

Ghastly ghouls and teradactylian wings: Desrosier's Full Moon too full to be completely understood

by Moira MacDonald

Ghastly ghouls tumble and hurl themselves across the stage. A platform transforms into a thunderous igniting rocket-ship. Horse clip-clops and wolf howls rend the air. A bird flaps its teradactylian wings before losing them. Pristine Baroque courtiers glide gracefully together. There are sparklers and shrieks, doughnut people, fauns and dancing skeletons; and at the end of it all there's the conjurer himself—Robert Desrosiers—bouncing in a 20-foot suspended jolly jumper like a child in ecstatic delight with the spectacle he's created.

This is the Desrosiers Dance Theatre. It's a bit like going to the circus, so exercise caution if end-of-semester chaos has already turned you into a whirling dervish. But if you find overstimulation has a purging effect, Desrosiers and his 10-member ensemble are worth checking out.

Originally presented at last summer's "Glory of Mozart" festival, *Full Moon* is a mad romp on the

theatre

Full Moon and Black and White
choreographed by Robert Desrosiers
Premiere Dance Theatre

thin line between order and chaos. As one might expect, Desrosiers sides with the darker forces. He exploits the mischievous qualities of Mozart's "Missa Solemnis in C Minor," so that even refined court dancers perform complex acrobatic pas de deux.

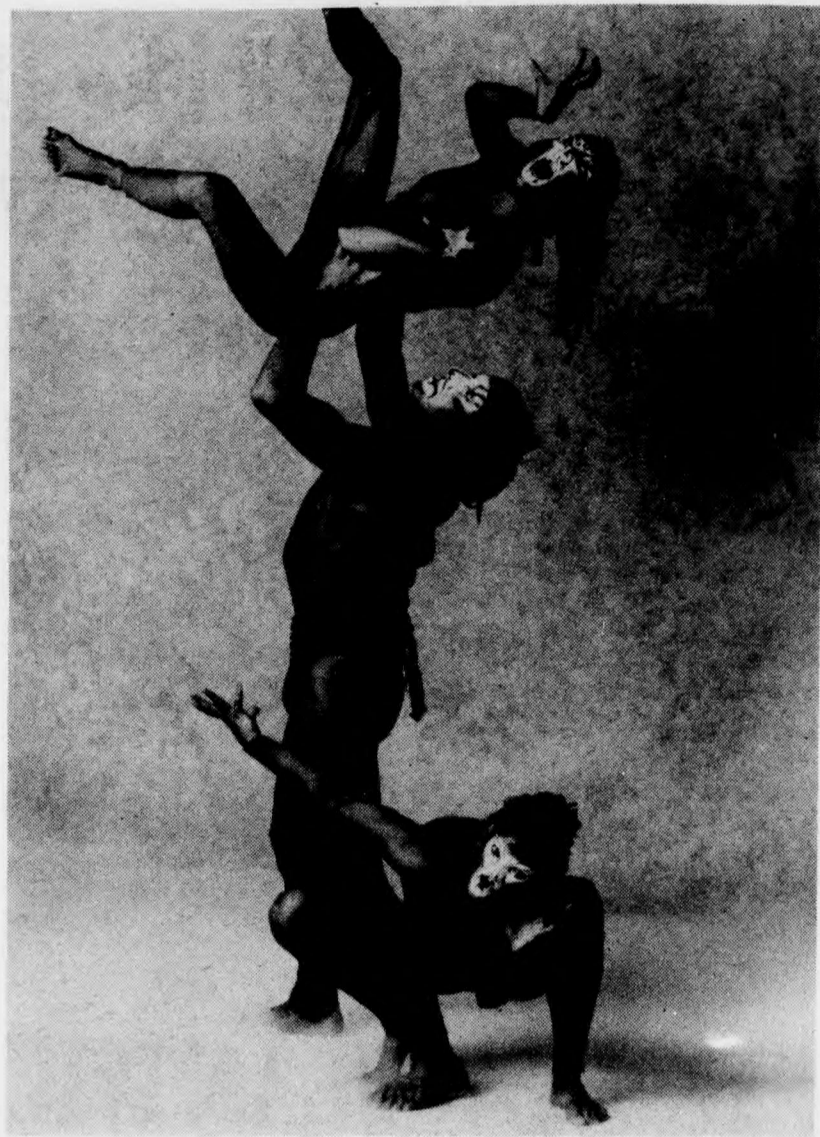
Scarlet gargoyles gradually infiltrate these Apollonian ranks ending, curiously, in a very Baroque harmonious compromise. Order (maybe) is restored.

Desrosiers is known for his use of acrobatics—often arousing comments that what he's doing can hardly be called dance—which make his work much more physical and dynamic. Some of his pas de deux combinations are brilliantly intricate in their conception, but in performance lack refinement and fluidity, appearing forced.

The wildness continues in the second act with Desrosiers' newest work, *Black and White*. Here the dark side is re-cast—as black of course—but in more concrete terms, with none of its previous moral connotations. The work begins as a morbid elegy with sober-faced clowns and a funeral; it becomes beautiful with a marriage, then turns absolutely raucous. Whatever message Desrosiers is trying to get across gets lost in the bombardment of images, costumes and special effects.

Desrosiers has overdone it on this one. Everything's there: the sets, the costumes, the lighting, great dancers, evocative music by Eric Cadesky, innovative movement—but it's too much. If he wants his themes to be understood he'll have to learn to channel his creative explosions; only then will the creative genius of Desrosiers bewitch us completely.

Full Moon and Black and White continue at the Premiere Dance Theatre until November 30. For more information, call 973-4000.



From top: Robin Wilds, Philip Drube and Sylvie Plamondon in Robert Desrosier's *Full Moon*, currently playing at the Premiere Dance Theatre.

Family love quadrangle plays on sons and sexualities

by Philip Wong

The Sum of Us is about the relationship between Harry Mitchell (Gordon Pinsent) and his gay son, Jeff (Ted Atherton).

The Sum of Us opens with young Jeff entering a modest Australian dwelling, after a game of football. Jeff reveals to Harry that he has a date with Greg, a gardener who has caught his fancy.

Much to Jeff's surprise, Harry also has a love interest, a widow by the name of Joyce. Harry, who met Joyce through a dating service, plans to propose. Father and son have an adverse effect on each other's companions, ultimately destroying each other's relationships.

theatre

The Sum of Us
written by David Steven
directed by Eric Steiner
starring Gordon Pinsent and Ted Atherton
Bathurst Street Theatre

Harry is a widower, plumber and very "unreal" father. Warm, compassionate, understanding and extremely encouraging—Harry is more of a roommate than a parent. Harry has had an interesting life, accepting his son's homosexuality and dealing with the death of his wife and his mother's lesbian affair.

The strength of *The Sum of Us* is that, even though the play focuses on homosexuality, it is not written exclusively for that audience. "To me, a

gay play means a play written by a gay playwright for a primarily gay audience. This play doesn't fill the bill...it is a play with a gay theme—but that's not the only theme," explained director Eric Steiner.

The performances are all convincing, with the exception of Joyce (Caroline Yeager), who can best be summed up in one word: annoying.

Ted Atherton should be applauded for a strong performance, for not playing a stereotypical homosexual.

Gordon Pinsent puts on an excellent display of an "ideal" father. If Pinsent's name isn't familiar, his face should be: he has starred in television shows like *Bonanza* and *Hogan's Heroes*.

John Wildman (Greg) also gives a

strong performance. All the actors have a convincing Australian accent, the play being filled with many Aussie jokes and sexual puns.

With its humour, solid script and strong cast, *The Sum of Us* has a lot to offer. It is more than just a gay play or a play about a father and son; it is about love, fear of loneliness and the quest for companionship.

The Sum of Us plays at the Bathurst

arts

film • theatre • galleries • music

Street Theatre until December 22. For more information, call Ticketmaster, 872-1111.

Bird a beautifully written story of sexual obsession

by Garine Torossian

A Live Bird in its Jaws is a beautifully written story of sexual obsession and the revelation of filial secrets. Its dramatic and comic approach allows the audience to relate to the story.

Yves Saint Pierre's English translation of Jeanne Mance Delisle's Governor General's Award-winning erotic tale presents three disturbing

theatre

A Live Bird in Its Jaws
written by Jeanne Mance Delisle
starring Stephen Ouimette and Tanja Jacobs
Theatre Passe Muraille

yet humorous characters. Helen (Tanja Jacobs), who is a writer and mother of an eight year old son, longs for her lover Xavier. Stephen Ouimette plays the homosexual

Xavier, who sews dresses and helps Helen prepare for her performances. Helen also longs for Adrien (Michael Rhoades) Xavier's twin brother, the hunter and spirited adventurer.

The play is a colourful and emotional journey through the lives of eccentric and entertaining characters.

A Live Bird in its Jaws is set in a warm, atmospheric cabin isolated in the deep woods of northern Canada. Helen, Xavier and Adrien come together to enact a family ritual, a performance which Helen has written. Ironically, the performance ends up being similar to their relationship. As a result, the line between the artifice of the play and reality become obscured.

The stage setting and performances are exceptional. The isolation of the cabin mirrors the isolation of the characters. The warmth of the atmosphere contrasts with the complex relationships of the characters.

Jacobs is a captivating actress who grabs the audience with her powerful voice graceful movements. Ouimette, a talented and versatile actor who was also lead in the film *Top of His Head*, is convincing as Xavier. Rhoades, a charismatic actor, is perfect as Adrien.

A live Bird in its Jaws plays at Theatre Passe Muraille through Dec 8.



Tanja Jacobs, a captivating and powerful actress, stars in Theatre Passe Muraille's production of *A Live Bird in Its Jaws*.

Todd Buttonham



Gordon Pinsent, John Wildman, Caroline Yeager and Ted Atherton star in Eric Steiner's adaptation of David Steven's *The Sum of Us*. Although it deals with homosexual experiences, the plays themes are universal.

Electric Blanket:

AIDS Projection Project — Toronto

- outdoor slide presentation
- 403 Queen Street West
- December 1, 7:30 pm
- free admission, donations accepted



DAY WITHOUT ART

Be there and learn