

Boys in the Band achieves depth but not success

By BRIAN PEARL

The production of Mort Crowley's play, *The Boys in the Band* now at the Central Library Theatre is very entertaining and honest to the subject of homosexuality, but the play fails seriously in dramatic impact department. The crisply sharp and acrid dialogue all came off beautifully, the jokes and laughs in the first act came one right after another, but when the going got rough in the second act, the actors, the director and the playwright all seemed to lose their grip on the power of the play.

The real power of the *Boys in the Band* is that it is a basic, honest play on the controversial and, until recently, taboo subject of homosexuality. The frankness of the play extends far beyond the casual, natural use of the pejoratives "fairy, faggot, queer, queen and cunt" into the realm of

human nature itself. Crowley reaches his audience by showing how homosexual love is much like any other kind of love, except that it is between two men. This distinction though is not trite or lightly taken, because the response of society to homosexual love is the other, darker, aspect of the play.

Director Donald Ford of the York Centennial Theatre has assembled one of the finest casts this city has ever seen and directed them admirably well in a play that is, perhaps, awkward for both the actors and the director.

The cast, composed entirely of men, acted tremendously well as a unit. The plot, a simple story of the complications that arise when Michael receives an unexpected visit from a strangely hung-up "straight" friend on the eve of a birthday party for Harold, moves smoothly enough in the group scenes but continually hits snags

when the individual characters emerge from the milieu to express themselves.

Malcolm Gordon, to get to the crux of the plays problems, plays Michael, the host of Hal's birthday party and the most revealing homosexual in the play. The plot revolves about his profound revolution with himself, and, when he becomes a drunken bitch by play's end, the audience is meant to have a moment of ironic understanding with the normally alienating aspect of a fag in full flight.

The problem is that Gordon couldn't quite pull it off. He overacted abominably in the breakdown scene and nearly blew the whole play right there. Fortunately for him, though, he had a great supporting cast. Sy Silverberg played the self-elusive Donald with just the right mixture of feigned cynicism and forced

detachment. Ronald Halliday, as Emory the raving queer, sustained most of the humour of the first act easily and then got the heavier stuff off nicely with his recitation in the second act of his boyhood love for a New York dentist.

The actor that deeply impressed me, though, was not really a central character in the plot, but the strength of his characterization reached past the plot right into the meaning of the play. Gerry Huckstep plays Hank, a school teacher who is divorcing his wife and leaving his family because he loves Larry, a freewheeling, promiscuous homosexual hustler. Hank looks amazingly featureless, ivy-league and bland, at the beginning, but as the play becomes

more involved he emerges from behind the facade to reveal a man of extraordinary dignity fighting desperately, and succeeding, to retain his pride and win Larry's love. By the play's end, I admired the character of Hank enormously, simply as a figure of human endurance and dignity — any thought of ridicule because of his sexual habits was as foreign to me then as my former scorn for his bland appearance. The consistency and strength of the acting of this role was highly laudable.

So, in the end, I thought I learned something — the love you take is equal to the love you make. But I already knew that. What I must have learned was not something I acquired, but something I lost, a bit of useless and pitiful prejudice.

AGYU

ART GALLERY OF YORK UNIVERSITY

Ross Building N.145 Mondays - Fridays 11 - 5

ESKIMO PRINTS

from the Collection of York University

Extended to Feb. 5

York Masters present to the York community:

Peter Schaffer's hilarious off-Broadway success

BLACK COMEDY

Feb. 2 thru 6 at 8:30 p.m.

Stong College Theatre Room

Tickets \$1.00

P.S. *Black Comedy* is a must for anyone remotely interested in laughter. Don't miss it!

McLaughlin and Stong College Councils in co-operation with CYSF present

SHA-NA-NA

in concert
and
DON McLEAN

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 5 AT 8:30 P.M.
TAIT MACKENZIE GYM

Advance tickets \$2.00

At the door \$3.00

Advance Ticket Sale starts Monday, February 1st
at the Vanier-Founders ramp.

Stong's seedy art grows

The Robin Mackenzie show now in the Stong Gallery is based on concepts of growth and recycling. It consists of three rows of seed potatoes under charged wires. At one end of the gallery and layers of straw at the other end which are spaced six bales apart. Both potatoes and straw is added; when the straw reaches a pre-determined line, it will be dispersed over the York campus.

People who are interested in helping with this dispersion are invited to leave their name and phone numbers in the



gallery. Robin Mackenzie will speak on Thursday, January 21 on the work and his theories of it. Those who disperse the straw can choose where they place it. Each bale of straw will then be photographed in its location.



Green Bush Inn

Atkinson Dining Hall
Thursdays & Fridays
4 pm to Midnight

Dancing and Entertainment
on both nights

THURSDAY NITE: THE FOUR STUDS
FRIDAY NITE: BARABAS

Also we are looking for a part-time manager for the Green Bush. If interested, come over and ask for Jim Parks.

—Proof of Age required—

Join us