

# The Waltz of the Toreadors

by Jean Anouilh



January 15 - 18 & 22 - 25, 1997

Laugh and cry with this classic from the pen of Jean Anouilh, considered by many to be the greatest of modern European playwrights. High comedy with Gallic flair, exciting, ironic, and cruel.

## The Waltz of the Toreadors

by Jean Anouilh

Directed by Rosemary Keneford

### CAST

MME ST PE	Dorothy Gardner
GENERAL ST PE	Brooke Keneford
GASTON	Rob Johnstone
SIDONIA	Calie McPhee
ESTELLE	Kim Gardner
DR. BONFANT	Jim Holmes
FIRST MAID	Natalie Fraser
MLLE. DE STE-EUVERTE	Jenefer Haynes
MME. DUPONT-FREDAINE	Sandy Wynne
FATHER AMBROSE	David Lavoie
NEW MAID	Katie Betts



# Dance of life a bitter waltz

## **The Waltz of the Toreadors**

Kanata Theatre

**When:** Jan. 15-18 and Jan. 22-25, 8 p.m.

**Where:** Ron Maslin Playhouse,  
Terry Fox Drive, Kanata

**Tickets:** \$12; phone: 831-4435

**By Iris Winston**

Citizen correspondent

There are no great love stories, no heroic tales and certainly no heroic figures in the world portrayed by French dramatist Jean Anouilh in *The Waltz of the Toreadors*.

Even though many of his characters seek romance and perfect happiness, they are likely to settle for sordid compromise. Take the pathetically lecherous General St. Pé in Kanata Theatre's *Waltz*, which opened Wednesday. Too cowardly to leave the pseudo-invalid wife he despises for the woman he has believed to be his true love for 17 years, he blusters about honor and pursues the chambermaids instead.

Equally pathetic are the wife who interprets the spousal relationship as possession, the near-mistress who finally finds a young lover, and the general's two squabbling daughters who think only of new dresses.

Anouilh called this 1952 script a *pièce grinçante* — a grating play — and grate it does in its bitter pessimism and acid satire. It does have its comic moments and director Rosemary Keneford and a well-chosen cast certainly play up the physical comedy and farcical aspects in this production. But the overall impression is of the futility of lives spent locked into unhappy relationships.

Brooke Keneford's aging lecher begins as a likeable and long-suffering fellow, dealing with a shrewish, demanding wife (Dorothy Gardner). He is considerably less likeable after their violent confrontation, one of the most powerful scenes, that ends with his attempting to choke her.

The ugly passion in this relationship contrasts sharply with the intentionally artificial romance with Mlle. De Ste.-Euverte (Jenefer Haynes). The two bring some charm and electricity to the re-creation of the early moments of their affair but, in the harsh tragi-comedy of Anouilh's view, time moved on and the romantic moment stood still. Thus, Mademoiselle really has no option but to find a new love, the General's innocent young secretary, Gaston (effectively played by Rob Johnstone).

Too late the General realizes that the "trouble with all this philandering is that you reach my age and realize you've never once made love." As his physician (a coolly cynical Jim Holmes) points out, "We have all stayed little boys. Only the little girls grow up."

Left behind, the General returns to a flutter with yet another maid, knowing he has no chance of real happiness. In the final moments of a well-paced production, Keneford encapsulates the sharp edges and bitterness of life's comedy that leaves a residue of sadness long after this *Waltz* ends.

*Ottawa Citizen Jan 16/97*