

# 'Sport of My Mad Mother' well received

by JANE MARTIN

Anne Jelicoe's play, 'The Sport of My Mad Mother', presented by the Contemporary Drama class of Cynthia Othergill, played twice last week to two very appreciative audiences. The play is essentially about three young teenagers, who, just "untied from mother's apron strings" and now running loose in the streets of London, are finding out about all the dark mysteries of life. They encounter an older American boy and he meets Greta, a prostitute who to them at least is representative of what it is to be grown up. One finds the play somewhat reminiscent of William Golding's 'Lord of the Flies.'

The play was very much open to interpretation, and the interpretation of this production is pretty clearly indicated in the programme. Here they describe it as "an anti-intellect play not only because it is about irrational forces and urges but because we hope it will reach the audience directly through rhythm, noise and music and their reaction to basic stimuli."

The speeches, which were either brief sentences, chants or rambling monologues, required a confident and versatile delivery. So the pace in the play becomes crucial. This presentation moved at a pace that exhausted the audience while it passed quickly over some rather significant lines.

This was suitable in at least one respect, as it demonstrated the clumsy, undirected and uncontrolled energy of the characters — the teenagers who were looking for some cause, something around which they could organize and assert themselves. It is cer-

tainly a dynamic and exciting play, which as a whole does have a great deal of meaning. But the deliveries were so hurried that many of the speeches, trite though they were, left the audience with some action, but without realizing all of the ironies or understanding their underlying meanings.

The part of Steve, played by Jim McWhir, was suitably off-hand, suggesting that this was similar to a play within a play and that the audience might therefore identify themselves with this outsider.

Cameron Mackay as Dean, who tries to make some kind of order out of all the misguided energy, was most compassionate with the bewildered misfit, Dodo, played by Iryna Ostapchuk. However, he seemed at times to lack the presence and calm assurance which this part demanded.

Dodo looked most effective in a voluminous overcoat; a sort of lost soul. But the audience did not see a great deal of this pathetic creature as her head was, as a rule, appropriately buried in blankets. If Dean seemed somewhat lost, Norah Cotter, playing the part of the hysterical Patty, seemed to have a little too much confidence when one takes into consideration some

of the reactions she had to events. One was rather taken aback when she was able to cry after the fight. Her acting was however very spirited and captivating.

Stephen Godfrey managed his part as Fak very well. He was able to convey the idea of a lank, awkward, impulsive and yet very frightened youth who aspires to the image of a "tough". There was a very definite sense of

continuity in his portrayal of Fak. Al Forbes played the part of Cone, the incongruous

youth, both pugnacious and blundering. He was intense, but hadn't quite the style that Fak showed.

Finally, the part of Greta was played by Josette Cornelius. Here again I was surprised, as in this interpretation she was very much a witch figure. I don't think it was meant to imply that all prostitutes must be witches. I had imagined just a rather condescending, mature, wo-



man-of-the-world who taunted the teenagers. Josette Cornelius was no less than terrifying to watch, although the characters on-stage did not seem to find her quite as alarming as those off-stage.

The set was very much in the style of the usual Café de la Terrasse decor, with the exception of several towels on washing lines, and some graffiti on the walls. I would have preferred something more stylized, less messy and more suggestive. The costumes were most apt, clearly indi-

cative of the 50's.

Generally, I was pleasantly surprised by the success of the play as it is neither a traditional play nor one which is simple and self-evident; it required a great deal of thought and interpretation. The production, although its interpretation and consequently its message differed from my own impression on reading the play — certainly made its point. And it was well received by the audience which is after all the most important thing.