

## EDITORIAL

## COERCION &amp; CENSORSHIP

by Anthony N. Fragola

On Thursday evening, March 12, David Wood used a key that he had in his possession from last semester when he was a member of the Essay staff to enter the staff room, "borrow" the review I had written that day, take it to the cafeteria, show it to students and Mr. Sanders, and then write footnotes wherever he deemed appropriate. Of course, he didn't bother to ask permission or inform either me or the editor if he could do this.

Clearly this was a complete invasion of property and infringement on the right of free speech. It was not what Dave Wood wrote which concerns me, but his manner of doing it. As Dave Wood well knows, since more than once I have had to defend Dave Wood's articles, we will print nearly anything which is not libelous.

But this episode was also enlightening. For two years I have been trying to encourage both students and faculty to write reviews. Only recently have we had any success in obtaining Guest Reviews. Students were especially reluctant and feared that any criticism might jeopardize their position in the artistic community.

I remember one of the first reviews written by a high school student. After Robert Lingelbach wrote his review of Blood, Sweat, and Tears he was harassed by other students who chided him for publishing such a review in this school. Apparently the criticism was so severe that Rob Lingelbach did not write another review. This is but one example.

If a "Jim Bobbitt" writes a criticism of a performance, then he is cast as "A washed out horn-player" who has no right to tell the orchestra anything. But Jim had four years of musicology and did know what he was talking about. Many people agreed with him, but they were not the vocal ones. Their approval was given to me in hushed whispers. I had Jim as a student and found him highly sensitive and perceptive, and I deeply respect his opinion as an artist. I grant that his choice of words was severe, but I chose not to edit his review for I believe it is not my function to act as a censor. I believe that Jim Bobbitt is more qualified as a music reviewer than many journalists who obtain their status as a reviewer in

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## L'HISTOIRE

A  
REVIEW

BY ANTHONY N. FRAGOLA

Unannounced and uninvited, Dave Wood surreptitiously added the footnotes. I think they should be printed, for they provide some interesting insights into Dave Wood's mind. Rather than hassle with Mr. Wood, I leave the reader and the viewer to make his own conclusions.

A. Fragola

In its present form, L'histoire du Soldat is a hopeless farce.<sup>1</sup> The main reason for this is David Wood's heavy-handed, gimmicky presentation of the devil. It would seem that the devil's part in L'histoire needed to be more stylized, more controlled, more integrated with the presentation of dramatic content. But when Dave Wood gets a laugh, he strives for the guffaw.<sup>2</sup> If the dirty-old man technique works well when he is a mad-hatter butterfly catcher, then he wrings it dry when he is a legless soldier trying to entice the impoverished soldier to regain wealth and new honors.

And where does this leave poor Rick McCullough? He tries vainly to maintain his stature in a serious dramatic role, but there is Dave Wood rolling his eyes and twisting his mustache - it doesn't matter if he has one or not - ready to pounce on the heroine and say, "if you don't give me the deed to your ranch,

I'm going to put you on the railroad tracks or saw you right in half.<sup>3</sup> And then, And then? And then Rick McCullough has to wait for the laughter to die before he can utter a word.<sup>4</sup>

L'histoire must be taken as an allegory, the devil in the disguise of the butterfly catcher, the gentleman, the legless soldier are supposed to be manifestations of evil; they are not and should not be roles of comic farce.<sup>5</sup>

Doug McCorkindale's presentation of the Narrator adds substance and stability to the performance. He is aware of his role as the middleman, between reality and allusion, false goals and meaningful values, and he does not transgress his position.

Besides having to cope with farce and histrionics, Rick McCullough has to deal with extremely difficult rhythms, constantly shifting time signatures. Under the circumstances, Rick McCullough does a creditable job. He seemed uncomfortable in his role as an actor, and this too may have contributed his difficulty with timing, and any attempts at concentration must have been shattered by the laughter ringing in his ears.<sup>6</sup> When Rick dances with Svea Eklof, he

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THE RECOVERED  
REVIEW

EDITORS NOTE: Our appreciation is extended to Stacy Meyer for not only contributing this Guest Review but also for taking her time to rewrite the review after its theft from the Essay office. We apologize for the late issue this week, held over in order to include this rewrite.

"L'Histoire du Soldat" began where the final dress rehearsal ended; the first action of the participants was to set the stage for the performance and change from warm-up apparel to performance costume. Then, Douglas McCorkindale, the Narrator, introduced the story and its central character, the young soldier, Eric McCullough.

Rick is a promisingly good dancer, and as a dancer he performed "L'Histoire" well. But the core of the role was not in the movement, it was in the character of the soldier, which was never realized within Rick as an actor. There is no getting around it: NCSA dancers desperately need good, regular, disciplined acting classes -- for the sake of the choreographers, as well as for the dancers. No excuse will hold. Job Sanders' production of "L'Histoire" would have been much the better, had Rick known how to become the young soldier -- not to mention how to use his voice to project through the house.

Svea Eklof as the princess was delightful, I thought. Perhaps more experience as a performer has moved her closer towards maturity than Rick has yet had a chance to get; Svea came across as a beautifully melodramatic, spoiled, dumb, lovely princess-- and this is how she was supposed to be. Her costume was designed and executed by Cathy Casper; it was just about perfect.

David Wood played the Devil, who controlled and killed the soldier-boy. As the Devil, David disguised himself and took on several other characters. Voice manipulation - costumes - mannerism - props - all helped him express the various characters. Unfortunately never once could one forget that he was watching David Wood be funny, David Wood milk the audience for laughs and tears, David Wood play at being the characters, which leads one to believe the acting to have been exterior. Personally, I feel I have been taken; I enjoyed something which really was not of the quality it could or should have been. Besides, all these characters I have seen David do before, one time or another. Perhaps for the new students it was fresh. However, after four years, I'm eager to see David do something totally differently funny.

Douglas narrated excellently. From the balcony, his words could be understood; the bit of dancing about he did was delightful. Thank goodness for classes of dance-for-actors; Doug was happy and light on his feet. He helped to keep the show moving.

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