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REALITY AND ILLUSION BALANCED

By John Mostuma

Productions at the Charles Playhouse ("Boston's resident professional theatre") are seldom dull, and the current offering, Jean Genet's "The Balcony," is no exception. The playwright will be kept wide awake just trying to unravel the reality from the illusion—which Genet seems to feel is a hopeless task anyway.

World a Whorehouse

Genet starts with the basic metaphor of the world as a whorehouse and proceeds to upset his plot with sadism, masochism, passion, homosexuality, castration, and good old smut in his attempt to show the interdependence of Vice and Virtue, being and function, truth and fantasy. And one need not agree with Genet to be bothered by the penetrating force of his argument of the insubstantiality of man, especially civilized man.

The staging at the Charles Theatre reflects the starkness of the play. A single U-shaped platform is the only fixed setting, the lighting is somber, and the costumes are almost barely plain except for the brilliant robes worn by Madame Irma's "guests" as they act out their elaborate fantasies.

The play must be difficult to perform, because of the constant shifting from "reality" to "illusion"—the acting-within-acting which complicates the whole play.

In general, the Charles people were good, with some characterizations and some scenes really excellent. Irma Dukalis was variable in the long role of Irma, mistress of the whorehouse. At times she seemed too much caught up in her own illusions—though the balancing of that role must be very difficult. Her final scenes were fine, though.

Reality and Illusion Balanced

Louis Zorich put in a good performance as the chief of police who wants to be a hero, another role where reality and illusion tend to be delicately balanced. Sometimes his histrionic sounds false, but otherwise his performance was reasonably convincing.

In the roles more sharply divided between illusion and reality, or restricted wholly to illusion, none of the performances were beautiful handled. I might single out the nice contrast in the judicial fantasy between Jill Clayburgh's seminarian, writing Portrait and Godfrey Evans'priest, archconservative Judge; or, again, the fire in Mfiof Grant's portrayal of Chantel, the whore-turned-rebel who specializes in revolution taking place outside the whorehouse walls.

Too much of the plot should not be revealed to potential theatre-gazers—much of the play depends on its shock value, the stimulation of its impact. The Charles Playhouse production is both entertaining and provocative, and deserves a hearing by students willing to be a bit disturbed by a play.

Ford Foundation sponsors Wilson

The Ford Foundation has named Assoc. Professor of Engineering Gerald L. Wilson, as one of twenty-two professors who will spend a year to fifteen months gaining experience in industry at high levels of decision-making.

The residency awards, made under a $360,000 program begun in 1964, are designed to help counterbalance a tendency towards abstractness in technological education by encouraging a closer relationship between educational teaching and practice.

Each resident will work as a paid officer of a company on projects involving the planning and execution of engineering work and will be assigned essential company tasks designed to strengthen his professional growth. Prof. Wilson will be working for the American Electric Power Service Corporation of New York.