

Pantomime returns to the GLT stage

By ANI PEDERIAN
Herald Staff Writer
Pantomime is really for grown-ups.

Much of its humor, of course, goes over the heads of children in the audience, according to Georgetown Little Theatre's Ron Hunt.

Nevertheless, pantomime is still promoted as being for little ones. The flamboyant, colorful costumes, the singing and dancing and its classic transformation scene in which characters go to a fairy land, provide more than enough satisfaction for children. The kids don't mind missing out on the cruder jokes.

Long familiar with pantomime, Mr. Hunt is currently in the throes of rehearsals for "Hickory Dickory Dock". The show is being put on by the Peel Pantomime Players and the Little Theatre for both Brampton and Georgetown audiences this Christmas season.

Involved in three previous pantomimes as an actor, Mr. Hunt can remember being taken to see pantomimes in Britain when he was a child.

GET SEATS
"It was a great way of settling down the kids after Christmas," Mr. Hunt laughed.

Although pantomimes have become a British tradition over the years, with British parents struggling to get seats for Boxing Day, which was the opening day for the pantomime season, Mr. Hunt said pantomimes originated with the Greeks.

However, for the Greeks, pantomime meant no dialogue. Actors used mime to imitate others and expressed their meanings through their actions alone.

Through the years, pantomime was picked up by travelling groups of actors and eventually developed into the musical pot-pourri of today.

By the 1750s, vaudevillians had gotten in on the act, throwing in crude jokes to go along with the mime.

And, in the 1850s, comedian Joe Grimaldi refined the pantomime to what it is today, Mr. Hunt said.

Grimaldi was famous for singing couplets and leaving out the last word.

Because it would be such an obvious last word in the rhyming couplet, the audience would shout it out.

His pantomimes encouraged the audience to respond, and audience participation became an important part of pantomime. Actors would run through the audience, getting down off the stage chasing each other and mixing with their spectators.

THWART AFFAIR
The classic British pantomime relates a popular story against a background of satiric or exaggerated scenery and music.

In Britain, characters like lovers Harlequin and Columbine developed, and a plot in which daughter Columbine's father attempts to thwart their love affair because he disapproves of Harlequin.

MAKE FUN
From the Italians, the British pantomime borrowed more characters, making fun of the local

police chief, the rich landowner or the evil baron and his henchmen.

The classic story now gave Columbine a mother called The Dame. A rough woman with a heavy chest and comic lines, "she's" really a "he". Mr. Hunt is playing The Dame in Hickory Dickory Dock.

He explained that The Dame came to be played by a man because it allowed the character to show lots of leg on stage without upsetting the censor's office. It also attracted customers. Nobody could take offense because it really wasn't a woman exposing herself on stage.

If you're planning to see Hickory Dickory Dock in Georgetown Dec. 10, 11 or 12, look for the redhead with a bun around each ear and another atop his head. It'll be Ron Hunt. Seats can be reserved by calling the Little Theatre box office at 877-3700 or by writing to P.O. Box 64, Georgetown. They're \$2.50 each.

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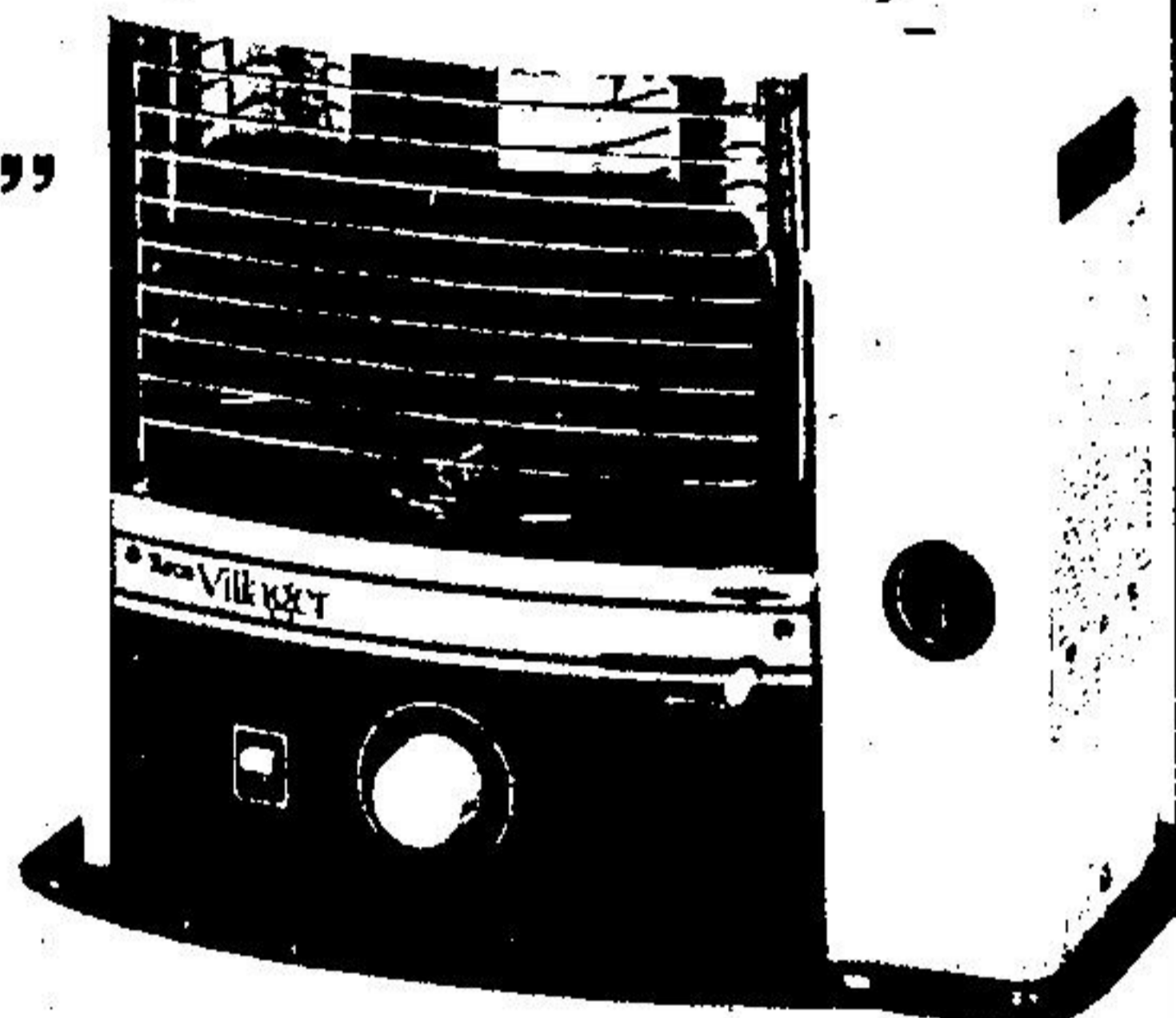
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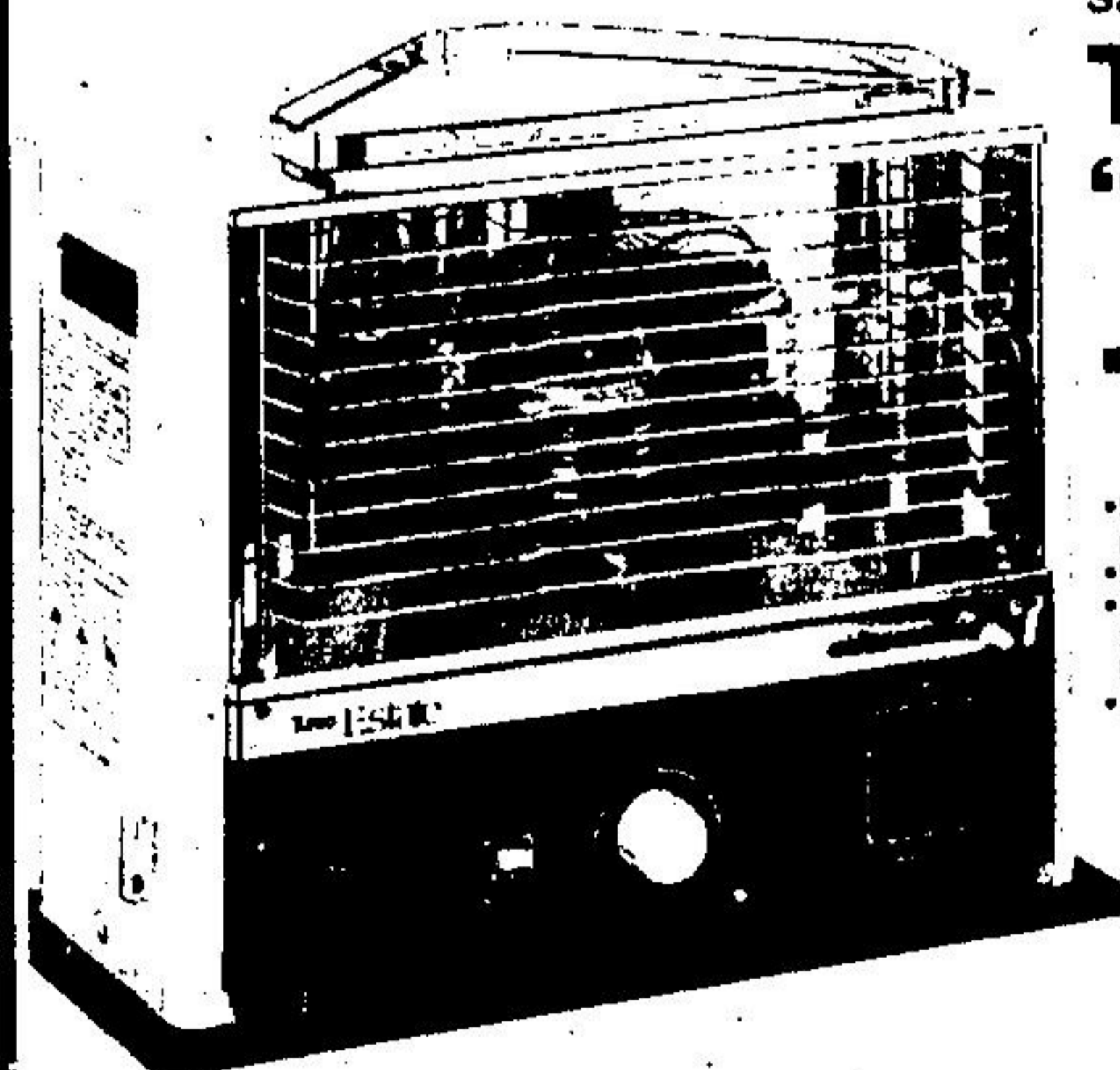
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