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TECH SHOW '63
'SINS AND NEEDLES'

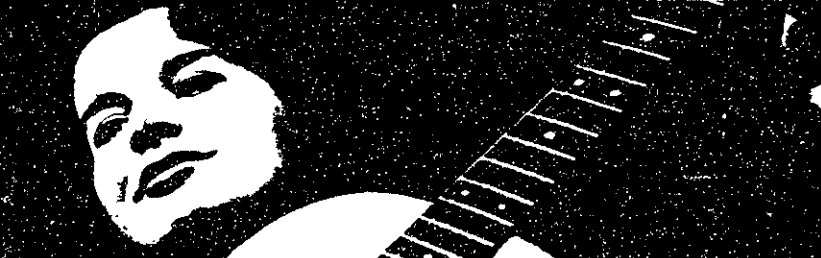
February 28,
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theatre . . .

'Oh Dad, Poor Dad' At The Charles

By Charles Foster Ford

The original Harvard production of "Oh Dad . . ." was done by a group of dedicated amateurs, some of whom seemed to have parts written especially for them. They played it with almost vaudevillian style, strictly for laughs (which are many). I hear the London production attempted to be a serious social comment, and fell flat.

At the Charles, the play doesn't get off the ground. It is encumbered by strange casting, inadequate rehearsal, and gross technical errors . . . all of which are obvious to even the untrained. The play's artistic qualities, comic and serious, have a hard time shining through these handicaps.

The action of the play concerns Jonathan's awkward emergence from his cocoon. A stammering, inhibited boy at twenty-three, his mother has smothered him almost out of existence. Rosalie, a girl Jonathan watches with his telescope, is invited in to talk to him. Madame Rosepettle wants to show him what the outside world is really like. Rather than feeling disgusted, however, Jonathan falls in love with her.

Frank Segrue and Michael Murray present OH DAD, POOR DAD, MOMMA'S HUNG YOU IN THE CLOSET, AND I'M FEELIN' SO SAD, a pseudoclassical tragicomedy in a bastard French tradition, by Arthur Kopit. Directed by Neal Kenyon. Costumes by Susan Webb. Scenery by Richard Guilleksen. Lighting by Walter Dolan. Musical Consultant Joe Raposo. Special effects designed and executed by Hugh E. Lester. Production Supervisor Aloysius Petrucci.

THE CAST

Madame Rosepettle . . . Nancy Zalla
 Jonathan . . . William Hammond
 Rosalie . . . Susan Reiselt
 Commodore Roseabove . . . G. Wood
 Head Bellboy . . . Garry Phillips
 Bellboys . . . John Brown, David Barber, Peter Gerety, Peter Russell, David Tabor

When Madame Rosepettle tells the story of her marriage to Commodore Roseabove (a nine-page monologue), Jonathan is evesdropping. This grotesque vision of love and marriage unsettles the boy; he attacks his mother's venus-flytraps with an axe, and murders her pet piranha fish.

At this moment Rosalie returns, and entices Jonathan into his mother's room, where he has never been allowed. There, she strips off her innocence, and most of her clothes, and tries to seduce him. She reveals herself as the depraved thing Madame Ros-

pettle said she was, and also as a possessive counterpart of the Madame herself. Then, like a prophecy of the result of marriage, Dad sprawls out of the closet. Terrified, Jonathan smothered Rosalie, and retreats into his own room to await his mother's return.

"Oh Dad . . ." is a perfect example of what has been called Theatre of The Absurd. The setting of the play is unreal, the characters incredible, the dialogue and action logical extensions of irrational premises. The whole must be held together by the vigor and style of performance.

Still, under the ridiculous surface, and almost subliminal seriousness is at work. The comic occurrences are actually caricatures of the modern world. Jonathan, completely mother-dominated, must observe the outside world with his home-made telescope. His mother locks him in his room not to keep him in (which would be heinous), but to keep him from going out (which is beneficial). Madame Rosepettle married her husband because he was someone she could possess completely: she could love him, she could marry him, she could kill him, because he belonged to her.

Madame Rosepettle's grotesque description of her courtship and marriage is an extreme parody of modern love. This loveless union of grotesque figures is a compendium of all the unpleasantness possible in marriage.

William Hammond and Susan Reiselt play Jonathan and Rosalie quite well. Their first scene together captures the air of oddly believable strangeness which should characterize the whole play. Nancy Zalla makes an indifferent Madame Rosepettle. Her hesitance and confusion in the opening scene was embarrassing. Her monologue was quite effective, however, and her performance may improve generally once she has learned the opening lines better.

Neal Kenyon considers the play a grotesque comedy. His emphasis on the closing line, "I ask you, as a mother to a son, what does this all mean?" proves he feels it means nothing, which it does not. The set-changes, to the bedroom and back, are performed on a darkened stage by noisy, clumsy stagehands.

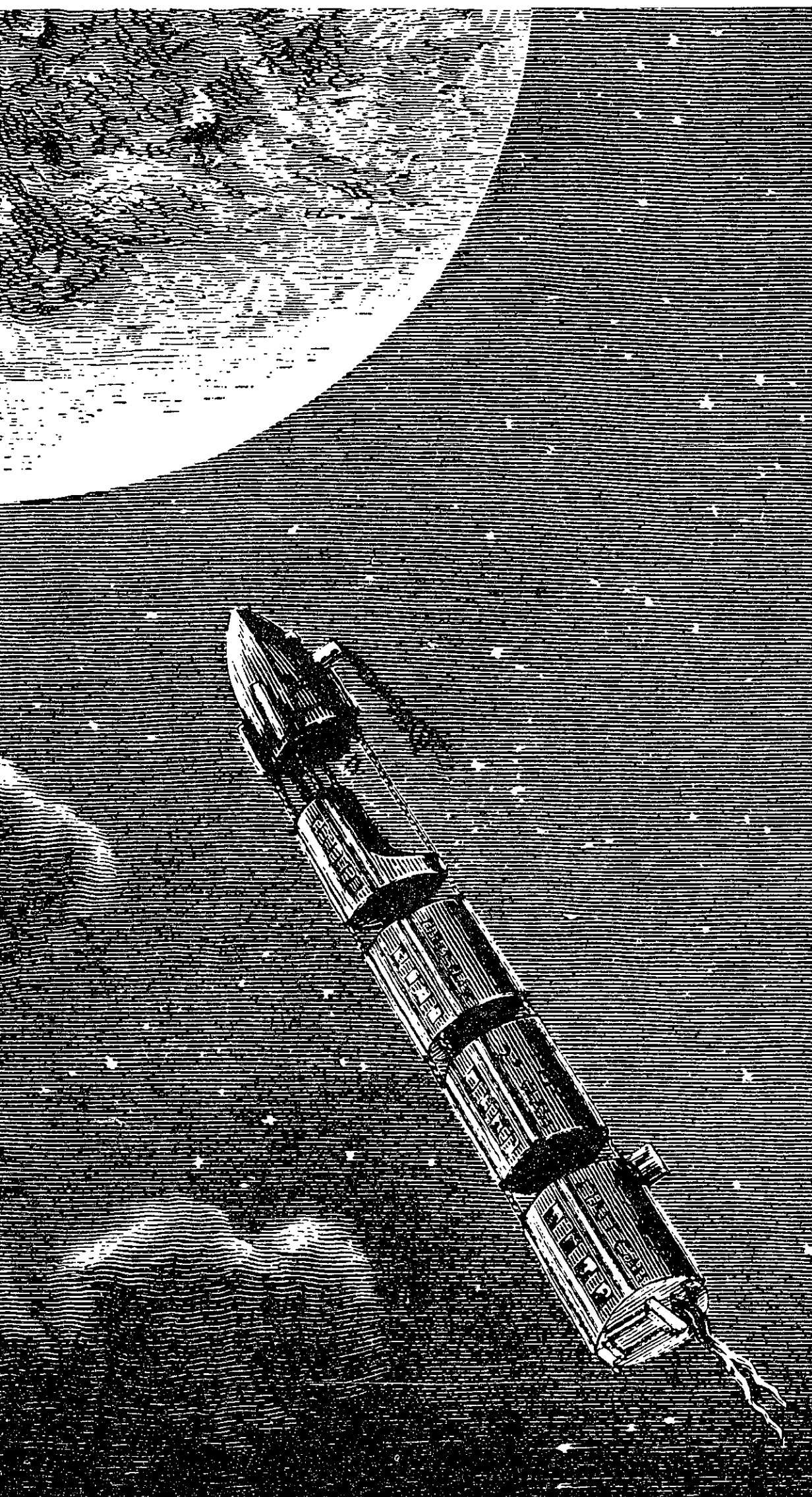
"Oh Dad . . ." is an interesting play. It deserves better treatment.

Summer Employment For Foreign Students To Be Meeting Topic

Foreign students may find summer employment by contacting the Student Personnel Office (1-380) or the Placement Office (1-173). In addition, there will be two meetings at which job opportunities will be discussed.

The first of these meetings will be tomorrow at 5:00 in Room 10-108; the second will be next Wednesday at 5:00 in Room 10-275.

Visas will permit employment if the student is returning next fall and if the MIT Foreign Student Office approves.

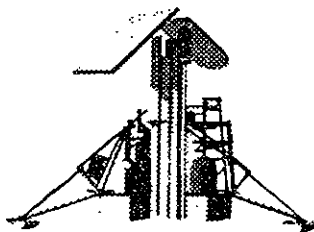


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