

A & E

Literary Genius: *Lost in the Funhouse* Strindberg from the sound booth

by Amity Foster

Wow. The last one. No more will my five or six loyal readers be treated to my random thoughts about cool books. One book that I have made time to read is *Lost In The Funhouse* by John Barth. It is a collection of short stories which are connected, by character or by ideas. I once read an excerpt of Barth's work about two years ago. I didn't like it and didn't understand it all. I don't know if I understand it any more, but I do know that I like it a lot more because it made me laugh when I really needed to.

Seven stories into the book, and I have read about twins attached belly to back, kids being kids, bees swarming on a child and his mother, and a book giving its own autobiography. As with all good books, the reader is drawn into the characters, like Ambrose who was swarmed on by bees while being breast-fed. Ambrose's story moves on throughout the book as he grows up, changing views and names. Thus far, one of the themes in the book is that of growing up, of changing (whether physically or mentally). Last semester I talked about Italo Calvino's book, *If On a*

Winter's Night a Traveler. *Lost In The Funhouse* reminds me of Calvino's story because of the way characters and stories mix together. The writers use the same style, with narrators that switch voice, even though the story stays the same.

The story I like the most is "Autobiography." Barth spends time in his introduction explaining that the 'I' in the story is not himself, but the story. The story describes its parents: Dad, the writer who dallied with Mom, a recording device, when he got bored one day. This has probably been done before: a writer creating a story that is literally living as its own being, but Barth makes it real. I actually felt sympathy for a story talking about its creation and its readers. The story goes through a sort of mid-life crisis, and then talks of its death. I felt sad for a thing that can't hear itself talk, and whose creator is jealous and dislikes it.

The story speaks like a human being as it says, "Shark up some memorable words at least. There seems to be time. Nonsense, I'll mutter to the end, one word after another, string the rascals out, mad or not, heard or not, my last words will be my last words". Yeah.

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Seeing a show from the booth is always different from seeing it in the house. Knowing what the lights and sound are supposed to do makes me feel like I know what the show itself is supposed to do. Watching Mark Rosenwinkel's show, *Wanderings: A Strindberg Odyssey*, made me realize this isn't always true.

The show is about and based on August Strindberg and some of his works. I know very little about this playwright: he wrote *A Dream Play* and *Ghost Sonata*. The show, performed by Rosenwinkel, who is also the writer of *Almirante*, done at Concordia last year. Mark Rosenwinkel, a Concordia alumnus, is the writer of several plays, including *Moby Dick*, based on Melville's book, which was performed at a children's festival in Russia.

Rosenwinkel's intrigue with August Strindberg began about seventeen years ago while he was in graduate school. He says the passion of Strindberg's existence and the tension between his religious upbringing drew him to do a show on the playwright. Strindberg grew up in a religious household, denounced it, and

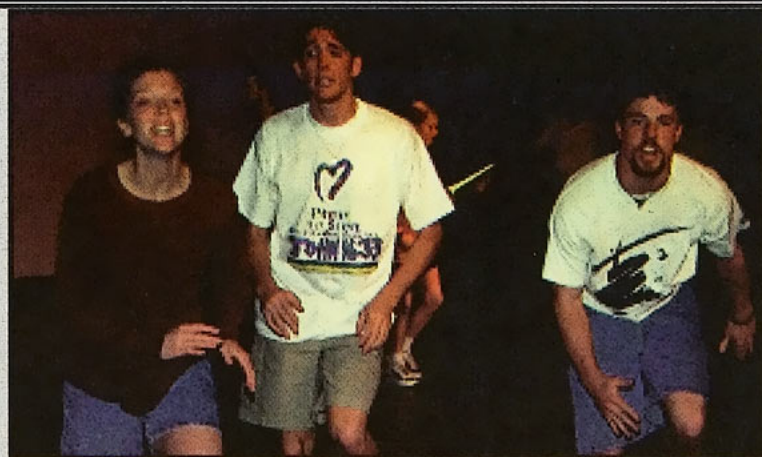
towards the end of his life, started to come back to religion.

Wanderings was performed by Rosenwinkel as August Strindberg and Elizabeth Streiff, taking on the various roles of prostitute, beggar woman, housekeeper and young girl. The first act is composed of Strindberg's opinions about women, other writers, dogs, fame, love and his interest in chemistry. The second act contains references to, and ideas from, Strindberg's plays. Both acts bring in Strindberg's emotions about religion, particularly his changing emotions about religion.

Many of the ideas and themes come from his plays, short stories, and novels. Literature is often thought to be somewhat autobiographical, and Rosenwinkel suggests this is true of Strindberg. Like other famous artists, it is hard to find the dividing line between art and reality between Strindberg's life and his work.

I knew very little about August Strindberg when I saw this show. After seeing *Wanderings*, what I know has been supplemented by Mark Rosenwinkel's creative take on a very odd man.

"Called to be Free"



Director Mike Charron has assembled an all-star cast, including the King's Players and former Student Union director Dan Asmus, to perform a rock opera, entitled "Called to be Free." This performance will take place as the last mass event at the National Youth Gathering in Atlanta this July.

