Identity is major theme of Pinter's "The Dwarfs"

By Ray Hagstrom

Recently a lady wrote Harold Pinter, in reference to one of his plays, "Who are the two men?" Where did they come from?--Are they supposed to be normal?--"The playwright replied, "Who are you?"

"Where did you come from?" --Are you supposed to be normal?--"the answer was not as devious as it might seem. The theme of identity is again foremost in Pinter's latest production, "The Dwarfs," now playing at the Theatre Company of Boston.

Three facets of one man

The plot of "The Dwarfs" revolves around three characters whose identities meld as the play unfolds. By the end of the play, Mark, Len and Pete resemble the three facets of personality. Mark is the vain one who never loses his cool, he needs the other characters to survive. Pete is sober and businesslike—he fought his way up the social ladder from a rustic background to the city. He says characteristically, "Thinking got me into this and thinking's got to get me out." Len is caught between these two. They do battle for his attention. He feels no great need for the other two characters, yet he bow's to their wishes.

He is further persecuted by the Dwarfs. The Dwarf intend to do Mark and Pete harm, but Len is trying to protect them. The focus of the plot is the gradual realization that in spite of their clashes, the three men need each other to survive. The conclusion of this is stated, "We depend on these concerted accidents to survive."

The play itself is another success for Pinter. There is a very natural unfolding of the action through the characters. Never do they resort out of countenance. Skillful acting and directing iron out the difficult parts where a weaker performance would make the action implausible.

Williams seems crude

Pinter himself picked "The Local Stigmatic" by Heathcote Williams as the running mate for "The Dwarfs." Pinter is a hard act to follow. The characters by comparison seem out of place. The action is bland—Williams tries to beat some response out of the audience. Certainly this is a valid means of eliciting reaction, but it seems crude after Pinter's finesse.

The Theatre Company of Boston has moved to a new location. They have remodelled a theatre located at 136 Mass. Ave., just off Boylston. The new quarters are much better than their previous rather spartan arrangements at the Hotel Touraine. This new location, being quite close to campus, coupled with the well chosen repertoire this season promises to make TOC a likely spot for an evening out.

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