

Stoppard uses scintillating wit to fullest

Tom Stoppard (*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, *The Real Inspector Hound*, *Jumpers* and now *Travesties*) is a writer whose works one either enjoys tremendously or finds a crashing bore. There seems to be little middle ground on the matter, as the opening night audience for the University Theatre's production of *Travesties* testifies. Although comparatively small for a UT opening night, the audience was most vocal in its appreciation of the play, and quite deservedly so.

Stoppard possesses a highly literate and scintillating wit. He loves puns, both outrageous and subtle, as well as word games, limericks, philosophical paradoxes, and playing with the inadequacies of the English language.

A major theme in many of his plays is the plight of the filler characters, the also-rans, the third persons from the left, the seconds in command, the passing acquaintances of life's heroes and how they deal with and justify their positions in the greater drama of life.

And so it is in *Travesties*. Henry Carr, a minor British consular official, happens to be in Zurich, Switzerland, during World War I. Others who happen to be in Zurich at about the same time are Lenin, James Joyce and the dadaist Tristan Tzara. The play concerns

Carr's memories, both real and imagined, of his meetings and dealings with these three illuminaries.

As the events of the play occur through Carr's rather erratic recollections, many liberties could justifiably take place, not only with actual history (the big three actually did live in Zurich during the Great War), but with the style and method of telling the story. Stoppard has made full use of these liberties.

Carr is a coffee-table conversationalist; he enjoys talking endlessly about matters he often only half understands. Ergo, long sections of the play are devoted to discussions of political positions (with Lenin), philosophies of art (with Tzara) and the English language (with Joyce).

And, since we're dealing with Carr's memories, every now and then the conversation will stop, sometimes even in mid-thought, and jump back to a previous series of statements, which will then lead to a different series of revelations.

Stoppard is working on several levels at these points: He is not only showing us several "what-I-should-have-said"-type conversations, but is also engaging, from a literary point of view, a somewhat cheap but outrage-

ously clever method of getting a great deal of exposition and character development across.

Few writers would have the intestinal fortitude to do what Stoppard does with the dramatic form. Fewer still would have the ability and wit to carry it off. Stoppard does.

Jerry Lambert was quite crisp and distinct as Joyce and Dave Smith gave a good deal of needed strength to the character of Lenin. Arastoo Sepehr's Tzara was intensely enjoyable although he occasionally suffered from a diction problem.

Also of note was Katie Klein-

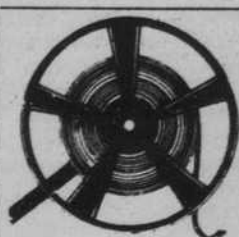
was off. An off-the-wall bit will work consistently only if it is meticulously thought out and timed to do so. Planned insanity, as it were.

Director Jean Cutler should certainly be commended for keeping things moving at a brisk and energetic pace (a less visually fluid production of this play would be disastrous, as it is an extremely wordy piece; Jerry Williams' brightly colored and varied sets as well as Nancy Hills' costumes also helped in this area). I only wish more care had been given to the burlesques.

The third problem is the acoustics. The area is far too bright aurally. This, plus the fact that the actors at times seemed to be shouting rather than projecting, caused sounds to bounce around off the walls and echo into the audience. This is especially bad when, as in this case, one of the major dramatic values of the play is the language.

As mentioned earlier, Stoppard is not everybody's cup of tea. But those who enjoy acrobatic exercises in the cerebral realm should find Cutler and crew's production of *Travesties* well worth their while.

The play continues tonight through Saturday night at 8 p.m.



By BOB WEBB

Travesties

Carr also has a penchant for the music of Gilbert and Sullivan. Therefore, every now and then the play slips into broad burlesque, even to the point of breaking into outrageous song and dance.

As Carr, James Lundstrom does a highly commendable job of getting an enormous number of words to us while still keeping us visually occupied. He is quite an energetic actor who apparently sees the fun of the play and is able to transfer it to use. He gets a little too carried away at times but that is essentially a directoral problem.

sasser, whose introductory lecture to the second act was spirited and fun.

There were, however, two areas in which the production needed some help.

One was the burlesque sequences. Sometimes the vision of a three-ring circus gone awry was organically appropriate to the action, but occasionally it smacked of being weird for the sake of being weird.

Also, often a particularly outrageous set of actions which should have brought the house down didn't because the timing

Buffet (Continued from Page 4B)

One cut from that film, *Livingston Saturday Night*, appears on *Son of a Son...*, and is also featured in the movie *FM* (and on the album soundtrack). Buffet performed the *FM* version live as a staged benefit for "Save the Whales."

Eugene and Jimmy Buffet are both "down to earth" and his fans and the curious will agree, as *Playboy* did, in calling Buffet "a true original. His songs are special stories. Some are outrageous Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers romps, but others come dangerously near being poetry. Jimmy writes about pieces of America that most of us can see, but never stop to notice — and he keeps getting better."

Flutist Tim Weisberg finally makes it to Eugene as Buffet's guest. Weisberg's latest album, *The Tim Weisberg Band*, brings Weisberg closer to a pleasing combination of music that appeals to a broad range of music lovers.

Tickets (all reserved seating) for the EMU Cultural Forum event are \$7, \$6 and \$5 for the general public, and \$5.50, \$5 and \$4 for

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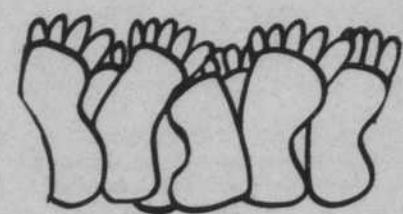
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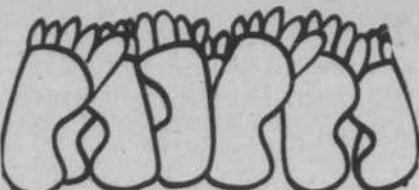
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