

Reviewer Finds Athas' Poetry Reading, After Delay, To Be Not Worthwhile

BY TIM TOURTELLETTE

The second of the scheduled four poetry readings for this Fall took place last night at Albemarle lounge, with novelist, short-story writer and poet, Daphne Athas, reading from her work.

The lounge was completely filled with students and some members of the English department in obligatory attendance. Miss Athas was late. At fifteen minutes past the scheduled hour at which she was to begin the reading, it was announced that Miss Athas was having dinner -- and should arrive shortly, which made one conjecture on just how much importance Miss Athas attached to her reading at St. Andrews. Or perhaps her dinner was so delicious she was unable to tear herself away from the table.

The minutes went by. Cigarettes were lit. People began to get restless. The lounge was a little too warm. Two people gave up and departed.

Finally, Miss Athas arrived, escorted by writer-in-residence Ron Bayes. Dressed in

a white and gold pants suit, Miss Athas looked rather out of place among the motley-dressed students. Bayes, despite his dress suit and tie, proved he was just one of the guys by sitting down unceremoniously on the floor. After the proper introduction, Miss Athas took her place at the podium, clutching her latest novel and smiling pontifically at the assembled group. The reading began -- over a half hour late and without any apologies thereof.

Miss Athas began with several "humours" poems -- which, sadly, weren't too humorous: one dealing with bugs, and one--prepared for a chuckle? -- dealing with the conversations between desserts. That's the kind you eat, not the kind you get lost and die in. Next came a serious poem and it was, in fact, serious in mood but not seriously good. Besides you were still thinking about what the chocolate mousse said to the pudding.

Next came selected readings from her novel, "Entering Epehusus." The book deals with the trials and hardships of two sisters, during the depression in the south. The potential for a real gusty, searing Southern novel, right? Wrong. Characters come off somewhere on the plane of second rate comedy -- and when they are serious they resemble a Southern version of the Bobsey twins. Miss Athas might have averted complete disaster (or in my case boredom) by reading her works with a bit more enthusiasm. Instead, she read everything in a monotonous, worn-out, middle-age housewife voice. A lesson to be learned from Dylan Thomas, Miss Athas.

Finally, it was over, and Miss Athas thanked the audience, which I thought was the best understatement I'd heard in quite a while.

One closing shot: Whenever Miss Athas read some "funny"

line, it was usually the members of the English department that laughed loudest -- too loud sometimes, as if they were trying to spare Miss Athas the supreme anguish of sending out a "funny" line and getting in return only silence and yawns. Or perhaps since some of the English department people write and give readings, they could relate too well to what was happening and were helping Miss Athas out -- just as comedians laugh hardest at other comedians because to see one of your own craft fail is, in a way, to see yourself fail.

The next reading is in November, with Ron Bayes, Rex McGuinn, John Williamson, and Beth Copeland. Bayes is one of the finest poets around and a seasoned reader. McGuinn, Williams and Copeland are all students -- and very talented. So, poetry lovers, bind your wounds and wait until November for what promises to be the best reading this Fall.

Word had been received from the Century Custom Reading Service that the tapes from the St. Andrews Folk Festival were not of the fidelity that is necessary to produce a recording. The money and the tapes are being returned to us. Students who ordered records in advance may receive their refunds after November 1.

Players Excel In Funny Spoof

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to end, but it even displayed technical, dramatic, and musical excellence. The Sunshine songsters shone song after song with outstanding musical performances being turned in by Steve Wilson as the dashing Capt. Jim, by Jon Graham as the dirty ole "Uncle" Oscar, and by new-comer Nancy Meador as the German Opera star Madame Ernestine von Liebedich. Linda Logan was splendid (as usual) as the shy, syrupy-sweet Sunshine heroine, despite a score which somewhat strained her natural alto range.

If the principals were good, the supporting cast was no less impressive. Indeed the show was an absolute masterpiece of balanced roles. The chorus groups added their own touches of brilliance what with the rangers' regimented shuffle and the ladies' catty game of croquet. Special applause goes to Sydney Humphress who, with wild and furious gyrations, led the ladies in the uproarious number "Mata Hari," a dance sequence ably choreographed by the cowardly-but-kindly Capt. Jester, alias Danny Mizell. Emily Hathaway as Nancy Twinkle proved sufficiently seductive, not to mention acrobatic as she danced through party scenes with a loaded tray of glasses. Fleeted-footed, near-sighted Keith Hartke crept and bumped well. Special accommodation goes to Chief Hartlove who amid tremendous jocularly remained the very essence of sobriety -- How, I don't know.

Any review, and most certainly this one, would be incomplete without a word about the set design. However I am at a loss to find words complimentary enough to describe the work of Tommy Sperling whose vibrant, contrasting colors and intertwining trees caught just right the carefree fantasy of the play. In fact the only flaw in the whole play was the curtain call -- the cast was not permitted to accept their standing ovation. They could have had it, too.

Staff writer



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