

# ARTS

## Powerful play addresses sexuality

by Suzanne Kennedy

**TABU: A Celebration of Sexuality**  
A Collective Creation by the Canadian Stage Hour Company  
The Canadian Stage

Whether or not this play is a celebration of sexuality is up to the audience, but it certainly is a play about sexuality. Performed at the Canadian Stage in Toronto, it is an extremely refreshing piece of theatre, written collectively by the members of the Hour Company.

*Tabu* is an historical story mixed with only a few minutes of the character Garten's real life.

Through the character of Garten, the creators explore sexuality in terms of sexual deviance, morality,

sexual freedom, heterosexuality, bisexuality, lesbian and gay relationships.

The historical part centres on the true story of Private Flowers, in the Canadian Army in 1832, who was sentenced and hanged for having sex with another man.

The gallows scene is very dramatic, with Flowers walking along the hands of the other characters, using their heads for support. They also explore the perspective of the Blacks in Canada before 1833, when slavery was abolished in the British Empire.

All of this is acted out in an open space, with only four, two-level gurneys, which are creatively used to stand for barrack beds, platforms and the Army General's coach, in



*Tabu's* players give rise to the spirit of sexuality through uplifting performances. Showing at the Canadian Stage Theatre in the Berkeley St. Stage. It's a must see.

which the Flowers scene is enacted in revealing silhouette.

Despite being very open, the play may offend some who are not mature enough to deal with its content. There is same-sex kissing, and erotic movement incorporated into the play, as well as a variety of original, improvised music, interspersed with Canadian folksong, and the bongo is continually in the background, helping to set the mood.

This play is very far from "preachy". It only explores the characters' feelings regarding their rights to decide, to choose, and the right to act upon that choice. Garten's own personal problems are on their way to being solved when she realizes it's not whose girlfriend she is, but how she sees the world, that determines her sexuality.

The Hour Company is a special company which puts on hour-long plays, and then, at least for *Tabu*, they held a half-hour discussion with the audience regarding the content of the play, and how applicable it is

to the high school audiences which would be coming to see it, for the play is aimed at a 16-25 age group.

There were many arguments for and against this, and unfortunately, there were more against.

Several teachers in the audience had some valid complaints, stating that high school audiences weren't mature enough to deal with the subject material, and that the parents would be up in arms about their children seeing this sort of thing, and the school board would have to deal with the backlash.

Others disagreed saying that sex is common-knowledge to students long before high school and that they are not too young to explore the issues. A comment was made that they should know about the issues before they have to make the choice, not WHILE they are trying to make it.

Another interesting point brought up was the rampant homophobia on university campuses, and how much more conservative university stu-

dents are compared to the myth of open-mindedness which most universities try to uphold.

As well there was a complaint that the percentage of homosexual content was much higher than hetero in *Tabu*, and someone came back with the barb that if we go see any other show, we aren't counting the percentage of heterosexual encounters in it.

*Tabu* is definitely a celebration of sexuality. It is a positive powerful work about sexuality in our society, and how it is considered evil and a negative experience instead of an affirmation of life.

Make a point of seeing this play. It will open your eyes, and make you examine your own values, fears and prejudices, and you can experience other people's views in discussion.

*Tabu* plays at the Canadian Stage Theatre in the Berkeley Street Stage Upstairs, 26 Berkeley Street, Tuesdays-Sundays, until March 23. Tickets are \$15 Adult, \$5 youth and unaged. For more information call 367-8243.

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