

opening night

Experiment in 'Theatre '68'

By ALAN SLUTSKIN
Collegian Drama Critic

Thursday evening in the Pavilion Theatre, Kelly Yeaton's experimental workshop was performed just as it has been for the past few weeks. An added element on this particular night was an audience that watched, listened and simply joined the fun.

The most typical incident occurred during the theatre games at the outset when Pete Whitehead, a graduate student in theatre who was not involved in the company, ran onto the stage and hit Sue Ryave, one of the game players. Sue just looked at him, then asked, "What the hell are you doing here?" and Pete just ran off again. That reaction was the essence of "Theatre '68 — New Forms And Expressions."



SLUTSKIN

Upon entering the Pavilion one was immediately struck by the light show that was created through the use of a translucent scrim and rear projection at the far end of the arena. Paul Ulrich's lighting, the color and effects by Herb O'Dell, Ted Althof, Robert Bissett and a little of everybody's genius, combined with Greg Smith's sound production to instantaneously prepare all for the approaching involvement.

Fun Begins

The fun began with some general interaction simply called "Encounters." Real people meeting each other, not aware of what the other would do or say, reacting and interacting to spontaneous situations. There were no strictly drawn guidelines to restrict the players, and the level of communication with the audience was one of actuality and interpretations and reactions dependent only upon the individual's singular personality structure.

Susan and Phyllis Ryave, identical twins, became involved in a mirror game, and even then, although dialogue was involved, the encounter progressed to a point where individual impressions of movement took precedence over verbal communication.

Free Forum Movement

The finale of the opening section involved an exercise in free form movement that featured Penny Hairston as the statue and Basil Augustine as the park policeman. Hairston displayed magnificent physical control of his huge frame, while Augustine reacted spontaneously to the situations around him until the final explosion took place with Lou Florimonte.

The tempo then retarded drastically as the company progressed into a slow motion experiment with total control and awareness of the body as an instrument. There

were no cameras cutting and no optical tricks, simply the amazing reality of the human form in total control of itself.

The following scene was an adaptation of Michel de Ghelrodre's "A Night Of Pity." The scene began much like a "play" as Hairston was once more highly effective, this time as the soldier. David Hymes as Bacchus, fluctuated between interpreting the character and reciting a script. This reciting of a seemingly endless college of verbiage came very close to crippling the tempo until Claire Anne Coyne appeared as the woman and served as the vehicle for some potent reflections of Bacchus. The ensuing dialogue was entwined in specific references that intrinsically generated to universals — "Isn't that child awake yet? How many years will he stay that way with his eyes closed?"

Total Experience

The first half of the total experience for the evening was culminated with the appearance of the group in Hagan King's, excellently designed masks and Lucretia Bramlett's choreography that continued to sustain the isolation of movement that had begun in the opening theatre games.

Opening the second half of the workshop was an experiment entitled, "Since Feeling Is First." The company appeared blindfolded, and the play was initiated with exploring the area of touch. Subsequently, this moved through the addition of sound and finally, sight until the subtle transition was made into the final rendition of Maxine Furlaud's "Fitz."

"Fitz" was by far the most experimental concept of the evening. Kelly Yeaton's masterful sensitivity to central staging showed as Lynda Harper, Alexandra Kissinger, Don Shall and Don King became involved in overcoming the one obstacle that has always been the greatest problem of arena theatre. In the arena, when two characters are involved in a dialogue, the director manipulates the blocking so that everyone can always see the face of at least one of the actors. However, at all times, at least half of the audience is unable to see the face of the speaker.

Precise Movement

In "Fitz" two couples took identical roles and attempted to display a precise simultaneity of movement and speech. The result was an almost perfect coordination of blocking angles and dialogue that was weeks, perhaps months, away from becoming simultaneous. This, however, does not detract from the fact that the experiment was perhaps the freshest, most progressive theatre form ever attempted under the auspices of the University Theatre.

In the past, the opportunities to experience every level of theatre have abounded. The University has been involved in musicals, comedies, tragedies, operas, etc. etc. All have used traditional concepts, some have injected original introspections. Kelly Yeaton is presenting the most basic, fundamental involvements that will go into the architecture of tomorrow's theatre.

Letters to the Editor

Misguided Assumptions on ROTC

TO THE EDITOR: Wish to submit an explanation concerning the alleged "flagrant act of prejudice" discussed in the 23 May 1968 letter to the editor.

Initially, the author of that letter jumped to conclusions and the letter contained misguided assumptions rather than the facts of the matter. The issue was not a racial one, but one of examination policy.

The examination was given in two adjacent rooms by a captain and a 1L colonel. When the two Negro cadets arrived at the captain's exam room late, in accordance with the captain's longstanding policy, they were denied admission. It is also the captain's policy to allow late arrivals to make up the exam at a later date with no penalty. The colonel, who had no similar admissions policy or extra class seats, sent two late arriving white cadets from his class to the captain's class. Complying with the colonel's desire, the captain admitted the white cadets.

We sincerely hope for the sake of the service and the nation that the cadet, who failed to gain all the necessary facts before making a decision, will gain some maturity before accepting a commission and the responsibilities which accompany it.

We do give credit to the cadet who had the courage to say something when he felt there was a grave injustice, but we feel that good-judgement was lacking when he wrote the letter without all the facts before him.

CDT 2LT Robert Bewley
CDT Maj. Mack Brooks

Negro History Requested

TO THE EDITOR: It became apparent at Wednesday night's discussion on "The Negro at Penn State" that a course in Negro history should be made a requirement. The Douglas Association is making a much needed and honorable attempt at giving the Negro at Penn State a dignified and unified black community that is the equal of the white community.

Unfortunately, there is a negative reaction to this movement on our part — the whites. We feel threatened by a Negro society with an equal stature to our society because it disrupts our unjustifiable feeling of superiority. For this reason and the many other causes of prejudice, both Negro and white students should be required to take a course that will honor the contributions of the Negro to our nation, whether they be in music, art, literature, or labor.

This will give the white students a part of the Negro history that no history course has ever shown us, and it will offer the Negro students a more complete knowledge of their heritage.

Such a course would at least be a positive step in bridging the gap between our two societies. For, if prejudices are to be reduced, the Negro must have a dignified society and the whites must understand and honor their society.

Louis Alexander '70
Robert Johnston '70

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