

## Take Care

*Theatre Inconnu's The Caretaker engaging and exciting*

Have you ever experienced a Harold Pinter play? If so, then you've probably noticed they are a lot like childhood nursery rhymes: when they're good, they are very, very good—but when they're bad, they are horrid. Which explains why whenever I hear Pinter is being staged (which isn't often) I am filled with a sort of excited dread. Will this be an inspired production of one of England's finest playwrights? Or will it be an exercise in embarrassment and frustration that will leave me shell-shocked and fearful of ever entering a theatre again?

With a loud and gusty sigh of relief, I can happily report Theatre Inconnu's production of *The Caretaker* is both electric and fresh, and just about everything you want a Pinter play to be.

As with most of Pinter's works, *The Caretaker* is a simple story with little plot and few characters. Aston (Michael Shewchuk) takes a drifter named Davies (Clayton Jevne) back to his poor cramped apartment after rescuing him from a fight. The two live together in the small abode, occasionally visited by Aston's erratic brother, Mick (Jason Stevens). And that's about it. Everything else is in the dialogue: fast, spontaneous, sometimes nonsensical conversations that are funny, painful, and deeply revealing.

As there is nothing for the play to fall back on (no fancy plot twists or flashy reveals), *The Caretaker* has the potential to be particularly awful if performed badly. Fortunately, Shewchuk, Jevne and Stevens all rise to this particularly challenging script. The effort they've put into finding the core of their relationships with each other is obvious; all three achieve moments in their speeches and in their silences that are poignant and moving. Pinter has a tendency to repeat a lot of his dialogue, but all three cast members (and particularly Jevne and Stevens) are able to give new meaning to the same sentences repeated over and over,

keeping the story alive and fresh.

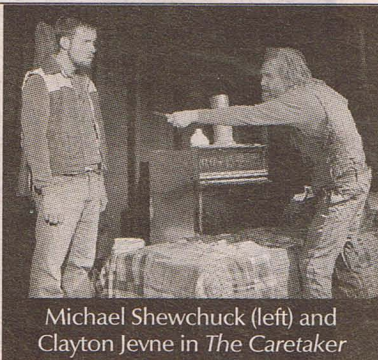
With so much talk and so little action, it would be easy for the play to lose focus, but director Graham McDonald does a great job keeping everyone in line. He knows how to use movement to drive the story forward, and when to let his actors be still and enjoy the moment. The result is an engaging, exciting production that never stalls or stumbles.

If there is one criticism to make of this production, it's that McDonald seemed determined to set the play in the early '80s, which is odd considering the only way to really date the play is through the music played between scenes and Aston's retro-looking shirts. As I wasn't concerned with the time of the story, I found these era references unnecessary and distracting. One other thing to be aware of: the theatre space itself has an unfortunate beam in the middle of the stage that I'm sure is structurally imperative and prevents the roof from falling on the players, but it does make it difficult to see sometimes (especially when one of the few action scenes takes place directly behind it). Arrive early and choose your seating wisely.

But these are trivial annoyances that by no means take away from the overall delightfulness of Theatre Inconnu's latest triumph. What more can I say? Go see *The Caretaker*. Now. Tonight. Go!

—Sarah Gignac

GRAHAM McDONALD



Michael Shewchuck (left) and Clayton Jevne in *The Caretaker*

***The Caretaker***  
 Until March 10  
 Little Fernwood Hall,  
 1923 Fernwood  
 Tickets \$10-\$12  
 360-0234