Duke Players perform N.C. drama

Reynolds Price's play Early Dark, based on the Duke professor's novel A Long and Happy Life, is no great drama, but it does examine Southern perspectives on a universal problem in an entertaining way. The Duke Players' production of the play, which opened Wednesday, features an agreeable cast and interesting technical work, which add up to a measured, thoughtful, but slightly overlong performance.

Early Dark is set in Warren County, N.C., in 1957, where Rosacoke Mustian is growing into womanhood. Life with her pragmatic mother, her earthy brother and sister-in-law and her impish little sister is stagnant. The military discharge of her boyfriend, Wesley, brings some hope back into her life. But if Wesley manages to be a little romantic, he remains as boorish as Rosa's brother Milo in his desires, equating sex with love.

The play deals with Rosa and Wesley's on-again, off-again relationship and how it is influenced by events and attitudes in the rural North Carolina setting. The most pressing factor in the relationship is Rosa's struggle for emotional maturity. Wesley's often childish behavior is a stumbling block, yet she retains an almost masochistic fascination for him.

Review

Rosa is as important to Early Dark as Scarlett O'Hara is to Gone With the Wind - and the comparison is not inaccurate. Like Scarlett, Rosa exists on a higher plane than the people around her; she is trapped in her place by her sex but she has an intrinsic need to rise above her position.

The Duke Players' production intensifies a Scarlett/Rosa comparison in its casting. Emilie Talbot, who plays Rosa, bears a striking physical resemblance to the young Vivien Leigh. Talbot is more than just a lovely actress, however. Her performance is thoroughly professional, making the audience sense both her ties to her home and her yearning for something better. When Rosa and Wesley make mistakes, Talbot invites the audience inside Rosa's mind to see the conflicts she experiences.

If there is a problem in the relationship, it lies mostly in Jeffrey Aaron's performance as Wesley. Aaron goes through his paces as

he is directed, but that is about all. His monotonous voice doesn't help matters, and it is often hard to see why Rosa is so strongly drawn to him.

In other roles, casting varies from acceptable to outstanding. John Bozeman's Milo seems at first to be a redneck stereotype along the lines of Harvey Korman's Ed Higgins characterization from The Carol Burnett Show. But events lead him to the same sort of new maturity Rosa seeks. The moment in which Milo grows up has a special magic.

Melissa Lockhart is too obviously young and slender for her role as Rosa and Milo's mother, but her everpresent resignation, practicality and firmness go far in creating the illusion of age and experience; moreover, she has an enlightening monologue in the second act and goes for it with her teeth, flamingly intense but never overacting.

Anthony Kelley, Gregory Taylor and Daniel Karslake give earnest, helpful supporting performances.

There is nothing profound about John Clum's direction, but Early Dark does not deal in profundities. Clum moves people around the stage appropriately and helps clarify a few otherwise muddy characterizations.

Costumer Anna Stevens, scenic designer Stephen Judd and light designer Charles Catotti all deserve bravos for recreating the rural North Carolina of the 1950s. Each technical element is wellfocused and on-target, with Catotti's work preeminent.

The script itself is largely engaging. At times the dialogue is absolute poetry, while at other times it is as gutsy and guttery as (to re-use a comparison) a fight between Eunice. Ed and Mama on The Carol Burnett Show. The variety of Price's writing captures a pleasingly diverse cross-section of small-town life. The only thing to be wished for is a little pruning; Early Dark's longeurs are primarily to be found in the script. Two and a half hours is just a bit much, considering the play's fragile, lightweight material.

Overall, though, Early Dark lives up to its advertisements. It is indeed a "touching romance." And as a well-performed, beautifully designed production of a Southern work of art, Early Dark is a memorable experience.

Early Dark will be performed through Saturday at 8:15 p.m. and Sunday at 2:30 p.m. in the Reynolds Theatre in Duke University's Bryan Center. Call 684-4059 for ticket information.

Toronto students to arrive Thursday

Canadians coming to experience Southern culture

By TOM GREY Staff Writer

A busload of Canadians will arrive Thursday around 6 p.m. in the parking lot of the Morehead Planetarium. Thirty-nine UNC students, members of the Toronto Exchange, will be on hand to greet them and take them across the street to a potluck dinner at the Alpha

Tau Omega house. The Canadians will spend Thursday through Tuesday in Chapel Hill attending seminars, classes, special dinners, the Clemson-UNC football game and parties. The emphasis will be on showing Southern culture to the Canadians. Sunday, for example, the two groups will attend church services at Mt. Zion Baptist Church.

"We want to make this exchange as open as possible to the whole campus," Exchange coordinator Tim Sullivan said. "We're having an all-campus party on Saturday night. Also, the seminars are open to anyone."

Vince Steele, another coordinator, said that the idea of the exchange was not only to get to know the Canadians, but to let them see as much of the Chapel Hill area and University community as possible.

Money for these activities comes mainly from fund-raising events. UNC Exchange members have sponsored a Pit Day, bake sales, doughnut sales, a covercharge night and a band party.

UNC members will travel to Canada in January. Money for the trip will come from dues of \$50 each. The trip will take 17 to 18 hours including a one-hour stop at Niagara Falls. The UNC students will explore Canadian culture, art, government and social life.

Last year a tour of Parliament, a reception hosted by government officials and an ice-skating trip were some of the activities sponsored by the Canadians.

Although UNC members made it to Canada last year, the Canadians had to cancel their trip to UNC at the last minute for financial reasons.

"We were disappointed, of course," said Clinker Hamilton, a member of last year's Exchange and a coordinator this year. "We had worked hard to plan our activities, which centered around Home-

coming and Halloween." This year the coordinators say that they are anxious to make the Exchange

two-way again. "The group this year is very enthusiastic," Hamilton said. "They are doing a good job preparing for the Canadians' arrival and we're anxious to get them here and show them our hospitality."

This will be the 25th year of the Toronto Exchange. Admission is open to all students, although there is a screening process to narrow the number to 36 from

the several hundred who apply. "We look for a good mix," said Steele. "To get a diverse group, we consider such factors as wehther the student is in-state or out-of-state, the student's major, and, of course, we chose an even number of males and females."

Mangum to open haunted house Sunday

Crook's Corner-

Strange things have been happening at Mangum Residence Hall lately. The ghosts and goblins that have been hiding in the closets since last Halloween have begun to show their faces as dormitory residents once again prepare for Mangum's annual haunted house.

Mangum is sponsoring the haunted house to raise money for the North Carolina Burn Center. The money will go to a \$15 million endowment fund for people there who have financial difficulties,

said Mangum President Mark Fava. This is the third year Mangum has sponsored the haunted house. The money raised last year also went to the burn

"We have had good response so far," said Treasurer John Forrester. "Last year we had between 1,100 and 1,200 people. This year we hope to sell at least 1,200 tickets in advance."

The haunted house will be open in Mangum Sunday night from 9 p.m. to midnight and Monday night from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. Admission is \$1.

— AMY BRANNEN

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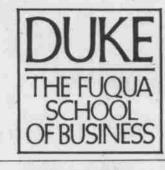
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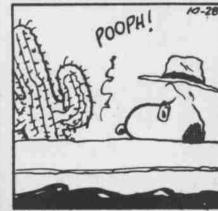
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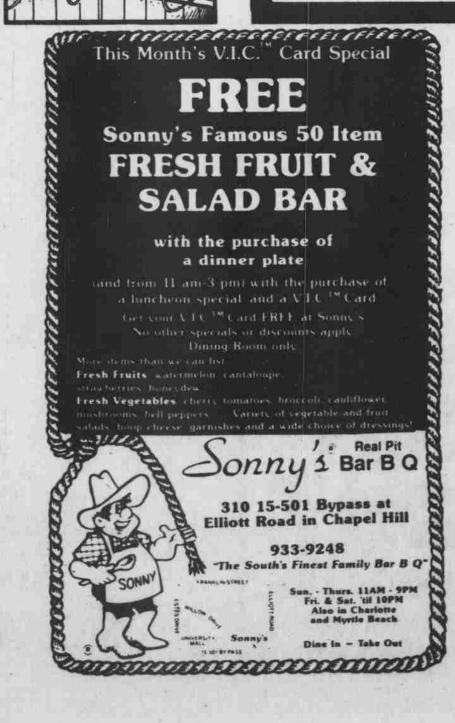
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