

Christmas Presence

by Timothy Bantum

The Holiday Season seems to bring a certain lively energy to everyone. We all want to get out and go shopping, or hang up bright lights, or listen to those special songs that are back in style this time each year. Live performances of the fine arts seem to be in great abundance. Handel's Messiah is played and accompanied by numerous orchestras and every stage seems to be filled by an old man mumbling "humbug. . . Baa Humbug."

However, tacked back in a corner of St. Anthony Main, in Minneapolis, I was treated to a special presentation this year. **Christmas Presence** was performed by the Refreshment Committee, a group of actors who called the Mainstage Theatre home.

Christmas Presence is made of three one act shows, each totally independent of the other except for their Christmas theme. The first play was a lively adaptation of Charles Dickens' classic *A Christmas Carol* with a new twist. Each ghost was performed by three actors simultaneously. This doesn't sound like it would work but it did! The vocal harmonies added a great effect. Special lighting helped create the appropriate mood, whether it was gloomy ... eery ... cemetery.

Following a brief intermission, came part two of **Christmas Presence**. This play was entitled

The Innkeeper and was based on a piece of poetry written by a Twin Cities clergyman. The story is a fictitious account of Jesus returning to Bethlehem. He comes to repay the innkeeper who allowed his parents to use the stable thirty-three years before, on the night of his birth. The account is quite moving and does a great job of pointing out the only reason Christ was born in the first place...he had to die.

After a final short break, the actors completed the program with their rendition of *A Doo-Wop Nativity*. Taking their lyrics directly from the first several chapters of Luke, they sang the story of Christ's coming and the events that surrounded his birth. The tempo, beat, and mood were constantly changing, depending on the part of the story being told. A highlight of this display was the musical tracing of Jesus' ancestors through Mary all the way to Adam. If you thought geneologies were tough to read, try singing them.

Christmas Presence was a refreshing look at the real meaning of this season. Judging by the fact that all seventeen public performances were sold out, I'd say quite a few others agree with me. A flyer from the show described it as "A New Christmas Tradition." If you missed it this time, be sure and try to get tickets early next year. I have a feeling a lot of people are going to take their advice.

Now Playing . . .

by Dirk Mattson

Here's your key:

- \$\$\$\$\$ Worth the price
- \$\$\$\$ Entertaining but not urgent
- \$\$\$ Saturday matinee material
- \$\$ If you really want to
- \$ Wait for the video

\$\$\$\$\$ *Steel Magnolias* has an all-star cast of actresses involved in a story which has been done before but now includes more players. Sally Field, Shirley MacLaine, Olympia Dukakis, Dolly Parton, Julia Roberts, and Daryl Hannah all play women in a small Louisiana town who befriend each other through the difficulties of life, particularly the problem of diabetes for Sally Field's daughter Shelby (Roberts). The ways in which these women look at life work together to comfort Fields and her attempt to deal with outcome of Shelby's disease. While the film has been labeled by some critics as a copy of *Terms of Endearment*, it differs from it greatly by the sheer variety of interpretations of the crisis as given to us by the different characters. The actresses presented the women so simply as the neighbor next door you never truly knew. The seasoned actresses also bring a refinement to their character; subtle mannerisms are well portrayed. Each of these women give quality performances which polish a well-

written screenplay by Rob Hatling. *Steel Magnolias* is indeed well-done; you would never know metal could smell so sweet.

\$\$\$\$ *Crimes and Misdemeanors* starring Woody Allen and Michael Landau finds two men involved in affairs -- one wanting to be involved while the other would give anything to get out. Woody Allen, who also wrote and directed the film, attempts to define his life and the situations of those around him as he strives for happiness or at least attempts to define what it should be. The result is laughs through dozens of one-liners in a way that only Allen can give. Like so many of his other films, Woody Allen uses it as a vehicle for his existential search for life. The film, as a good existential film can do, becomes a bit depressing as he is no closer at the end of the film than when he began. Whether related to this or not, the film does lose a bit of continuity toward the end as it tries to tie all the various subplots together for the conclusion. Even if you may not agree with Mr. Allen's philosophy of life, there is no doubt that he has an uncanny ability to capture life on film: all of the details of life each become a thorn in Clifford's (Allen's) side. The comedy you see in his portrayal of them make it a bit easier for you to laugh at yourself.

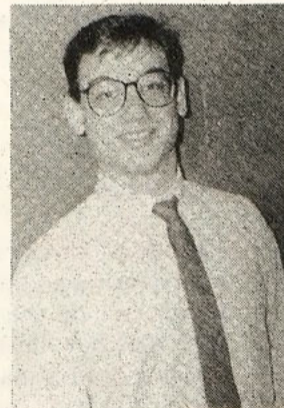
Concordia Speaks

WHAT DO YOU THINK IS ONE OF THE MAJOR CRISES FACING THE TWIN CITIES TODAY AND WHY?



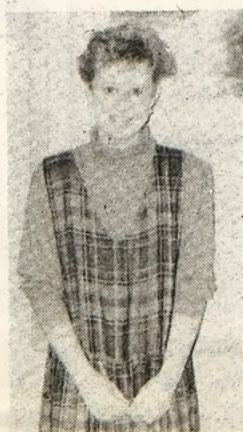
Chad Gieske: *People are too materialistic. The only thing they care about is material goods and not about other people.*

Rob Krueger: *There are problems such as homelessness and drug and alcohol addictions and so on but, all and all, compared with other metropolitan area the Twin Cities seem to have a better handle on these problems.*



Sarah Little: *The inner city children - many times they have no where to go and are left out on their own, and this is often times out on the streets.*

Chris Newman: *The traffic. It gives me a lot of stress on my way to student teaching in the morning. The construction seems endless.*



Eric Harre: *Drugs - they are a growing problem, especially in the Midway area.*