

Theater News



Black Comedy

by EUPHIMIA WYATT

BLACK COMEDY—The lights go out. A glare from a Sousa March. Excited voices back stage: "Main fuse must be blown." "Candles?" "Haven't any." When the curtain goes up, the stage is lit but a boy and girl are groping their way about it. They are in the blacked-out studio of a young and impetuous sculptor, Miller, who with his fiancée, Carol, are tremulously preparing for a visit from Carol's father and a notable art dealer.

To lend a more prosperous appearance to his studio, Miller has "borrowed" some furniture from his neighbor, Gorringer, who is away for the weekend.

But when the landlady knocks — without candles — she announces that Gorringer is on his way upstairs, so Miller and Carol lure him with drinks into the studio where Miller must keep on trying to return Gorringer's chair to the dark without knocking down either Gorringer or Carol's father.

Complications multiply — the arrival of an aggressively affectionate model — an electrician who is mistaken for the art dealer.

Mr. Shafer may be inclined to prolong his absurdities but they are really good fun particularly Lynn Redgrave, a very pretty miss in a skin tight abbreviated yellow satin dress who scales the stairs by the banisters with sinuously intricate leg work. The action is mainly choreographic as the actors weave about the furniture and each other with chaotic Crawford as Miller cheerfully taking pratfalls and stumbles.

The first play, "White Lies", is a curtain raiser which gives Geraldine Page opportunity to play a blithering fortune teller in a black wig at a second rate seaside resort which opens hopefully with Donald Maddon bribing Miss Page to frighten a friend from poaching on a girl but after a good twist it ends tamely.

In "Black Comedy", Miss Page is the blonde model and Maddon the baldish Gorringer. Mr. Shafer hasn't tried to tap the IQ of his audience but offers a juicy bone of entertainment.

THE HOME COMING — If you can write a play without plot narrative, without logical sequence or clearly motivated characters, you are on your way to being a great playwright according to a current drama specialist. "The Homecoming" by Harold Pinter writes another, may be the most important play of this period because it veers from sense to sensibility. The puzzlement to me is why Pinter's play which earned

these encomiums manages to keep its audience in their seats? Perhaps it's because he always manages to suggest that something, presumably sinister, may happen. The dialogue is as random as a dream.

Actually there is a real homecoming when Teddy, the eldest son, arrives from the U.S.A. with his wife, the mother of four sons. Teddy wishes to introduce Ruth to his family and there couldn't be in all of London, a more unattractive one.

The father, Max, is a widowed, retired butcher who is host to his elderly brother, a decent old chauffeur in a car-renting agency and two sons, one a dull apprentice prize-fighter, the other a sharper in a shameless profession. Max is a ravenous mouthed old tough whose conversation is based on violence.

Teddy lets himself into the house late one evening; offers to take Ruth up to his room but she insists on going out alone for a walk. Will she ever come back? She does and wins over the entire family who persuade her to stay with them rather than return with Teddy to her children. They also offer her a proposition — which she accepts — which is too unsavory to repeat.

Ruth is played by Mrs. Pinter (Vivien Merchant) with cool unawareness of reality. In a Pinterish way she suggests a mother of men. All the men are equally good and Peter Hall who directed "Marat-Sade" has kept both acts on the same substantial plane. Presented by Alexander H. Cohen, the production is by the Royal Shakespeare Company who have the Aldwych Theatre in London for modern plays.

THE EAST WIND — "I am always conscious of the uncomfortable sensation now and then when the wind is blowing in the East" said Mr. Jarndyce in "Bleak House". It seems the only solution for the frustrated suicide which opens this drama by Leo Lehman, a Polish Jew. "It's a study of the displaced Jews in Europe" whispered my companion but the suicidal Kanarski turned out to be a Catholic Pole. The play opens in Kanarski and Zaubers' Delicatessen in Victorian London with flashbacks to World War One. Kanarski is always remembering how he once ate grass for a week in a prison camp but Zaubers recalls how he drove himself to freedom in an empty bus.

At first Kanarski adopts English ways and English friends faster than Zaubers but when Kanarski is found hanging once more in the delicatessen larder and this time for good — Zaubers says "The British have got over the East Wind. Now it's only for foreigners." He promptly marries Kanarski's widow and makes her his new partner.

When Kanarski, looking extremely foolish in a white robe, returns to say that Heaven looks just like Kutly in Poland but that Stalin was trying to police it, one wonders if he hadn't made a mistake in his destination? One also wonders why Irving and Blau chose "East Wind" — unless it had blown away their sense of values? Michael Graner as Zaubers and Voskovec as Kanarski are not outstanding. Philip Bosco is extremely good as Jack, the genial Londoner.

Films Listed At Nazareth

The last section in the Nazareth College film festival "Cultural Expression in the Film" will begin March 1 with the award-winning film "Father Franchini" directed by Satyajit Ray.

George Steven's prize-winning "Place in the Sun" starring Montgomery Clift and Elizabeth Taylor will follow on March 8 and the program will conclude with "The Island," directed by Kaneto Shindo.

The three films will be shown in the Nazareth College auditorium beginning at 7:15 p.m. They are sponsored by the college lecture committee.

The public is invited to all films in the program which are followed by coffee and discussion in the college cafeteria.



Irish Clubs Sponsor 'Feis Eireann'

Under the joint sponsorship of the Hibernian and Harps clubs, "Feis Eireann" will be presented to Rochester on March 12 at the Eastman Theatre as a combined effort in promoting Irish culture during the month of March.

"Feis Eireann" is a group of singers, dancers and instrumentalists direct from Ireland who are, for the second consecutive

year, making an American-Canadian tour covering over thirty states here and in Canada.

There will be a special salute to the four provinces — Ulster, Munster, Leinster and Connaught. The program will be enlivened by dances that are uniquely Irish.

Both clubs are advising early reservations which can be made

by calling either club or Seamus McGinnity at 352-6819 or Walter Anderson at GL 8-8852.

Theatre East Adds Comedy

Under the Yum Yum Tree, Broadway comedy hit of the early sixties, will fill Theatre East's March 12-16 time slot. It has been announced by Artistic Director Dorothy Chernuck.

Or, stage at Theatre East, now, is "Major Barbara," one of George Bernard Shaw's "funniest, most thought-provoking comedies."

Playing the title role is a newcomer to Theatre East, Lydia Bruce, who starred in the Broadway production of "A Call on Kuprin." Other leading roles are taken by Robert Blackburn, Myra Mailoux, Bernie McInerney, Richard Kuss, Deveren Bookwalter and Thomas Barbour.

Following "Major Barbara," Theatre East will present the New York premiere of "The Birthday Party," by award-winning playwright, Harold Pinter. Pinter's new play, "Homecoming," recently opened on Broadway.

Tickets for all Theatre East productions may be reserved by calling: 334-9500. Special rates are available to groups.

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In a scene from McQuaid's production of "The Mikado" are Jim Martin in the role of Ko Ko and Coleen Maher as Katisha.

McQuaid Players Schedule 'The Mikado' at Fisher

McQuaid High School will present three performances of Gilbert and Sullivan's "The Mikado" at St. John Fisher College auditorium this weekend, Feb. 23, 24, and 25 at 8 p.m.

Jim Martin will portray Ko Ko, Bill Cawley and Judy Relanatta are the lovers, Nanki-Poo and Yum-Yum, Katisha will be played by Colleen-Maher. Tom Coughlin will be seen as Pooch-Bah, Pat Nolan as Elish-Tush, Sue-Eberhardt and Jayme Bouray as Pitti-Sing and Peep-Bo and Bob DiPaola The Mikado.

A chorus of thirty McQuaid boys and fifteen girls from St. Agnes, Our Lady of Mercy, and Sacred Heart Academy are under the direction of Father William O'Malley, S.J.

Mr. Richard Hunt, S.J., who designed the setting for McQuaid's "Murder in the Cathedral" last Fall, has constructed a completely authentic Japanese house and garden for the operetta.

Tickets are available at the McQuaid switchboard, through any McQuaid student, or at the door before each performance.

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