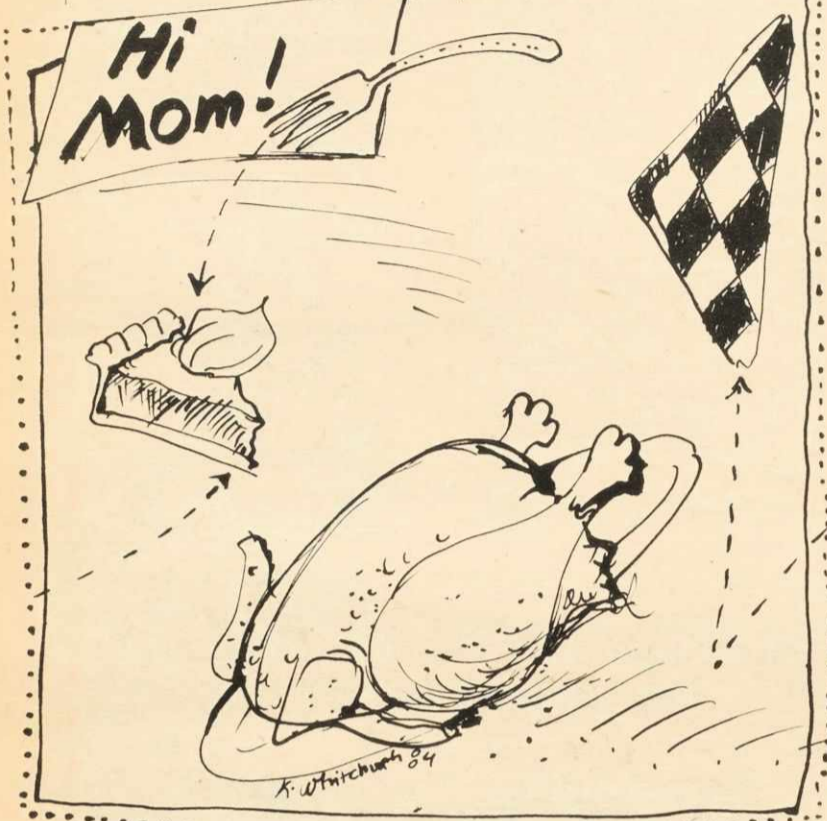


HAPPY
THANKSGIVING

FROM THE GAZETTE



Hot house — warm response

BY TOBY SANGER

The National Ballet of Canada danced a few short pieces of their repertoire at the Rebecca Cohn Auditorium last week.

The wide variety of work presented at each of their performances made it possible for novice ballet fans to taste a few morsels of the art while giving the more zealous a chance to savour the full fare.

Erik Bruhn's adaptation of Act I, Scene 2 of *Swan Lake* was elegantly quizzical. Leaving the Swan Queen in solitary despair after the death of the Prince also

leaves the audience wondering; it's not the nice romantic resolution in joint suicide we might expect.

Was the very audible sound of the herd of swans dancing across the stage a feminist statement on Tchaikowsky's romantically idealistic view of women or merely a sign that the Rebecca Cohn needs a better floor for such extravagant dance performances?

Sabina Allen, in the role of the Swan Queen, was superb. Her minimal facial expressions and body movements, like those of a Japanese *No* dancer, conveyed perfectly the vulnerability of the

swan.

Stephanie Landry, as a gargantuan owl-like Black Queen, seems like a black subconscious, an ungainly or even an unwelcome mother-in-law — considerable less evil than von Rothbart would have been.

The National Ballet Orchestra was excellent and a pleasure to listen to, even in the farthest corners of the Cohn.

The dancers and the dancing in the second performance of the evening, Jiri Kylian's *Transfigured Night*, were considerably more modern. So modern, in fact, that they could have been from Clayton Park.

With the three characters and their alter egos, it is often difficult to tell who is who in this tangled triangle of writing angst and violent passion.

Hot House: Thriving on a Riff is more than a tribute to Charlie Parker's musical genius — it's a libidinous view of *Coming of Age in America*.

Toronto choreographer Danny Grossman's modern ballet is built around a number of jazz great Charlie Parker's riffs and rhythms. The set and costumes seem right out of a science-fiction view of 1930s New York, something like Franz Kafka's *Amerika*.

In this dance (of a dance at a party itself), the male dancers are captured prosaically struggling with their identities in oversized suits and with their superegos in the form of undersized office towers.

The women are cast as more confident vamps, slithering and shaking with the erotic energy of striptease dancers going through their fifth routine of the night.

The climax comes with the upfront overcoming of sexual stereotypes in a parade of "alternative lifestyles" across the stage.

The National Ballet performed this difficult piece exceptionally well. The only improvement could have been a full set and Charlie Parker there, live.

It's a pity **Hot House** didn't get more than a lukewarm response.

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This most successful of Anouilh's works is full of humorous whims, romance and masquerades.

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