

Factory Lab, Passe Muraille bomb out

Toronto's small theatre groups, Passe Muraille, Studio Lab, Factory Theatre Lab and Toronto Workshop Productions are starting the year off badly. First, Studio Lab opened with a poorly justified resurrection of Dionysus in '69; its immediate future, once Dionysus ends, is undecided. Second, Toronto Workshop, which succeeded well with Chicago '70 last year (they went to New York and didn't do too badly with it) is threatening to do nothing but original plays based on current headlines, a very risky business.

Thirdly and fourthly, two plays opened last Thursday; I Had It, But It's All Gone Now at Passe Muraille and A Bedtime Story at the Factory Theatre Lab. Both are original plays, a laudable event if it were not for the fact that the productions are amateurish and both scripts are vague and idiotic.

A Bedtime Story can be dismissed easily. Soap. The play, by Frank McEnany, was an attempt to cross the styles of Harold Pinter and the afternoon soap operas on television. I would have preferred watching just the commercials and forgetting the

melodrama entirely.

At the risk of boring you, I'll describe the plot. Derrick, a young suburban chartered accountant type muffed the rites of the mattress last week and got uptight over his virility. Leoda, his patient and understanding wife, wants him to hang in there and try it once more. Enter Chad, a meddling, perhaps homosexual and Ia-go-type friend who plays head games with Derrick and Leoda, inciting a break-up of their perfect little marriage. Charlie Jacobs, who is the neighbourhood Greek god and never says anything, wanders on stage to claim Leoda, who he met on the bus. At play's end, Derrick, sadder but wiser now, throws Chad out and bemoans his own stupidity. And so do we; his, the writer's and the director's.

Collins Makes Out

The cast, fortunately, rushed their lines opening night. There are far too many words and no dramatic silences at all in the play and the dialogue held little more than superficial meaning. Jeanette Collins, as Leoda, injected no emotionalism at all into her role, except when she made out

on stage, which she does fairly well. Peter Kunder, who played Derrick, was consistent with his interpretation of the character throughout the play, but Derrick was much too naive and foolish to gather much sympathy from the audience. Kunder forgot that Othello was a big man at one time, before he made that silly mistake, and only his former stature makes the drama tragic. Gordon Dowton, as Chad, was spotty but suitably enthused and appropriately evil.

The fact is, you can only take so many bones out of a sardine. So, before I go on to the other play I'll point out that admission for students at Factory Theatre is \$1.50, a good price for a live performance of any kind. The theatre itself is above a collision repair and body shop on Dupont street near Brunswick avenue.

I Had It Funny

I Had It But It's All Gone Now is a funny play to watch. I spent most of my time either chuckling or wondering what was coming off, exactly. Sometimes I laughed and sometimes I felt very bored but mostly I was very puzzled. Why did Richard DeCanio write a play

based on parts of a novel by Nathaniel West? And why did Louis Thompson create such a ragoo of vaudevillian guerrilla theatre and existential Living Theatre seasoned by Rochdale College's own brand of heady drama? Like Tom Wolfe said about radicalism in the arts on Wednesday November 18, "very weird."

The whole show is staged like a burlesque review. The plot resembles a neo-morality play based on New Left politics as shot down under the searchlights of existentialism. The single performer who even moderately engaged the audience is Saul Rubinek, who plays 'Pops' Sunday, a messianic embezzler who invents and leads the Polka-Dot Party to power. But the description of Pops Sunday is still too straight. He resembles Ed Wynn, the vaudeville star, both visually and characteristically, but his prose is a combination of Spiro Agnew's and Richard Nixon's as spoken by Abie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin in unison. Very dialectic, no?


Incredible ineptitude

Lee Simpson, the patsy, the

clear-eyed martyred hero of the piece, is played with utter amateurishness by Bembo Davies. He's such an inept actor that he can't even make his incredible lack of talent seem like a put-on for one moment. I got the impression that the theatre company ransacks Rochdale every day for some poor useless dummy to play the hero. Davies gave the best impersonation of a total vacuum on stage I've ever seen, or ever hope to see.

But, for all this, the show does seem funny. But damned if I can tell you why. If you don't go looking for anything but the basic, banal explanations you are presented with and decide to accept a thoroughly mawkish evening in the theatre, I Had It, But It's All Gone Now can be enjoyable.

The future of Toronto's live theatre scene is beginning to look more and more like the past. Four theatres — the O'Keefe Centre, the Royal Alexandra, the St. Lawrence Centre and the Crest, will survive on money from middle-class audiences and government grants while original experimental and intimate theatre is nowhere to be found.



LA CHASSE GALERIE PRESENTS
Gilles Vigneault
IN CONCERT
MASSEY HALL
SATURDAY, DEC. 12, 8:30 P.M.
TICKETS \$2.00, \$2.50, \$3.50, \$4.50
MAIL ORDERS: Send cheque or money order together with a self-addressed stamped envelope to MASSEY HALL Box Office, 178 Victoria St., Toronto.
Tickets also available at LA CHASSE-GALERIE, 15 GLEBE RD. W., Tel.: 489-5413

Roaring Roaring 20's rerun

NO, NO, NANETTE
EVERGREEN AFTER 45 YEARS

By MICHAEL ROBINSON

Probably the reason for the decline of Broadway musicals and Hollywood extravaganzas is that since time immemorial they have had the same plot (boy meets girls, boy loses girl, boy regains girl). In that case, why revive the archetypal musical of the 1920's, No, No, Nanette?

The answer is simple. Nowadays everyone takes himself too seriously (if you don't believe me, just read the rest of this newspaper). But the plot, unlike modern Broadway shows, is

merely an excuse for the real stuff of the show — music and dance. There is a glorious disregard for logic and reality. The fantasy world created on the stage has its own set of rules, its own social conventions, own logic which is not upset when a chorus of 35 glides on from the wings in the middle of an intimate tete-a-tete. Why pay to go to the theatre to see the same sort of people you can see for free on the street?

A Fine Cast

A word about the cast — fine. Ruby Keeler has lost the girlish charm that brightened movies like 42nd Street (and not surprisingly, at her age), but she's a trooper, and the obvious enjoyment with

which she plays her role is delightful. Her tap-dancing is as good as ever, which isn't saying much, but it is welcome after the glaring neglect of this type of entertainment by the popular media. Bobby Van gave us the old soft shoe ("nothin' else will do") with notable expertise, although I caught about three words of his song — I believe the infamous accoustics were to blame.

I am sure that the day-to-day world of the Twenties was not much of an improvement on our own (although I am told that the sky sometimes appeared blue in those bygone days), but the exuberance and unashamed fantasy of its entertainment is welcome relief in these oh-so-serious days.

Cheer up, everyone! At the next protest meeting, indulge in a little witty repartee with the guy who's burning the flag. It may not drive the imperialist Amerikan hyenas from our native shores, but it might replace the usual dour expression on someone's face with a smile.



Green Bush Inn

Our new location is in the
ATKINSON DINING HALL

Thursday 4 pm - 12 pm
Friday 4 pm - 12 pm

Proof of Age Required

Have a drink with your dinner
on THURSDAYS.

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT
both nites

Join us.

★ **TOPLESS DANCERS** ★
★ Nightly from 8:45 to 1 am ★
★ Also Friday Afternoon 3:30 to 6 pm ★
★ and Saturday Afternoon 2 to 5 pm ★
★ **Live Music** ★
★ Nightly from 8:45 to 1 am ★
★ Also Friday Afternoon 3:30 to 6 pm ★
★ and Saturday Matinee 2:30 to 5:30 pm ★
★ **PLACE PIGALLE** ★
★ 89 Avenue Road ★
★ Free Parking Monday thru Thursday after 7 p.m. ★

THE NEW **BLUE ORCHID**
presents
THE BRIAN CRABB SHOW
from TV's PIG & WHISTLE show
A night of Sing Song, Music & Fun.
A show where YOU get into the Act.
NO COVER CHARGE

HOT AND COLD BUFFET all you can eat
Luncheon 12 noon - 3 pm \$1.45
Supper 5:30 pm - 10:30 \$2.25

UPSTAIRS
SPEAKEASY
With London recording artists
DAYBREAK
With GENE TAYLOR our resident weirdo
Rock, Comedy & Audience participation.

dancing nightly fully licensed
529 BLOOR ST. WEST PHONE 532-4401

BOOK NOW!
NEW YEARS EVE \$5.00 PERSON
Swing into the New Year Speakeasy style — snacks, hats, novelties & lots of fun incl.

You Can Thank Your Lucky Stars for
Arnold Palmers
DRY CLEANERS



VIRGO
Aug. 22 to Sept. 22

Beauty around you,
everything right...
... that's for you!
No wonder you like
our extra care.

Because ours is the
sign of better dry
cleaning, you can
brighten your fu-
ture and your ward-
robe. See us!

108 Hucknall Rd.
in the University Colony Plaza
MON - WED 7:30 am - 7 pm
THUR & FRI - 9 pm
SATURDAY - 6 pm