

# One More Time!

Tom Stoppard is perhaps the most brilliant and certainly one of the most theatrical of contemporary writers for the English stage. Born in Czechoslovakia in 1937, brought up in India and Singapore before coming to England in 1946, he is today, recognized as one of the cleverest creators of dialogue and theatrical situation.

What Monty Python is to television, Stoppard is to the theatre; both write at two levels, one a deliberate character, 'silly' extravagant and undeniably absurd, the other a clear-eyed view of human behavior and contemporary social realities, such that the absurd is seen as compassionately real. It is theatre for grown-ups.

Stoppard plays are marked by satire, irreverence, and an ironic reversal of the expected. His most famous play, "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead", consists of a 'through the looking glass' view of one of the most venerated plays in English - Hamlet. However, in Stoppard's statement of the classic, the heroes are two of the most minor characters of Shakespeare's work, whose major emotion is bewilderment in the midst of the bloody drama of the Danish Court. The Stoppard play is self-consciously theatrical in the manner of Pirandello, and achieves both ironic continuity with the older tradition, while, at the same time, expressing contemporary alienation from social realities.

His discovery is itself the stuff of myth. Stoppard has had a series of major hits: "Jumpers", a scathing parody of academic life, and "Travesties" in which his characters include Freud, Joyce and Kafka.

His plays are enjoyed for an apparent absurdity that involves no theatrical trickery, but which rests upon a remarkably firm dramatic construction. His word play, similar to that of Pinter, but more genuinely comic, is a second reason for his great success. Finally, his characters, beyond their verbal brilliance and ingenious action, speak and act as humans - odd, quirky and rather more genuinely private than we are used to in the theatre - but, nevertheless, reassuringly human.

Well, UNB Dram. Soc. is doing a Stoppard; a short one-acter with the surrealistically evocative title, "After Magritte".

The play starts with an apparent situation of excessively contrived absurdity. The art of Stoppard is to lead us, step by step, by the comic logic of his theatrical exposition, to the realization that the initial absurdity is irresistibly logical human behavior, in the face of nature's kindly perversity. It is very funny, very clever, and very compassionate theatre.

