central characters had genuinely been struck by society's insanity. As it was, Jones projected madness by concentrating on the supporting cast and special effects.

Scenes of the foppishness and decadent extravagance of Louis XIV's court, of the corruption of the archbishop and his officers, and of the overall immorality of all on stage effectively created an atmosphere of madness.

Paul Rainville was a perfectly fickle, arrogant and intelligent Louis. His tone and mannerisms were carefully gauged to never go beyond credibility, even when he mincingly ate chicken.

The highlight of this production was a colorful assortment of grotesque creatures and market people. The childish and deformed Honest Cobbler, excellently portrayed by Sue MacKinnon; the crude antics of the market people and wee fiddler supported on a tall moving pole powerfully conveyed the decadance and corruption of the society.

Elaborate period costumes and a clever set were dazzling and up to the usual quality of Dalhousie's special effects. Too bad a show can't run on these alone. But the bland aftertaste Molière left with the audience once the curtain dropped proved this impossible. Extravagance on the stage is a waste if it means scrimping on the essence of a play.



Janet MacEwen as Armande in the arms of Molière.

Kings relaxes

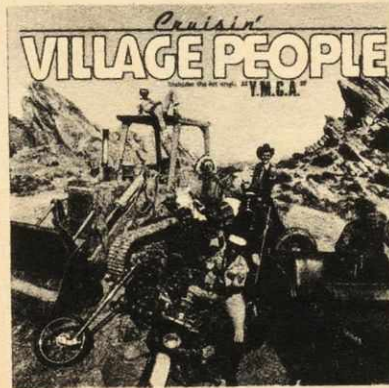
In the midst of pre-exam panic, students in the Dalhousie/Kings community will have a chance to relax with some classic Neil Simon comedy next Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday nights. King's Drama Club will be presenting Simon's 'Prisoner of Second Avenue'. A long-time favourite on Broadway, the play's sharp wit is all the more poignant because of the familiar issues it deals with.

Alienation in the big city, the modern rat race and wife/husband relations—in

the midst of the claustrophobic confines of a New York city apartment—are the heavier subjects which Simon brings to humorous life. He also pokes fun at big city neighbors and wildly eccentric relatives. It's not a long play, but it's packed with non-stop surprises.

Tickets are \$2.00 at the door or from cast and crew. The play is being directed by Tom Regan. Curtain time is eight o'clock in King's theatre under the chapel. Take a break and enjoy!

Take a look



Village People
on Casablanca



Toto
on Columbia

\$5.49

- The Cars
on Electra/Asylum \$5.19
- Blondes Have More Fun
Rod Stewart
on Warner Bros. \$5.19
- Barbara Streisands
Greatest Hits Vol. 2
on Columbia \$5.49
- 52nd Street
Billy Joel
Columbia \$5.49

- Dire Straits
on Mercury \$5.49
- BeeGees
on RSO \$5.49
- More Hot Rocks
Rolling Stones \$11.79
- Some Girls
Rolling Stones \$6.49

Plus books, magazines, T-shirts, mugs

Dal Bookstore

SUB
Basement