

## Victorian mores create social dolls

# In 'Doll House,' Nora seeks herself

By MARY BETH WAGNER  
Collegian Staff Writer

At 8 p.m. on April 14-16 and 19-23 in the Pavilion Theatre, the stage will be set for University Theatre Productions' "A Doll House," an English translation by Rolf Fjelde of Henrik Ibsen's "Et Dukkehjem" ("A Doll's House"). The student preview of the play will be at 8 p.m. April 13 in the Pavilion Theatre.

Marc Elliot Field, a graduate student of fine arts, is directing the play as his last step in getting his masters degree of fine arts. Field is completing the three-year fine arts program at the University — the program requires directing a play and writing a final paper about his experiences from the selection of the play to the final performance. As director of the play, Field has full responsibility for the production.

From approximately 70 persons who auditioned, Field has selected the people who portray the characters in the play. The tryouts were open to everyone and, in fact, four persons who are not in the theatre department have parts in the play.

Field chose Fjelde's translation because he feels it is the most workable English translation. Other translations which Field considered were, in his own terms, "not act-able."

Although Fjelde translates the title of the play as "A Doll House," others who have come before him have translated it as "A Doll's House." The latter translation has been used since 1884 when William Archer made the play known to the English-speaking world. Archer was not a translator but was prompted to translate Ibsen's play after an adaptation of it, "Breaking A Butterfly," was performed. "Breaking A Butterfly" received very poor reviews from both Ibsen's critics and supporters. So, as an advocate of Ibsen, Archer translated the play to give Ibsen due credit.

Archer, however, did not translate the title correctly from the Norwegian "Et Dukkehjem." Rolf Fjelde, a professor at Pratt Institute who is also teaching at Julliard, translated the title correctly from Norwegian to English. "A Doll House,"

Archer's title implies that the house belongs to the character who is the doll in the play, supposedly Nora, when it does not. Fjelde feels that "... the crux of the play is not primarily an individual but a relationship ... "Fjelde's translation of the title" has strengthened this and has also led to larger implications in Ibsen's favor.

Ibsen's play has often been misconstrued as a women's liberation play. With the original translation, "A Doll's House," Nora is thought to be the doll and also the heroine because at the end of the play she leaves her husband and children to find herself.

But Ibsen didn't write the play for any social movement, according to Field, and the play is much more meaningful than this interpretation. Field agrees with Ibsen that the play should not be noted as a "first" for women's liberation, but rather as bringing to the stage for the first time serious emotional problems in which the solutions defy the happy reconciliations of the Victorian lifestyle of the time in which it was written.

"A Doll House" takes place in the 1870's. The set for the play consists of a raised pedestal that has become the characters' stage. Wooden furniture that has been intricately hand-carved decorates the stage and matches the wood design painted above the doors of the set. The idea of the false, showy, delicate effect is to make the audience feel that the characters are living in a doll house in which happiness is a facade.

This unreal happiness centers on the marriage of Nora and Torvald Helmer, played by Sara Rush (12th-theatre) and Peter Moore (12th-theatre). Nora and Peter are dolls because they are guided by forces beyond their control — Victorian oppression.

Nora plays the part of the stupid female who needs her husband's help before she does anything. She is a doll to the pressures of being a mother, pleasing her husband, and keeping her home. Torvald is a doll to the pressures of public opinion and his job. Their happy dream world involves other characters in the play.

For instance, Nils Krogstad, played by John Fahnestock (grad-theatre), is a doll to the morality of the Victorian society which ostracizes him for a crime for which he was not legally guilty.

"A Doll House" has been performed differently from Ibsen's original version. In Lexington, Kentucky, it was called "The Child Bride" and was a type of comedy. The play also has appeared on television with Jane Fonda as Nora. Field feels that this production ends on a wrong note when Jane Fonda leaves her family because she has found all the answers. Nora in Ibsen's play leaves because she has many questions about herself that she needs to answer.

Field feels that directing "A Doll House" is the most "challenging and exciting" thing that he has ever done. Field has already directed six plays, among them "You're A Good Man Charlie Brown" and "Butterflies Are Free." "Essentially," Field says, "the actors do all the work and that it is the director's job to organize and coordinate the production and bring all the

elements of theatre together." Field feels that it is important to promote creativity without "an objective set of eyes and ears."

Field's enthusiasm seems to have carried over to Peter Moore, who feels that doing the play is "an actor's dream." Moore, who plays Torvald in the play, also has had roles in "Scapino" and "Hay Fever."

Sarah Rush feels that she can really relate to her part because just as Nora walked out in the end of the play filled with questions, he will be graduating and leaving college without all the answers.

What's significant about the play is that many of the problems that the characters in "A Doll House" are faced with are still unresolved in our society today. Nora walks out on her husband and children at the end of the play because she wants to break out of the fantasy-world she lives in and because she feels her husband cannot. The ending will be expected for contemporary thinkers but those whose thinking is still in the Victorian era might be shocked.

## Collegian arts Singer Sykes a good songwriter

By JOE TORI  
Collegian Staff Writer

Keith Sykes, The Way That I Feel, Midsong records BKL1-2246 Good singer-songwriters are rare. It is not often that you find a person who can write music and lyrics like Jackson Browne or Joni Mitchell. On "The Way That I Feel," Keith Sykes shows that he can. Sykes writes songs that come from his heart and from his extensive travels. His music is personal and individual and is capable of evoking emotion from the listener.

Sykes is no newcomer, either. Some of his songs have been played by Jerry Jeff Walker and this is not his first album. Sykes put out two albums previously, now underground classics.

"Just As Long As You Love Me," on side one, has kind of a Buddy Holly sound that is characteristic of "Peggy Sue." The instrumentals are not typical, though. The song uses smooth acoustic-electric guitar blended with slide

guitar to give a folk sound at some points.

Sykes finished off the side with a very slow and beautiful piece called "The Coast of Marseilles," describing his feelings about leaving a place that he has come to love.

On side two, Sykes sticks mainly with a fast and funky style of music. But, there are two songs that are particularly interesting. "What's Different About Her" is an exuberant song, but the best song on the album is "Call It Love." The song uses Sykes' Steven Stills-like voice both singing and talking. The acoustic guitars play no melody, only rhythm, and Sykes voice fills in the rest. The sound is very open and rhythmic.

It is hard to describe the subject matter of the songs because the description would just restate the song titles themselves. But the music is not hard to describe: fast and slow, pensive and light, rhythmic and free... diverse. Keith Sykes is a rare musician.

Diane Von Furstenberg

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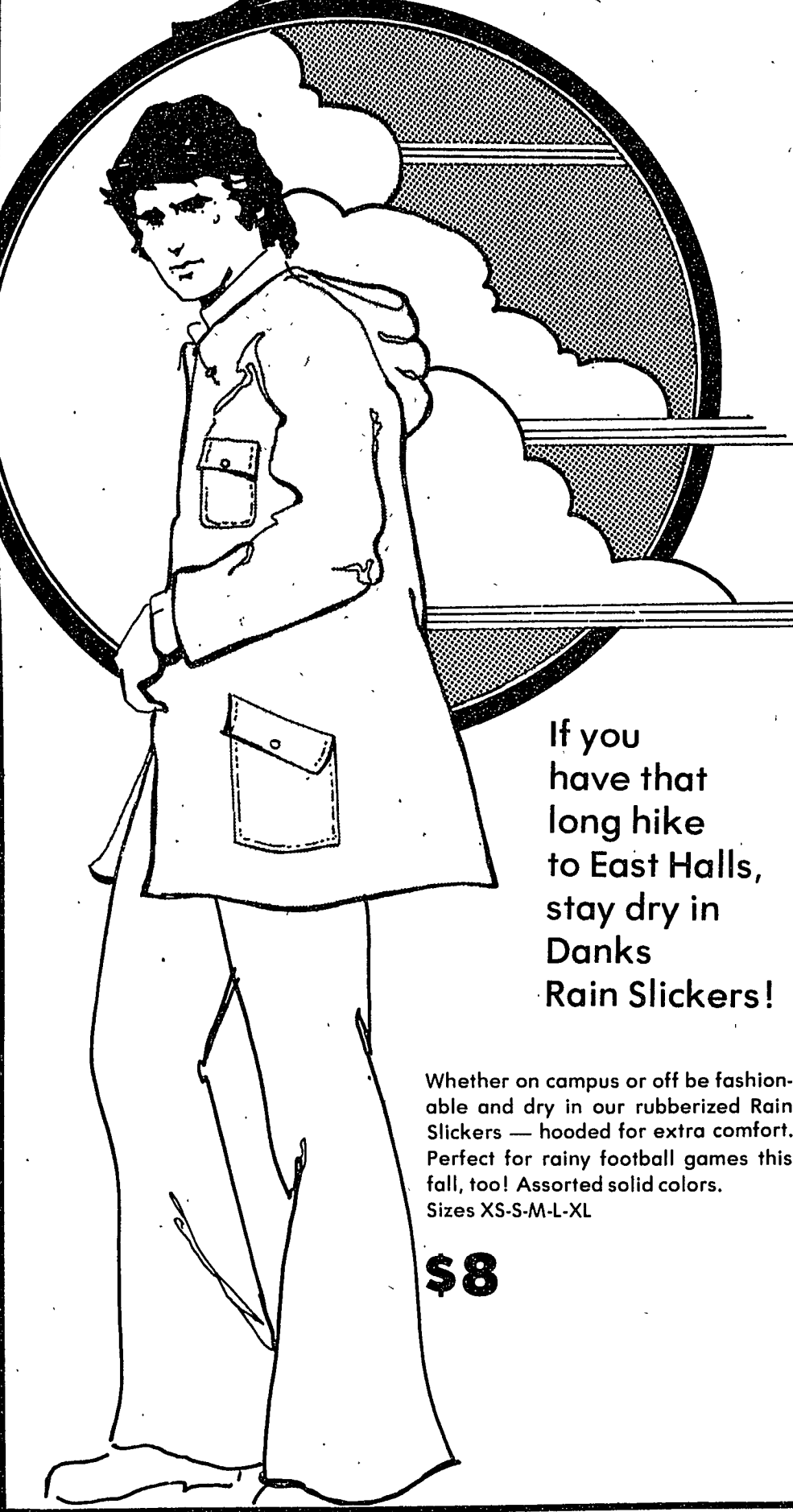
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