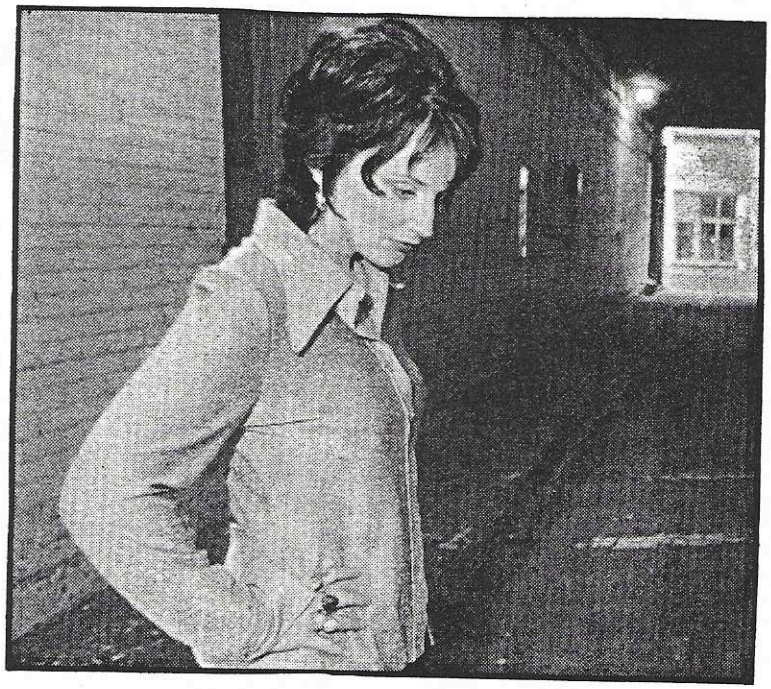
NADIA ROSS
PRESS MATERIAL
1990 -1999

I decided to make notes throughout this binder. It tells a story about alternative performance in the 1990s in Toronto, from the point of view of the works that the press chose to write about. This is before internet, so you really depended on critics and reviewers to write about your show, you only had a handful of chances to reach a lot of people and the gatekeepers had their agendas. It's like there were only a handful of 'influencers' allowed in the city and they were the only ones that could use the platforms of the time.

The powers that controlled the media were controlling print paper and television stations. (Now, writing this in 2020, it's a digital world, and control manifests in different but similar ways.)

I will continue to update this document as I go through the archives and find relevant stuff. I have film and early video of the scene. When I find the time, I will pull it out of the archives and show it to you.

P.S.: because I collaborate with so many people, I am not listing names in my comments - it would be impossible for me to write a thing if I start down that road. You can see who was working on the show in the credits in the reviews.



PRESS BOOK 1990 - 1999

a: actor
d: director
p: producer
w: writer

Not all shows in this document are STO Union shows. Sometimes I'm a performer in someone else's show, for example. This document has only some of the projects I was involved in during this era and as such is a bit of a random sampling of a period of time.

I don't talk about the reviewers/critics during this era. I think time speaks for itself - you can see some critics had depth and vision vs. other critics who return with repeated biases. Time can act like an eroding agent that reveals the true story once the delusions are stripped away. It happens to many of us with time. Time can be 'the great revealer' and this art form is anchored in time.

1.	(d/p)	Request Concerts	Now Magazine - May 31-June 6 1990
2.	(a)	Victorian Peepshow	Globe and Mail - July 6, 1990
3.	(d/p)	Exilum	Now Magazine - August 8 - 14, 1991
4.	(d/p)	Exilum	Edmonton Journal - August 21, 1991
5.	(a)	Jump	Toronto Star - February 9, 1992
6.	(a)	Jump	Globe and Mail - February 10, 1992
7.	(a)	Jump	Now Magazine - February 13-19, 1992
8.	(d/p)	When There Was No Money Left In The World	Eye Magazine - June 25, 1992
9.	(d/p)	When There Was...	Globe and Mail - July 3, 1992
10.	(d/p)	When There Was...	Now Magazine - July 9, 1992
11.	(a)	The Lorca Play	Toronto Star - October, 1992
12.	(a)	The Lorca Play	Globe and Mail - October 16, 1992
13.	(a)	The Lorca Play	Eye Magazine - October 22, 1992
14.	(a)	But Love Is Too Simple To Save Us	Now Mag. Preview - January 7, 1993
15.	(a)	But Love...	Globe and Mail - January 1993
16.	(a)	But Love...	Now Magazine - January 14, 1993
17.	(a)	But Love...	Toronto Star - January, 1993

18.	(d/a/p/w) Breeding Drum Majors		Toronto Star Preview - January 28, 1993
19.	(a)	Dora Award (Lorca Play)	Globe and Mail - June 22, 1993
20.	(a)	Dora Award	Toronto Star - June 22, 1993
21.	(a)	Dora Award	Now Magazine - June 24, 1993
22.	(d/a/p/w) Vengeance		Toronto Star - July 4, 1993
23.	(d/a/p/w) Vengeance ("noises off")		Globe and Mail - July 7, 1993
24.	(d/a/p/w) Vengeance		Goble and Mail - July 8, 1993
25.	(d/a/p/w) Vengeance		Now Magazine - July 8, 1993
26.	(d/a/p/w) Vengeance		Now Magazine - July 15, 1993
27.	(d/a/p/w) Cinderella Kamasutra		Eye Magazine - August 19,1993
28.	(d/a/p/w) Cinderella Kamasutra		Toronto Star - August 23, 1993
29.	(d/a/p/w) Cinderella Kamasutra		Eye Magazine - August 26, 1993
30.	(d)	Canadian Theatre Review re. BDM	Fall, 1993
31.	(d/a/p/w) The Alistair Trilogy		Now Magazine Cover - January 6-12, 1994
32.	(d/a/p/w) The Alistair Trilogy		Toronto Star - January 14, 1994
33.	(d/a/p/w) The Alistair Trilogy		Globe and Mail - January 17, 1994
34.	(d/a/p/w) The Alistair Trilogy		Eye Magazine - January 20, 1994
35.	(d/a/p/w) The Alistair Trilogy		Asian Newspaper - January, 1994
36.	(d/a/p/w) The Alistair Trilogy		Now Magazine - January 20, 1994
37.	(d/a/p/w) The Alistair Trilogy		Theatrum, April/May 1994
38.	(a)	Body and Soul	Now Magazine Midwinter Guide
39.	(a)	Body and Soul	Toronto Star - March 14, 1994

40.	(a)	Body and Soul	Globe and Mail - March 21, 1994
41.	(a)	Body and Soul	Now Magazine - March, 1994
42.	(a)	Das Rheingold	Now Magazine Summer Guide, 1994
43.	(a)	Das Rheingold	Globe and Mail - June 21, 1994
44.	(a)	Das Rheingold	Now Magazine - June, 1994
45.	(a)	The Earth is a Witch, The Witch is a Saint, The Saint is Applause	Now Fall Guide, 1994
46.	(a)	The Earth is...	Toronto Star, fall 1994
47.	(d)	Toronto Onstage	Toronto Star - February 28, 1995
48.	(d/p/w)	Excerpts From the Emo Journals	Eye Magazine - February, 1995
49.	(d/p/w)	Emo...	Toronto Star - February 12, 1995
50.	(d/p/w)	Emo...	Globe and Mail - February, 1995
51.	(d/p/w)	Emo...	Now Magazine - February, 1995
52.	(w)	Chalmer's Award	Globe and Mail - May 20, 1995
53.	(a)	C Magazine Cover	April - June, 1996
54.	(d/a/p/w)	Recent Experiences	Now Magazine - April 10-16, 1997
55.	(d/a/p/w)	Recent Experiences	Eye Magazine - April 10, 1997
56.	(a)	Blind Spot	Images Festival Guide - Apr. 22 - May 1, 99

Concert's silence has hypnotic effect

By JON KAPLAN
and MARY DICKIE

theatre
►reviews

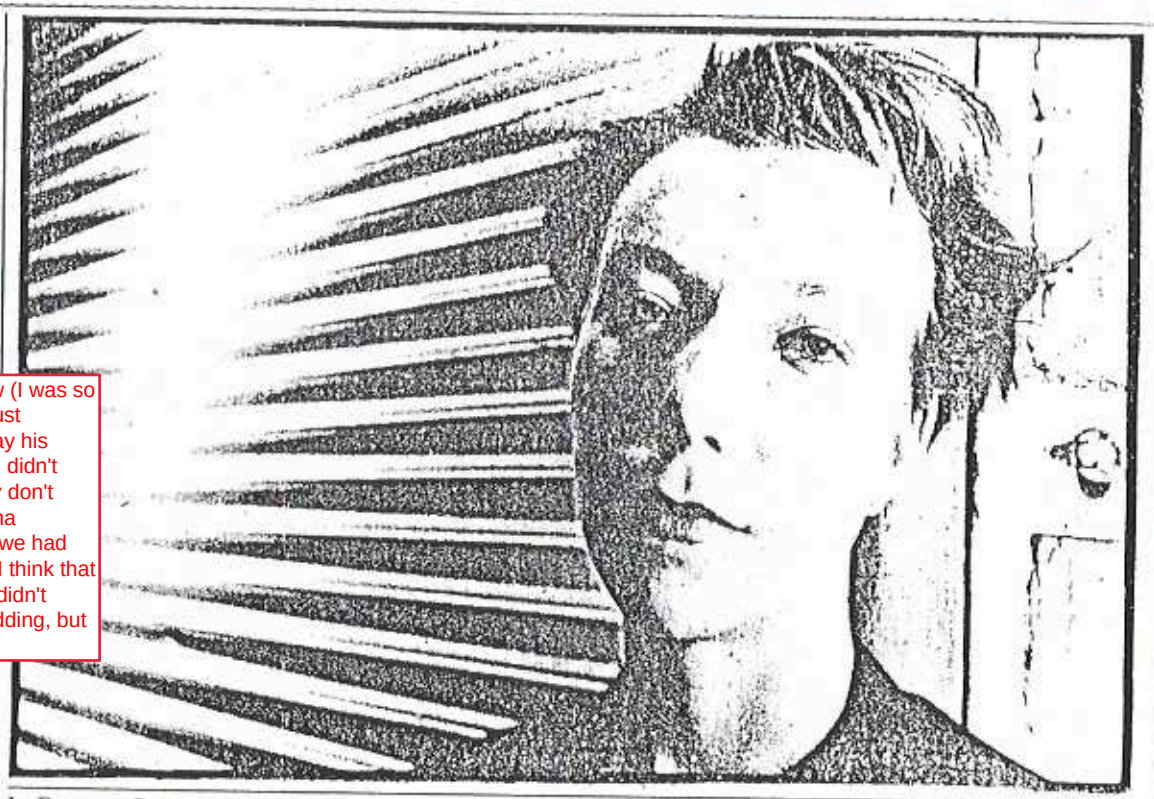
REQUEST CONCERT, by Franz Xaver Kroetz, directed by Nadia Ross, with Allyson McMackon. Presented by Particle Zoo Productions at Actor's Lab. $5. Rating: NNN

Request Concert is like a theatrical version of a silent movie — apart from the occasional sounds of the television and the radio, there's not a word spoken. But this production by Particle Zoo is strangely and hypnotically engaging.

The audience is privy to the almost embarrassingly desolate, empty life of a woman (Allyson McMackon) alone in her apartment. Like the title character of Chantal Akerman's film Jeanne Dielman, "the woman" cleans obsessively, carefully taking things out of their places, smoothing them and replacing them again and again. Although it sounds monotonous, McMackon's oblivious performance is hard not to watch.

And interestingly, after a certain amount of time, the fascination with watching the woman begins to seem almost as obsessive and compulsive as her behaviour.

— MD



DAVID LAURENCE

In Request Concert, solo performer Allyson McMackon — without speaking a word — is rivetting as a desolate and obsessive woman whose empty life is taken up with monotonous household chores.

I mailed Franz Xaver Kroetz this review (I was so proud) and I got back a furious letter, just dripping with rage. I had forgotten to pay his author's fee. It was my first show and I didn't really know how to do things right (they don't really teach about the business in drama school). We charged $5 per ticket and we had made no money. I felt terrible about it. I think that maybe after that I decided that I really didn't want to work with authors again. I'm kidding, but not entirely.

This should have been a STO Union production, the first one. In those days, companies were opening and closing quite rapidly and there was a lot of turnover. I was going to open STO Union but then this company was going to likely be handed over, but in the end it was simpler for me to just start STO Union but by then the show was happening....

There are no words in this play. As I was exploring the art form, I chose this play because 'action defines character'. What a person does, their moment to moment actions, tell the story. I wanted to focus on what a person does, moment by moment by moment as a way of learning how stories work.

I also chose a play with no words and a female lead who kills herself at the end because it is the only kind of play I could work with, in reflection on the Canon of Great Plays of the last 2,500 Years. The conditions that produced that canon were not particularly good to people like me. The only story left for people like me under those conditions would have to end in suicide. That's why I chose this play.

"desolate and obsessive woman" - my mother was often desolate and I was drawn to this situation for that reason, in an attempt to understand her better and come to terms with my helplessness in the face of her sorrow. The 'monotonous household chores' did her in. She was so creative and she was born a bit too early to benefit from women's liberation of the 60's. She saw other women breaking down walls and she was stuck in the kitchen. It drove her mad. She could not take the role that society had locked her into - monotonous repetitious: cleaning, cooking...that's why I am interested in repetition as well. These things haunt me, intrigue me. I always say when you are doing a show to choose something in the show that is going to help you grow or understand something, at a personal level. That investment keeps me going when there is no reason on earth I should continue to make a show go on.

Allyson McMackon was so good in this role.

The Fringe festival formula

(Globe & Mail - Friday July 6th 1990)

RAY CONLOGUE
Theatre Critic

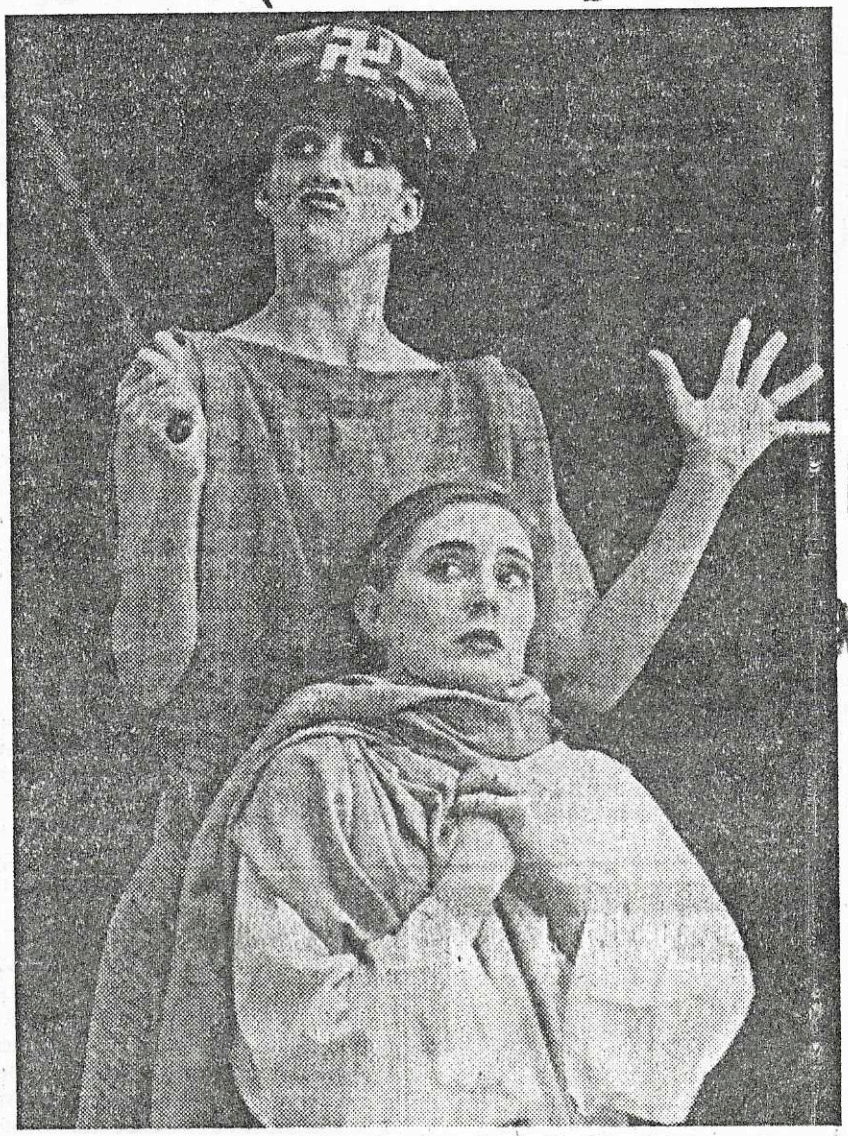
year — one little 12-
stretch — Toronto's
e theatre festival has grown
a tossed salad to a groan-
of 50 shows. It started
nd runs through to this

he Edmonton Fringe which
The Fringe of Toronto
ovides a theatre to any
that's doing an original
at has a show less than an
that won't charge more

eads, like a binary chemical
, to two inevitable results:
e and terrible theatre.
you an idea how horrible
ay await you, consider Lies
Vampire — 2 at the Glen
heatre. A 700-year-old
Leanna Brodie in rags
slime sporting an inexpli-
ronx accent) is incarcerated
ital ward for vampires,
ar tranfusions and kept,
off the street. A nurse
Grant) delivers a mono-
dly contrived of arcana
pires and dreary world-
about the travails of a
career. The climax is the
nearing herself with sup-
f-thawed bag of blood,
doctor tut-tuts.
before it was over, half-
the mindlessness of Greg
cript and the high school
e acting, and suffering
m unbearable heat in the

rd, in the program, I read
lay is an allegory about

lip side of fringing is a show
Green Productions' The
This superlative piece of
ma is a reminder how
theatre can confront so-
ms — in this case the so-
ion, beleaguerment and
entality that has grown up
Toronto police force — by
ide pretension and speak-
issue straightforwardly.
actors portray three young
d their sergeant. There are
cenes, but most of Mark
play is monologues to
dience which sound very
ike distillations from inter-
h real police officers.
he sense of bewilderment,
and battered ideals that



Ellen-Ray Hennessy and Siobhan McCormick in No More Medea.

one would expect; and no trace of sermonizing.

So we see Clark, a young woman cop (the business-like Wendy Lang) who has been shot, telling lies in order to protect her partner — a sexist oaf, and a lousy cop whose disregard for regulations led to her injury — because that's what the moral code of the force tells her to do. We see naive young McKellar (Christopher Earle) re-create a domestic quarrel — cleverly and economically done with hand puppets — and contrast the "old" and "new" methods of dealing with it. We see the gun-loving, fast-driving Hussman (Mark Brownell) running down a speeder. The truth is, it's a drag race in which one of the kids happens to be in uniform. It ends with two smashed vehicles and an uninsurable teenager. "They're gonna ban high speed chases," observes the moronic Hussman. "It'll take a lotta fun outta the job."

I think any cop who sees this show will have to agree That's how it is. Once that's done he might as well get down to it and tell us Why.

Several other plays viewed fell somewhere between these extremes of quality. The best of them was Deborah Porter's No More Medea, which she also directed. It's a clown show encounter between two archetypes of womanhood, the abandoned Medea who took revenge on her husband by killing their children, and the Blessed Virgin Mary. There is a tongue-in-cheek contrast between Medea ("the bad mother" says a video monitor) and Mary with her equally "ridiculous forbearance." Several thousand years of women being offered this choice of models explains the black and present mood of the female sex.

Ellen Ray Hennessy, who for once has found a role worthy of her wildness, memorably recounts the tale of Medea. She is driven mad by Mary, a deadpan and wildly funny Siobhan McCormick, who deals with every unpleasantness by gazing beatifically into the middle distance.

The companion piece to Medea is Victorian Peepshow, a baffling but compellingly staged vaudeville by Diane Cave. Two lunatics take the roles of Queen Victoria and a "Brighton pig farmer" respectively, with John Shirreff playing a pantomime version of Victoria in full regalia. A man and woman in leather enact a fetishistic striptease while the two lunatics argue over their roles. Lurking somewhere is a neo-Marxist message about the enforcement of class roles, but what is most memorable is Nadia Ross's wittily grotesque lunatic Victoria, and Dawn Davidson's striptease. Forcefully directed.

Ordeal by Roses is yet another youthful flirtation with the imagery of fascism and sado-masochism, this time in the form of a dance homage to Yukio Mishima. Based on Eiko Hosoe's kinky book of Mishima photographs, in which the would-be samurai novelist portrayed himself in various poses of suffering, Jacques Marcil re-creates Mishima as Saint Sebastian (pierced by arrows), a seppuku victim and heaven knows what else. Paul Ibey has choreographed pretty if predictable moments in a japonesque style, and Anne Sprincis plays a slightly kinky geisha. Mildly diverting and exasperatingly naive.

See No Elvis, Hear No Elvis starts off as a beguiling exercise in absurdism. Two junior managers in a factory eat the slop in the cafeteria over a deafening industrial hiss. The ambitious one is sure the food is wonderful; the other glowers at him. Food fights are punctuated with lyrical monologues full of postmodern discontinuity. Writer Phillip Kummel, who likely has some talent, has pushed things too far: the viewer loses interest in the conversation long before the author does.

TORONTO'S WEEKLY NEWS AND ENTERT

Vol. 10 No. 48
Aug. 8-14, 1991
94,000 copies
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Thursday

free NOW

* * *

A new theatre company, **Sto Union**, premieres with **Exilum**, the first piece by playwright **Adam Nashman**.

The company's artistic director, **Nadia Ross**, plans a group that will operate with the utmost flexibility in what it stages and how it presents material.

"I expect that Sto Union will redefine itself with each production."

Exilum is set in a fantasy-world bar, where a criminal and a lawman meet for the first time. The pair play with concepts of liberty and justice and end up destroying the ideologies by which they live.

"If one ideology falls, do we need another to take its place? Can we live without ideology? The play asks what we might do if we have no signifier telling us right from wrong or how to live our lives.

"Stylistically, the play is right out to the audience. I wanted to see if we could successfully put a fairy tale onstage, playing with form but also telling a straight story."

After its Toronto run, Exilum will travel to the Edmonton Fringe festival.

It plays here tonight and Friday (August 8-9), 8 pm, at the Helen Gardiner Phelan Playhouse (79-A St. George). 588-0327.

* * *

▶theatre scenes

Although technically this is under STO Union, it really should have been a Bald Ego Production as it was the Bald Ego gang, they just didn't have their company yet.
I wasn't a playwright's director, is what I was confirming for myself. The Bald Ego gang, however, were a lovely group of really sweet people willing to do anything and have a fun time doing it. I was happy to see that they went on and formed the company like they were meant to.

The Fringe Journal

Exilum ★★½

Where: Stage 12, Bus Barns West

Exilum is one of those shows for which this whole festival was probably devised.

It's avant-garde fringe stuff for The Fringe, and while *Exilum* won't be to everyone's taste, there's a lot to be said for the risks taken in this production.

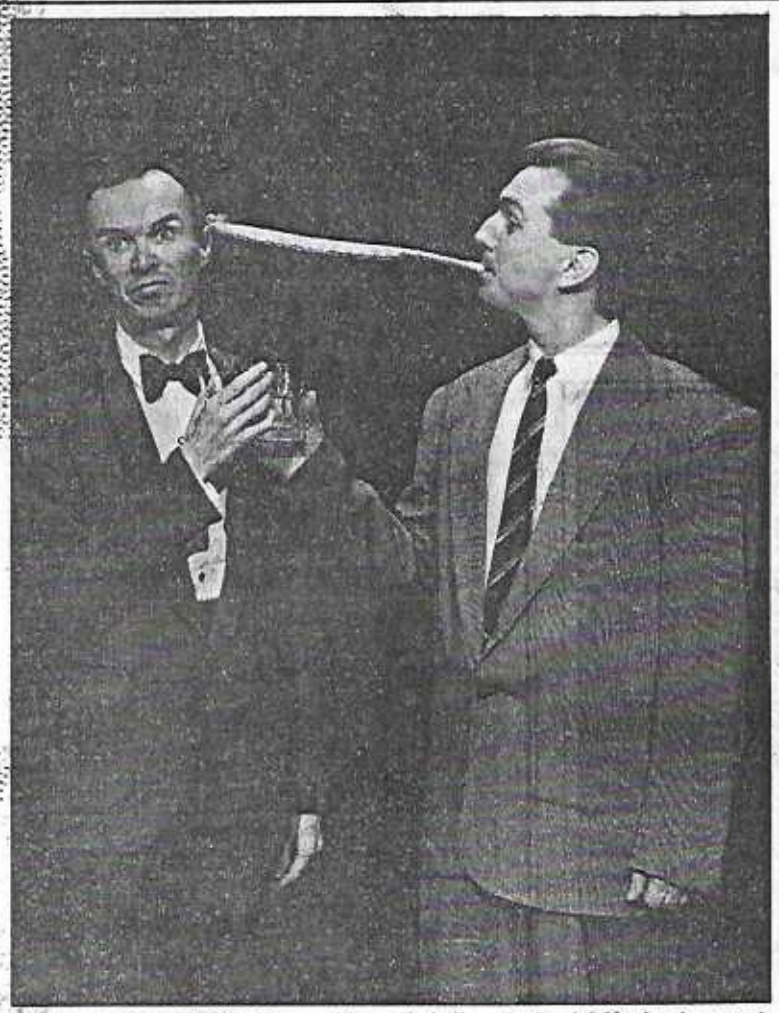
Writer Adam Nashman, who also appears in the piece, is a playwright of significant promise. In this work, he has created a surreal demi-monde, peopled by disreputable characters whose lives interconnect in a seedy, grubby bar called the Exilum, owned and operated by the leggy Trotsky.

The story centres on Lazar, a hooker who seeks refuge in the bar after she's killed a cop-client (a stiletto heel to the eye does the trick for the trick) where she's confronted by Florida, a drunken detective who's doing a little off-duty boozing.

Florida and Lazar, who confesses that she dispatched her customer because he has infected her with disease (AIDS? syphilis?), find their own kind of love in the shadowy corners of the Exilum while the other habitués dispatch an interfering detective who's come to investigate the goings-on.

Director Nadia Ross gets fine performances from the entire cast. Their work makes this awful world accessible to us, even if the play occasionally seems just a tad impenetrable.

— *Marc Horton*



NO DIALOGUE NEEDED: No one blows their lines in Daniel MacIvor's experimental wordless play, *Jump*, starring Ken McDougall, left, and Edward Roy.

Imagination, good acting help wordless play work



Theatre

Geoff Chapman

"Who the hell wants to hear actors talk?" That was Harry Warner back in '27 when considering the future of talking movies — and though he was wrong, he made a bundle out of words and celluloid.

The jury will likely still be out on the modern Warnerism of Toronto's hot playwright Daniel MacIvor, he of the unprecedented three Chalmers nominations, whose new play *Jump* opened at Theatre Passe Muraille on Friday.

It is not quite wordless. A character actually said "jump", and mutterings in the dark were detected — but all that's a very long way from the traditional view of theatre, where people act for a living and play parts, leading to the revolutionary thought that the words they speak must actually mean something.

MacIvor and his musical cohort Tom Walsh — who's a part of some worldbeat, far-out jazz and experimental music mobs around town and provided a relentless, pounding score from diverse sources — evidently are bent on exploring just how far you can go with a gesture, a grin, a glance, a leer, a physical act, in the context of this stylized, very theatrical probe of human behavior.

There's a fragment of linear plot, despite form and content being whittled down to basics, involving a stag party, a bridal shower and a final wedding ordeal in which the would-be partners (Ken McDougall and Caroline Gillis, mostly hilarious) have to jump from a ladder — and presumably be caught — to demonstrate commitment.

The characters move in and out of the small space quickly, creating "art" through unusual choreography, movement and expression, frequently manufacturing moments of high humor — Edward Roy very funny as a punctilious master of ceremonies, Tracy Wright and Nadia Ross only slightly less so as identically-garbed but very different "bridesmaids."

Yet even most silent films had sub-titles, current operas have surtitles, and surely audiences need all the help they can get. Otherwise you are forced to wonder whether a bizarre mix of mime, clowning, sitcom ballet, 60 minutes at the expressionist improv and a Second City approach to the foibles of human behavior can communicate with its watchers.

It's a measure of MacIvor's riotous imagination that the answer is mostly yes in this performance theatre saga. We have a distinct need in our lives for mystery and ritual, for costume and fantasy. Hunger for art marks our civilization, and this is art captured in between words and music, understatement carried to excess.

Jump is pitched at times on a portentous, self-indulgent level, something you might expect in *Close Encounters Of The Third Kind*. This results in some baffling bits, such as a jokey procession of wedding gift toasters that eventually ends when burnt toast pops from a TV screen toaster. The symbolism here is — what? The birth process? Dreams turning to ashes? Take your pick.

This may be the author's agenda all along. He wants you to play a sort of *Front Page Challenge* by trying to guess who's doing what to whom and why. It makes for much crazed fun, unglamorous but real, without shedding much light on the human condition.

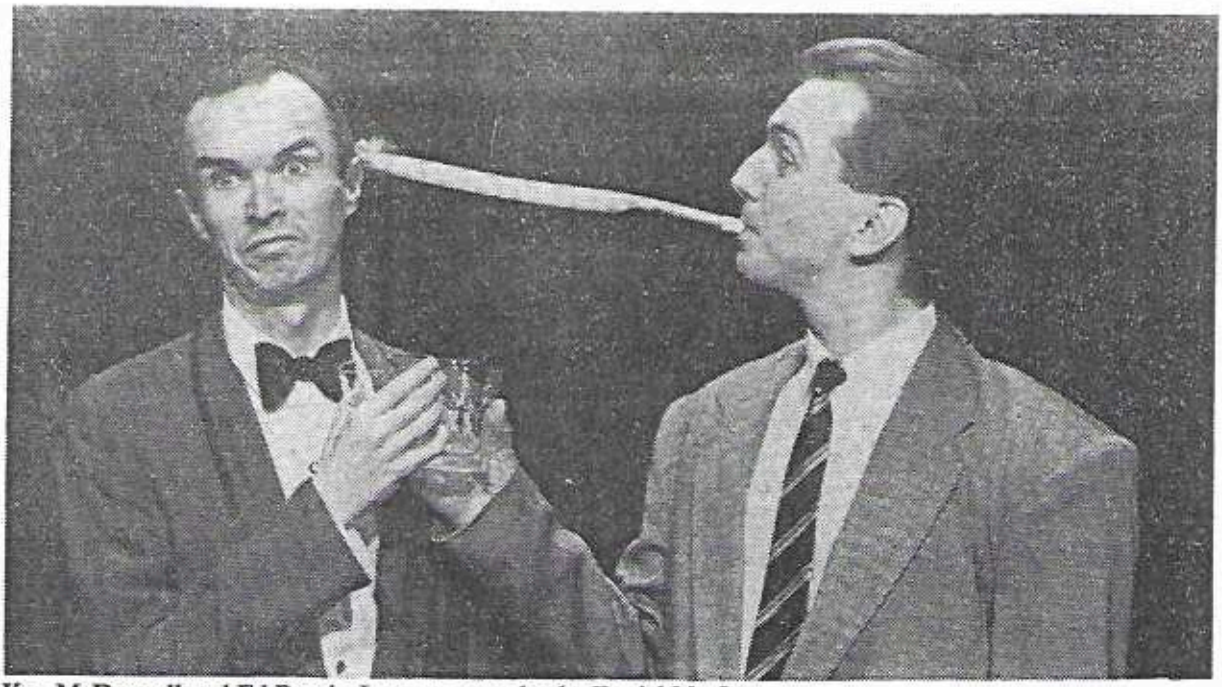
Jump

Written and directed by Daniel MacIvor. Set by Steve Lucas. Music score by Tom Walsh. Featuring Caroline Gillis, Ken McDougall, Judith Orban, Nadia Ross, Edward Roy, Mark Shields and Tracy Wright. A Da Da Kamera Production until Feb. 23 at Theatre Passe Muraille, 16 Ryerson Ave. 363-2416.

This was NOT a STO Union production. This was DaDa Kamera (Daniel MacIvor) and I was one of the performers in it, (with Tracy Wright as my twin sister - first time working with her. I was absolutely terrified, I was so impressed with her. I shook when I stood next to her. But I kept it cool and tried to keep up with the big kids - the entire cast were more established than me).

Again, a wordless play.

Actions defining scene, not words.



Ken McDougall and Ed Roy in Jump, a new play by Daniel MacIvor.

THEATRE REVIEW / *Jump is a play of few words, no plot and a lot of movement carried out so cleverly by the cast that words would probably just get in the way*

Playing without words

BY H. J. KIRCHHOFF
The Globe and Mail
Toronto

JUMP

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY DANIEL MacIVOR

At the Backspace of Theatre Passe Muraille

Rating: ★★★

WHEN a playwright is nominated for three Chalmers Awards in one year — as Daniel MacIvor has been for last-year's *House, Never Swim Alone* and *Tango* — it pays to pay attention. And MacIvor's latest work, *Jump*, definitely repays that attention.

The first thing to say about *Jump*, a one-hour show that opened Friday night at Passe Muraille's Backspace, is that barely a word is spoken in it. The play has been called "an exercise in deprivation" for MacIvor, a writer who loves words. It isn't dance, exactly, or mime, but a sort of stylized, choreographed movement, and in his directorial debut, MacIvor puts the six-person cast through its paces so crisply and cleverly that you don't really notice that there isn't any dialogue. In fact, words would probably just get in the way.

MacIvor has the cast members strut, pose, march and dance, enter and exit, connect and disconnect, all backed by Tom Walsh's jazzy, imaginatively mixed bag of music (at various times drums, bells, voice, electric piano, accordion, guitar, tuba and/or digital sampling).

Steve Lucas's set is a straightforward deep and narrow box, six doorways draped with red velvet — and eventually, a very significant ladder. The doorways get a workout, too; the show sometimes looks like a French farce, with cast members entering and exiting at a furious pace.

Plot? Nah. *Jump* is more a collection of scenarios, but the characters (the cast is wonderfully expressive) quickly take on personalities. Mark Shields as the Man in Overalls — no names, either — is a supercilious combination of stagehand and overseer, bringing on props and taking them off, and generally acting as though he runs the show.

Ken McDougall (Man in the Red Jacket) and Caroline Gillis (Woman in White) play out scenes of love and lust, trust and betrayal. Nadia Ross and Tracy Wright (both simply Girl with Dark Hair in Plaid Skirt) are nearly identical schoolgirls, blithely displaying curiosity, playfulness and not a little lust of their own; Edward Roy is a marvellously oily Man in the Grey Suit, a sort of tour director/love interest, although his interest is in the matronly Judith Orban (Woman with the Purse), who looks like a younger version of the Queen Mum, unaccountably dropped into an artsy frat party.

There are some splendidly funny moments in the show, displaying MacIvor's oddball sense of humour and witty theatricality. At one point, Ross and Wright, alone on stage, look around carefully, switch off the music and lights, and share a cigarette in the pitch-black silence, giggling and gossiping in whispers until Shields discovers them, turns everything back on and gets the show going again.

Later, Shields wheels a large television screen on-stage which, when turned on, shows a toaster. The cast lines up, backs to the audience, to wait for the toast to pop, and McDougall takes advantage of the moment to fondle Gillis. When she proves unresponsive — she can't take her eyes off the TV screen — he steps off-stage with one of the Girls with Dark Hair in Plaid Skirt, and Gillis and Orban do a very funny dumb-show of curiosity escalating to alarm about what the two are doing out there.

The show's ending is a lovely *coup de théâtre*, guaranteed to make you . . . well, jump. But, It would be rotten and unfair to give it away.

The show runs until Feb. 23.

JUMP JEWEL

JUMP, written and directed by Daniel MacIvor, with Caroline Gillis, Ken McDougall, Judith Orban, Nadia Ross, Edward Roy, Mark Shields and Tracy Wright. Presented by Da Da Kamera and Theatre Passe Muraille at Passe Muraille Backspace (16 Ryerson). To February 23, Tuesday-Saturday 8 pm, Sunday 2 pm. $12-$15, Sunday pwyc. 363-2416. Rating: **NNNNN**

Jump is a tiny, perfect play — original, self-contained and satisfying.

With Jump, playwright **Daniel MacIvor** pushes his fascination with the rituals of everyday life farther than ever before. The nearly wordless piece depicts a series of rituals concerning love, marriage and commitment — the jump of the title is a simple, decisive trust game. MacIvor's trick is to create rituals strange enough to be transparent and familar enough that we see ourselves in them.

Jump strikes that balance perfectly, thanks to the marriage of imagination and control MacIvor achieves as writer and director. The script has both the pinpoint observation of a humourist and a logical, coherent structure. **Tom Walsh** contributes an eclectic sonic landscape — more than a score, it's an intertwined, integral part of the script — which mixes original music and deft sampling and is expressive but never obtrusive.

The cast is superb, using finely-tuned movement and simple gestures to comic effect without ever going too far. **Ken McDougall**'s nervous bonhomie is the highlight of half a dozen fine performances.

— JL

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Fringe B



1, When There Was No Money Left In The World.

Ya pays yer money, ya takes yer chances

The Fringe:

BY NIGEL HUNT

WHEN THERE WAS NO MONEY LEFT IN THE WORLD
lyrics by Death Waits,
music by Bartok Guitarsplat,
directed by Nadia Ross,
produced by Sto Union

Although Death Waits is the first to admit that having two shows in the Fringe is "a statistical improbability," he explains that only one (*How an Intellectual...*) was actually his application. Producer Nadia Ross applied for the second, and when it wasaccepted she asked Waits to write the script.

The first is what Death calls "a Punch and Judy of the mind," consisting of a panel discussion on the theme of how to be moral in an immoral world as well as how one can get sucked into taking a stand.

The second is a musical of sorts about a quintessentially modern middle-class family who lock themselves in their house because they've run out of money; as the press release tells us, they sing, they dance, they destroy themselves.

While these shows mark Death Waits' Fringe debut, he is fast becoming a fixture on the local alternative scene and starting to produce interesting work.

Definitely a STO Union production. And such an amazing group of artists!!!

Death Waits (now known as Jacob Wren)
Bartok Guitarsplat
Astrid Van Weren (wow could she sing! No wonder she would star in New York for years in the hit musical Come From Away.
Darren O'Donnell
Ali Riley who was in multiple bands and wrote plays in the day and Mark Shields, who would become a central collaborator of mine.

Little did we know at the time that AIDS was going to hit us and hit us hard.

This show had all the exuberance of a group of people who don't know better, who don't know what is going to hit them and their community soon.



oman perfor-
LYNDA MIDDLETON

THEATRE / *Daniel MacIvor, 30-year-old playwright/actor/director, serves up a deceptively facile light comedy at this year's Fringe of Toronto Festival*

'Whimsical' as in MacIvor-esque

BY LIAM LACEY
and H. J. KIRCHHOFF
The Globe and Mail

THERE'S a new adjective — MacIvor-esque — being heard at the Fringe of Toronto Festival this year to describe shows that are ingenious and whimsical, with strong presentation skills and a lyrical lunacy in the writing. The adjective derives from the work of Daniel MacIvor, the 30-year-old playwright/actor/director who created such shows as I and **Never Swim Alone**, and came off a springtime of scoop Toronto theatre awards.

MacIvor's Fringe entry this **This is a Play**, theatre-expe comedy you might associate Tom Stoppard. The play cons the interior monologues of th tors involved in a conver drama. We hear very little of tual drama, which is appare kind of travelling salesman about a stranger (MacIvor) w rives in a household where a (Judith Orban) and her "f daughter (Caroline Gillis) Three heads of lettuce also fi the performance.

The writing is nearly all logues: "He enters, with conviction." or "I wonder if he's gay." In short order, we learn about the older actress's disdain for the project, the young man's obsession with Robert DeNiro and casting agents, and the young actress's disgust with her leading man and interest in the director. This is a deceptively facile piece, with a great rhythm to the language and tight execution by the three-member cast under Ken McDougal's direction. One cavil: the use of a vocal commentator serving as "musical score" of philosophical commentary is clumsy, adding a needless layer of pretension to an otherwise complete light comedy. *L.L.*

Having been involved in two good Fringe shows as an actor and as a di- ts on his play- , the tale of an pport group in group is: Judy, bored psycho- city; Sonny, a ster who takes wed, alcoholic ars old and full nse and anger; truck-stop wait- ga-makeup and s; and Jay, Vio- drives his grand- ngs, but eventu- ted in what he

are played by a virtuoso one- that only occa- sionally strays into caricature; the characters may be lurid, but they are all sharply delineated — aided by a sharply executed lighting plan — and sympathetically presented, for which Leese and director Gina Wilkinson must share the credit. The women, and Jay, talk about their pasts, ambitions, pet peeves, fears, frustrations and current predicaments. There are moments when the script seems simplistic, and the ending is unnecessarily messy, but over all this is a thoughtful, well-acted production. *H.J.K.*

The presumably pseudonymous Death Waits, a 21-year-old playwright-director, has two shows in the Fringe. The first, **How an Intellectual Can Aspire to Savagery**, is interesting but strained. His second piece, **When There was No Money Left in the World**, is refreshing and endlessly inventive, a black comedy about a family during the "recession," which touches on the Freudian fetishism of cash and that current cultural favourite bull's-eye, the patriarchy. But mostly it's about Waits showing off his theatre skills and fertile parodist's imagination.

When There was No Money Left in the World opens with the cast (Waits, Darren O'Donnell, Ali Riley, Mark Shields and Astrid Van Wieren) sitting on chairs across the stage, staring deadpan at the audience. Along the front of the stage is a line of objects, and one actor points with a flashlight at each in turn. Gradually — and at first we're talking paint-drying speed — the plot begins to unfold. There's the brutal father, with one leg and a rifle, who often addresses his family, including his zombie wife, by speaking through a megaphone. There's the older brother, who sends away for sex toys through the mail, a high-IQ younger brother and an adult sister who figures out they are locked inside the house. By the end of the play, when she manages to escape, the entire production has turned into a country-and-western opera. Like Edmonton's Stuart Lemoine, Waits seems to be an original, an artist with a deep urge to share his strange black private jokes with the rest of the world. *L.L.*

Good in Bed, written and directed by Brenda McFarlane (**Suzi Got Her Lips Tattooed**), deals with just about the toughest subject there is for theatre — sex. The operative question and springboard for the show is: "Was he good in bed?" What follows is 60 minutes of sharp and mostly fast-paced sketches, monologues and routines that get right to the heart — or whatever body part — of the matter. The show sometimes drifts close to smuttiness or stereotyping, but McFarlane shows a dab hand with lively, intelligent gag lines, and often touches on the hard truths of relationships.

There are plenty of naughty bits, and at some points things begin to get too close for comfort — when the house lights come up and two women actors discuss, in graphic detail, the sexual possibilities of randomly selected men from the audience, for instance. But generally, when the sexual politics become pretentious, or when the tension (sexual or otherwise) becomes too inflated,

So wrong. Jacob's "How an Intellectual Can Aspire to Savagery" was really, really good, in my opinion. Both of these shows were showing Jacob's writing and how good it was. "How an Intellectual..." was remounted in the fall, I recall. But again, we were kids and we didn't know things - about remounting a show and creating a life for it beyond that initial presentation. We hadn't learned yet that we could create the path we wanted to walk on, not just be propelled onto it. I sometimes think what would have happened to Jacob if these two shows had had a bigger life after this. They presented this other side of Jacob, in some ways.

This was an important play for me and it's quite something to be the director of a play with a rave review and NOT get mentioned in the review.

This was often a tactic I experienced, where the way you can really hurt someone is to make sure that you don't include them at your party, or in your good news. Nothing hurts more than being left out of the good times.

I often felt not invited because, during those days, it was just one Bromance after the next in the industry.

And it was a way to ensure that I had no value at all, to remind me that I don't exist or matter. I was used to this tactic and could endure exclusion for long periods of time.

But I am sure L.L. wasn't thinking that much. Bromances are intoxicating, I would imagine. The thought of me likely never crossed his mind.

When There was No Money Left in the World

C4

The presumably pseudonymous Death Waits, a 21-year-old playwright-director, has two shows in the Fringe. The first, **How an Intellectual Can Aspire to Savagery**, is interesting but strained. His second piece, **When There was No Money Left in the World**, is refreshing and endlessly inventive, a black comedy about a family during the "recession," which touches on the Freudian fetishism of cash and that current cultural favourite bull's-eye, the patriarchy. But mostly it's about Waits showing off his theatre skills and fertile parodist's imagination.

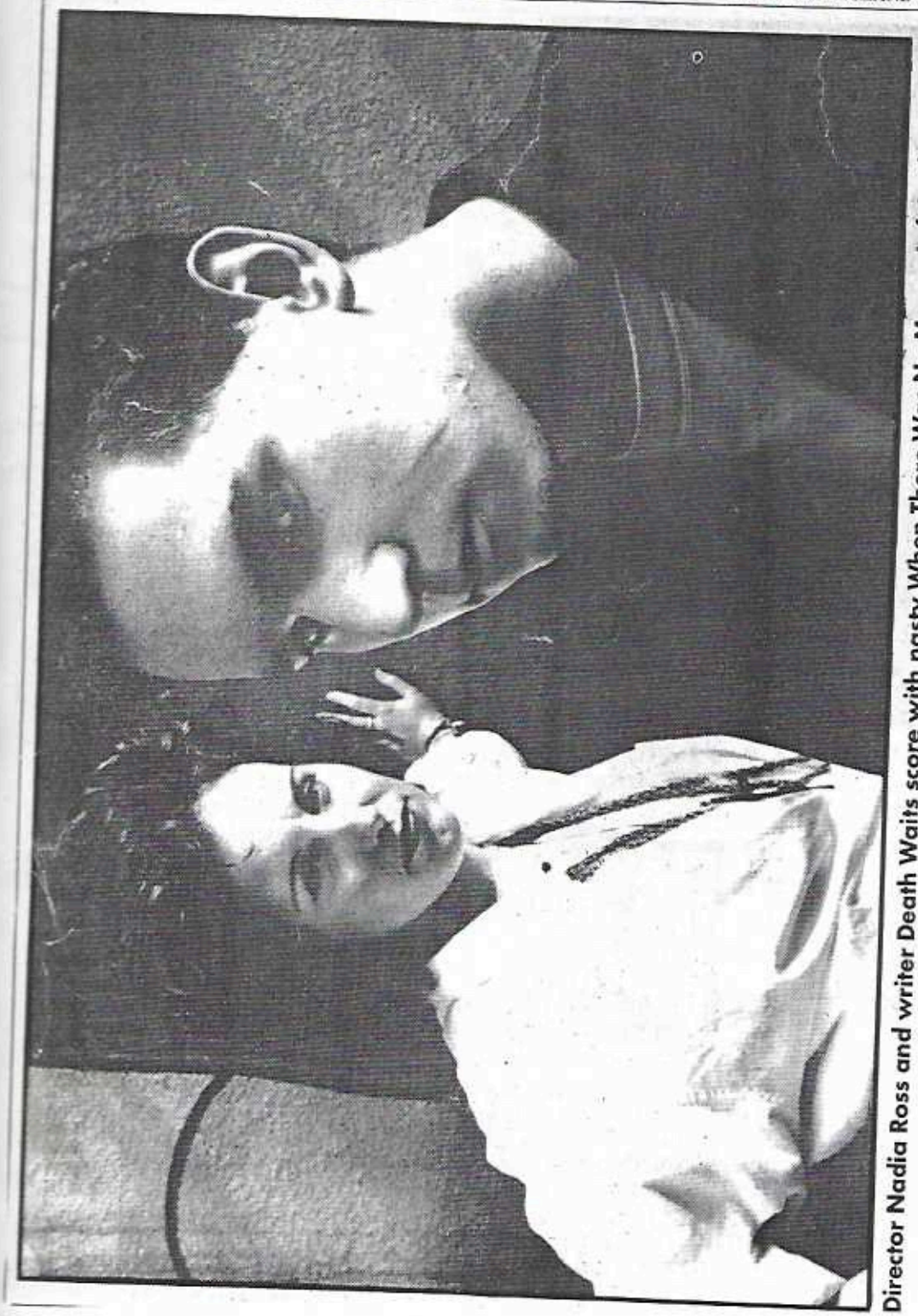
When There was No Money Left in the World opens with the cast (Waits, Darren O'Donnell, Ali Riley, Mark Shields and Astrid Van Wieren) sitting on chairs across the stage, staring deadpan at the audience. Along the front of the stage is a line of objects, and one actor points with a flashlight at each in turn. Gradually — and at first we're talking paint-drying speed — the plot begins to unfold. There's the brutal father, with one leg and a rifle, who often addresses his family, including his zombie wife, by speaking through a megaphone. There's the older brother, who sends away for sex toys through the mail, a high-IQ younger brother and an adult sister who figures out they are locked inside the house. By the end of the play, when she manages to escape, the entire production has turned into a country-and-western opera. Like Edmonton's Stuart Lemoine, Waits seems to be an original, an artist with a deep urge to share his strange black private jokes with the rest of the world.

L.L.

Jacob Wren (aka Death Waits) would always get more credit and attention then the women he worked with. Not only me, but Tracy Wright for certain. You could be the co-writer, the director... you could have been responsible for more of the show. It didn't matter. The press just liked writing his name down. The women were an afterthought. And it was hard to imagine that women could be creative. They could be great helpers, though. And many women were exactly that. They would help men, but not other women, mostly. So men's companies' would have so much free labour, women's help. And women's companies...well, we had to do all the dirty work ourselves.

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LAURENCE ACLAND



Director Nadia Ross and writer Death Waits score with nasty When There Was No Money Left In The World.

THEATRE REVIEWS

By JON KAPLAN
and JILL LAWLESS

BANKABLE MONEY

WHEN THERE WAS NO MONEY LEFT IN THE WORLD, by Death Waits, directed by Nadia Ross, with Waits, Darren O'Donnell, Ali Riley, Mark Shields and Astrid Van Wieren. Presented by Sto Union and the Fringe of Toronto at the Poor Alex Theatre (296 Brunswick). June 30-July 5. $7. Rating: **NNN**

Death Waits' deliciously nasty musical grafts the genre's bouncy tunefulness onto a macabre parody of its cheery content. It centres on a perverse but eerily realistic suburban family — one-legged, menacing father (**Darren O'Donnell**), dazed mother (**Astrid Van Wieren**) and three sullen and chafing children (**Waits, Mark Shields and Ali Riley**).

A long opening scene introducing the stifling patriarchy of the family is intentionally but painfully slow, but once the play bursts into song it explodes with energy and never looks back.

The family's rebellion is set to songs — **Bartok Guitarsplat** provides the gritty but bouncy music — which brim with macabre glee. The cast delights in the whole thing, with Riley capably carrying the bulk of the songs and Shields giving an affectingly low-key performance as the older brother.

— JL

Lorca exceptional and exhilarating

The Lorca Play, the latest offering from the talented team of writer-directors Daniel MacIvor and Daniel Brooks, is as intellectually engaging as it is visually stimulating.

The play, continuing to Nov. 1 at the Theatre Centre, uses the life and work of early 20th century Spanish playwright Federico Garcia Lorca as the basis for an investigation into, among other things, the relationship between control and the act of creation.

MacIvor, who collaborated with Brooks on last year's Chalmers Award-winning *House*, orchestrates the onstage action as Lorca, announcing to the audience at the outset, "Welcome to my last play." This reference is to *The House Of Bernarda Alba*, completed in 1936, just prior to Lorca's execution by fascist assassins.

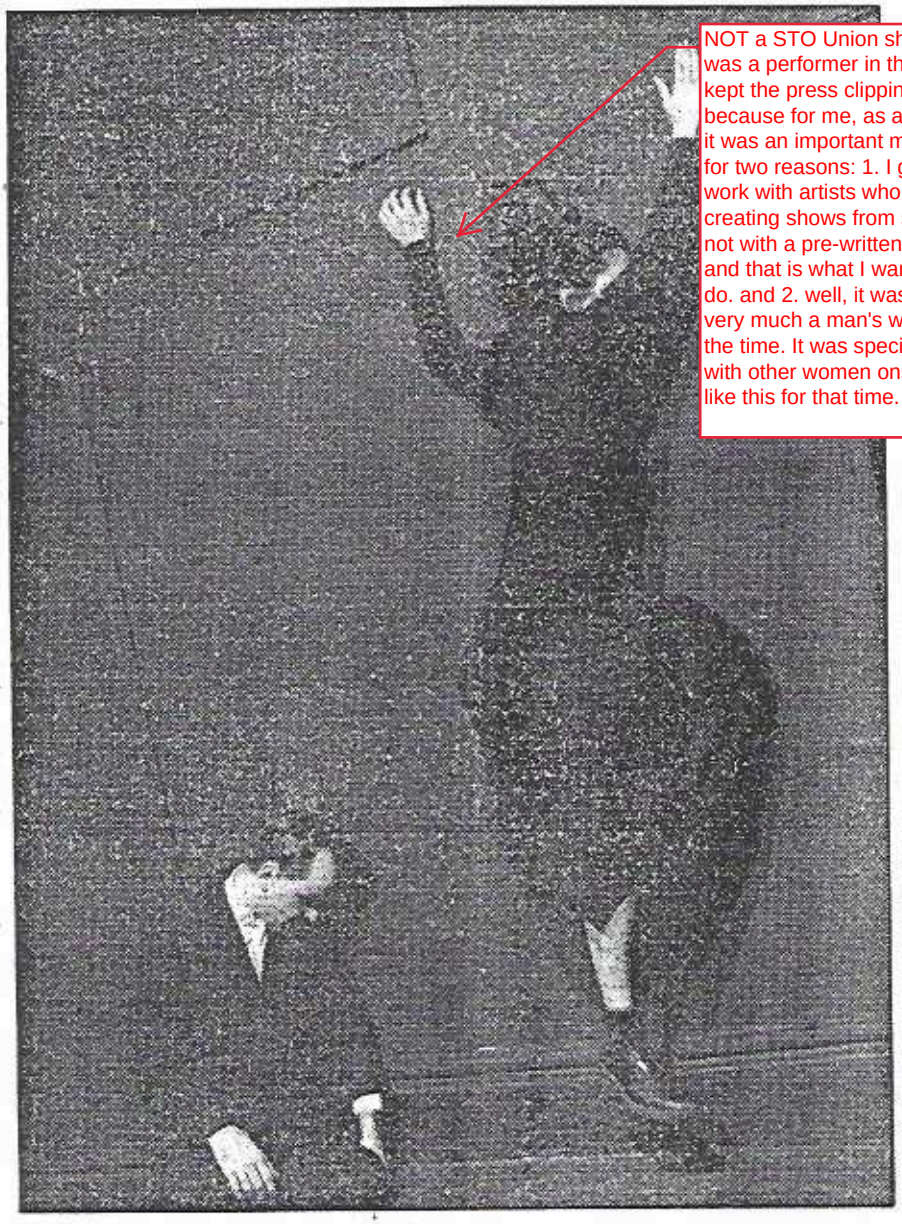
What follows intersperses snippets of *Bernarda Alba*, Lorca's dark portrayal of desire and repression in traditional Spanish society, with impressively realized visual tableaux and biographical bits about the playwright's life.

The various elements create a coherently thematic examination of authority, making connections between the enforced order of the society that Lorca inhabited and portrayed, as well as his own authorial control over the characters and action of *Bernarda Alba*. The point is taken a step further when MacIvor/Lorca assumes the role of director, alternately commanding the other actors to laugh, whisper and weep. Because these performers are all women, the relationship between authority and gender is also brought into focus.

Maria Vacratsis plays the stern, mourning matriarch Bernarda Alba, supported by Paulette Phillips, Ali Riley, Nadia Ross and Tracy Wright as the five daughters and Caroline Gillis as the servant. In a superbly orchestrated introductory passage, the seven provide a brisk and often comic five-minute synopsis of Lorca's play, one of several examples of how brilliantly the performers respond to Brooks's and MacIvor's precise direction.

The script, written in the succinct, almost musical manner of MacIvor's other work, is augmented by highly regimented choreography, much of which has the actors marching in lockstep to a soundscape that surveys styles from the baroque to the present.

Ultimately, this precision disintegrates into cacophonous chaos, a reminder that order is essentially an artificial imposition. But even chaos has its own logic in this exceptionally intelligent and exhilarating production.



NOT a STO Union show. I was a performer in this. But I kept the press clippings because for me, as a woman, it was an important moment for two reasons: 1. I got to work with artists who were creating shows from scratch, not with a pre-written script, and that is what I wanted to do. and 2. well, it was still very much a man's world at the time. It was special to be with other women onstage like this for that time.

CLIMBING the walls in *The Lorca Play* are Daniel MacIvor and Tracy Wright.



Theatre

Vit Wagner

The Lorca Play

Written and directed by Daniel Brooks and Daniel MacIvor. Lighting by Andrea Lundy. Costumes and props by Mark Shields. An August Company-Da Da Kamera co-production running to Nov. 1 at the Theatre Centre, 1032 Queen St. W. 538-0988.

The Lorca Play lacks Lorca's own insightful passion

BY LIAM LACEY
Theatre Critic
Toronto

THE LORCA PLAY
WRITTEN AND DIRECTED
BY DANIEL MacIVOR
and DANIEL BROOKS
Rating: ★★★

LIKE it or not, *The Lorca Play* is probably a milestone in Toronto theatre history. At this point in the development of Canadian drama, the work of independent artists such as Daniel MacIvor (of Da Da Kamera Theatre Co.) and Daniel Brooks (of Augusta Co.) represents the cutting edge of Toronto theatre.

Both Daniels are confident theatre artists who handle live performance with confidence and innovation, questioning the theatre medium in an era when it seems irrelevant to many and emphasizing the unique capacity of live performance to affect people.

They are always, irrevocably, aware of the immediacy of theatre, and everything they do — including *The Lorca Play* — is compelling on a moment-by-moment basis. Their authority is admirable, though one might legitimately wish that *The Lorca Play* was actually about something more than what it appears to be about — the mysterious process of creation.

Federico Garcia Lorca's best-known plays — his three tragedies *Blood Wedding*, *Yerma* and *The House of Bernarda Alba* — mark him as a kind of 20th-century Euripides, an impassioned poet of the male and female domains, with a fascination for sometimes morbid and abnormal psychology. The fact that Lorca was homosexual and was killed at the age of 37 at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War add to his mystique.

The Lorca Play is essentially a performance piece, which is based on, and incorporates, sections of Lorca's final play, *The House of Bernarda Alba*. Seven of Toronto's most conspicuously individual actresses — Valerie Buhagiar, Caroline Gillis, Paulette Phillips, Ali Riley. Nadia Ross, Maria Vacratsis and Tracy Wright — play the mother (Vacratsis) and her six daughters.

There is a strong sense of a schematic approach here. Moving in ensemble action, chanting, or sighing in unison, dressed in black and full of the repressed sexuality of the play, the actresses create a dark, vibrant chorus to the piece. Andrea Lundy's lighting work is particularly impressive.

Daniel MacIvor, as the male character, serves as a Lorca substitute, making male explanations of women, and as a sort of dictatorial figure, pronouncing on the women's behaviour.

Set against a series of three red exit lights, the women move and chant in unison — and offer a kind of deconstructed framework of the play, without the play. While the subtexts suggests interesting possibilities — about men writing words in women's mouths — the entire production has a sense of process rather than product, a series of intriguing set pieces without any conclusive interpretations.

What did it mean? Who knows? What we feel is a sense of voice, lighting, grouping and timing that is both eccentric and interesting and utterly inconclusive. There is no point here — about the conflict and drama between the sexes — that is not handled more passionately and insightfully by Lorca himself.

The Lorca Play runs until Nov. 1.

THEATRE

nique Mojica happy to ha

Much ado about Lorca



BY SIMON HOUPT

Daniel MacIvor and Daniel Brooks gave themselves a hell of a task when they set out, with seven Toronto actresses, to deconstruct the life and creations of Spanish playwright Federico Garcia Lorca.

Successful deconstructions usually depend either on a play that is well known to an audience, or the logical set-up of a story followed by its careful dissection. Shining examples from past years include Neil Munro's incredible *Hamlet* at Theatre Plus and theatre god Robert Lepage's *Polygraph* at Harbourfront. *The Lorca Play* has neither of these things going for it, and it offers its audience few ways to grasp the meaning of the work.

The House of Bernarda Alba — Lorca's last play — is the text around which MacIvor and company have spun a meditation on two divergent themes: the private creation of art and the public creation of myth.

Specifically, we're privy to the imagined inner workings of Lorca's mind as he writes *Bernarda Alba*, and we watch as the playwright himself, through contemporary media hype, supersedes his own works in importance.

Lorca is imagined as an icon of contemporary society along the lines of **Madonna** or Elvis. His public trades stories of encounters with the writer as they would tales of meeting any celebrity. And the questions tumble forth: Do any artists around today match Lorca in talent? If he were around today, would Lorca match Lorca in talent? In an age when image is more substantial than substance itself, when Letterman is more famous than his guests, do we even know how to approach those questions?

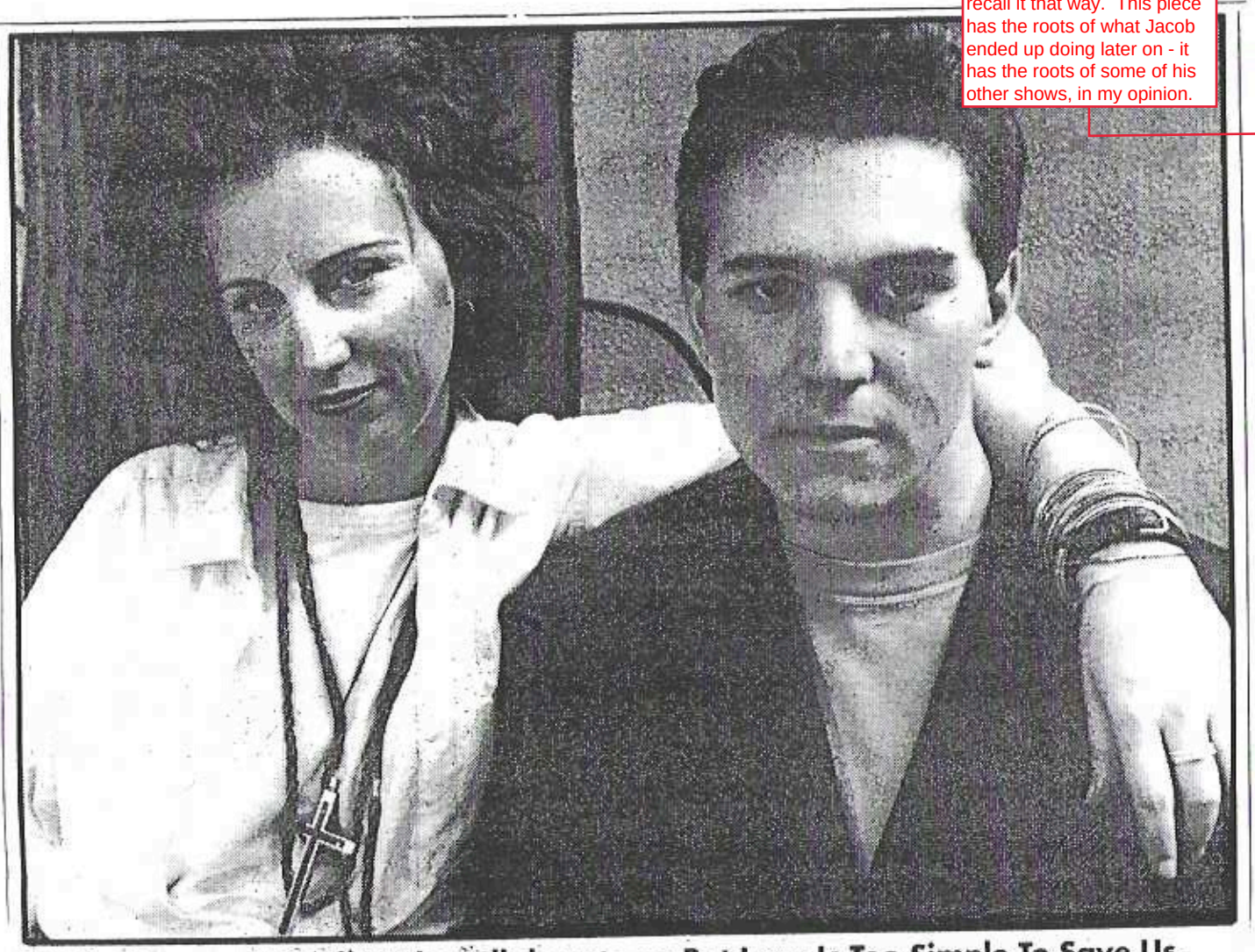
There is more here, including a potentially engaging exploration of the power dynamic between a writer and his creations. The work's tight ensemble choreography and its extreme lighting are two of its other strengths. Yet we're left with a pretty puzzle without the key. And not given anything interesting about Lorca himself, we're also left with the biggest question of all: Was he even worth discussing in the first place?

REVIEW

THE LORCA PLAY

Written and directed by Daniel Brooks and Daniel MacIvor. Starring Daniel MacIvor, Valerie Bułhagiar, Caroline Gillis and Paulette Phillips. Produced by Augusta Company and Da Da Kamera. The Theatre Centre, 1032 Queen St. W., 538-0988. Until Nov. 1.

NOT a STO Union show. I was an actor in this, but it says we were all collaborators, but I don't recall it that way. This piece has the roots of what Jacob ended up doing later on - it has the roots of some of his other shows, in my opinion.



Nadia Ross and Death Waits collaborate on But Love Is Too Simple To Save Us.

THEATRE SCENES

By JON KAPLAN

SIMPLE LOVE

Ballroom dancing waltzes in as a metaphor for romance in **But Love Is Too Simple To Save Us**, a new collective creation by **Candid Stammer Theatre**. The group's last work was the mock-panel discussion How An Intellectual Can Aspire To Savagery.

"My mischievous nature wanted to go 100 per cent in the other direction from the words which played such an important part in Savagery," says director **Death Waits**.

"Ballroom dancing marked the last time people danced together. In our piece, it's a metaphor for love, in this case involving four couples who break apart and form new alliances during the piece.

"Partnered dancing offers a whole different dynamic than today's social dancing," says actor **Philip Nessel**, who co-founded the company with Waits. "People played different roles that flowed from the idea of leading and following. We learned some of the traditional ballroom dance forms, like the cha cha, and then tore them apart to see how we could relate to them."

Though the work has some text, Waits notes that words are a poetic device rather than a narrative one. The company's focus is not on literature but on stage experience.

"Dance is frequently a rehearsal for sex," he adds. "That's what the show is — an experiment in anticipation. I expect people to leave the theatre with all sorts of new steps in their heads."

But Love, a Buddies in Bad Times seed show, opens tonight (January 7) and runs to January 24. 142 George. 863-9455.

THEATRE REVIEW / *Two experimental plays on one of life's most compelling emotions leaves the viewer waiting in vain for some fresh insight*

Two plays leave love still most mysterious emotion

BY LIAM LACEY
Theatre Critic
Toronto

Love, according to mythological scholar Joseph Campbell, is a kind of insanity. Love's mysterious, and ultimately inexplicable compulsions, figures in two experimental plays currently on the boards in Toronto. But in either case, the viewer waits in vain for some fresh insight into the most mysterious of emotions.

In the case of Love is Too Simple To Save Us, by Death Waits (21-year-old playwright David Warren) love is rendered in the form of a series of takes on ballroom dancing. The 50-minute piece is a movement exercise, in which couples circle a centrepiece — consisting of stacked moving skids and a small tower. There are some amusing moments here, including the constant frustration of unanswered telephones and the always awkward attempts of couples to connect.

Previously, Death Waits was responsible for the Toronto Fringe show, How An Intellectual Can Aspire to Savagery, a thin, but amusing attempt to show how intellectual pursuits keep people from their fundamental need, which is love.

In Love Is too Simple To Save Us, one feels, quite urgently, that the writer should have hired a choreographer to realize the emotional complexities he was seeking. Much of the time, the show, with its tableax and stylized dance, simply strikes the viewer as indulgent. When Andrew Scorer walks around the circumference of the room, and says to each section of the audience "I love you", the result is neither affection nor interest, but annoyance. Love, in its physical and divine manifestations, is reduced to a schtick.

LOVE IS TOO SIMPLE TO SAVE US

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY DEATH WAITS

Starring: Andrew Scorer, Nadia Ross.

MACHIAVELLI IN LOVE

WRITTEN BY RON EAST

DIRECTED BY PAUL LAMPERT

Starring: Guy Bannerman, Wendy Thatcher

A couple of years ago, Vancouver choreographer, Karen Jamieson, used ballroom dancing as a metaphor for disconnected relationships. Waits' show is a reminder how far he is from choreography, despite the ambitious attempts.

Unfortunately, a similar kind of emotinal reduction afflicts Machiavelli In Love, Ron East's ambitious and in many ways admirable attempt to address the personal life of the father of modern politics.

Machiavelli, as an historical figure, is much more than the cliche image of the manipulative politician: he was the pivotal figure in defining the difference between ancient and modern thought. Playwright East has addressed Machiavelli's position both with irony and wit: his muses in the play include a comic trio of the orator Cicero (Rodger Barton), the historian Livy (Julian Richings) and the playwright Plautus (Peter Millard).

Director Paul Lampert has brought a fine cast — including Shaw Festival veteran Wendy Thatcher as Marietta, Machiavelli's wife, into this production. There is also fine work from Maria Syrgiannis as Lucrezia, Machiavelli's love interest.

What we have here is an attempt to present Machiavelli cynically, although in many respects the effort seems worthy, but unconvincing. A figure of such spirit and dash deserves to be taken on his own terms, which were coldly true to the way power works. This attempt to present him in context is less strategic and consistent than the master-strategist deserves.

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TORONTO DANCE THEATRE STEPS OUT

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LOVE'S WHIMSY

BUT LOVE IS TOO SIMPLE TO SAVE US, directed by Death Waits, with Philip Nessel, Trisha Lamie, Nadia Ross, Jennifer Moore, Mark Shields, Denise Duric and Andrew Scorer. Presented by Candid Stammer Theatre at Buddies in Bad Times (142 George). To January 24, Tuesday-Saturday 8 pm, Sunday 2:30 pm. $12, Tuesday pwyc. 863-9455. Rating: **NNN**

Small personal dramas and a dose of whimsy give life to the latest collective by **Candid Stammer Theatre, But Love Is Too Simple To Save Us**. A series of imagistic movements and couplings, the piece uses ballroom dancing and unusual variations on partnered steps to paint a teasing but slight portrait of romantic love.

Watching the action shift in foreground and background, audience members construct their own dramas, as characters alternately pace warily around each other and engage in close clinches. Given the odd number of performers, there's always someone dancing alone — or occasionally blending with a couple to form a threesome.

Director **Death Waits** has a light but sure touch in moving the dramatic elements around the space.

— JK

Show puts the moves on love



Theatre

Vit Wagner

But Love Is Too Simple To Save Us

Written and directed by Death Waits. Lighting by Andrea Lundy. A Candid Stammer Theatre production to Jan. 24 at Buddies In Bad Times Theatre, 142 George St. 863-9455.

Death Waits — the cheerful stage pseudonym of promising young writer and director David Warren — isn't wasting any time asserting his versatility as a theatre artist.

Waits's previous show, *How An Intellectual Can Aspire To Savagery*, followed the format of a panel discussion, with the mostly stationary cast aggressively debating each other from behind a table. It was all talk and very little action. But the tension created by conflicting personalities made the outcome anything but static.

In *But Love Is Too Simple To Save Us*, now at Buddies In Bad Times Theatre, Waits reverses that imbalance.

The show, a Candid Stammer Theatre collaboration involving director Waits and the seven-member cast, is a piece of movement theatre. It has operatic singing, effectively rendered by Jennifer Moore, as well as passages of self-consciously artificial dialogue. But the greater burden of expression resides with dance and visual imagery.

Unfortunately, Waits hasn't quite figured out how to have something to say, without actually having to say very much.

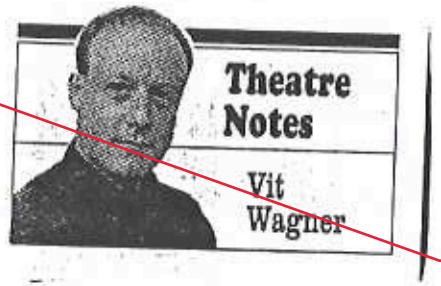
But Love Is Too Simple To Save Us loosely revolves around the impending marriage of a couple played by Andrew Scorer and Nadia Ross, although even this is only intermittently clear during the course of the 50-minute show.

Waits and company have constructed a series of miniature scenes and tableaux, thematically linked by the view that, while life might very well be futile, the struggle to live is what gives it meaning and value. Love, in this context, is presented as a quick and desirable but ultimately unattainable salve to these eternal frustrations.

This is best expressed in two of the production's many jokey bits. In one, a character played by Trisha Lamie persists in trying to light a cigarette despite standing directly in front of a fan. And in the other, Ross, encumbered by a white wedding dress, has to scale a considerable height to answer a telephone, only to have it stop ringing at the moment that she reaches it.

The actions of the ensemble — also including Philip Nessel, Denise Duric, and Mark Shields — are well co-ordinated, moving fluidly around the floor of the theatre, with the audience ringing the outside.

It's a problem, however, that the choreography isn't compelling enough to justify the show's dependence on dance as its principal medium of expression.



RHUBARB! FEST: The relationship between words and images also figures in *Breeding Drum-Majors*, which runs Wednesday to Feb. 7 as part of the 15th annual *Rhubarb!* festival at Buddies In Bad Times Theatre, 142 George St.

The piece is co-written and directed by **Nadia Ross**, a 27-year-old performer whose recent credits include three shows — *Jump*, *The Lorca Play* and *But Love Is Too Simple To Save Us* — in which few words were wasted.

"If I look back on the year and all the plays I've been in, I can count how many lines I've had," says Ross.

"It's this whole thing that this group of people who work together have gone through this year, trying to figure out what works on stage and what language communicates to the audience that goes to small theatre."

Now, Ross senses the wheel is poised for another revolution.

"It's been really exciting in Toronto this year, exploring stuff and trying out new things. But the exploration has to keep on going.

"And that might mean going back to words. That's definitely something I'm looking at."

Breeding Drum-Majors, a collaboration with writer-director **Diane Cave**, is a deconstruction of 19th-century German playwright Georg Buchner's *Woyzeck*, cited by many as a seminal drama in the history of modern theatre.

Ross and Cave have recast the story, which Buchner based on an actual incident, so that it's told from the perspective of Marie, the prostitute murdered in a fit of jealousy by the male protagonist, Woyzeck.

The production, which features Ross, **Earl Pastko**, **Mark Shields**, **Jeff Wiebe** and **Ed Fielding**, aims to achieve this through a range of theatrical approaches.

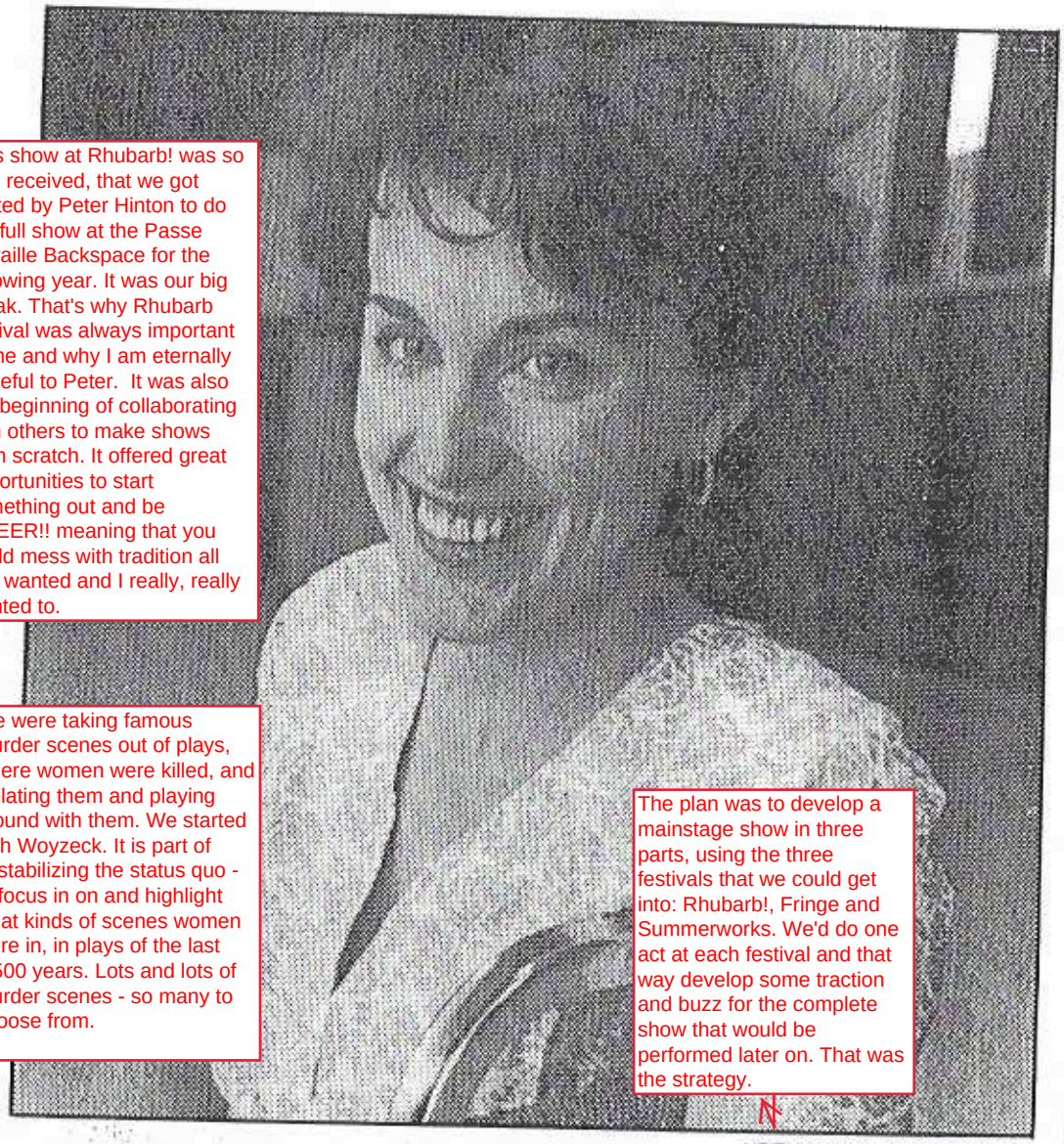
"It's dealing with words, no words and what words work," Ross says.

Breeding Drum-Majors will be performed nightly at 8 p.m. on a program with four other short works. Tickets ($12-14) are available at 863-9455.

This show at Rhubarb! was so well received, that we got invited by Peter Hinton to do the full show at the Passe Muraille Backspace for the following year. It was our big break. That's why Rhubarb festival was always important to me and why I am eternally grateful to Peter. It was also the beginning of collaborating with others to make shows from scratch. It offered great opportunities to start something out and be QUEER!! meaning that you could mess with tradition all you wanted and I really, really wanted to.

We were taking famous murder scenes out of plays, where women were killed, and isolating them and playing around with them. We started with Woyzeck. It is part of destabilizing the status quo - to focus in on and highlight what kinds of scenes women were in, in plays of the last 2,500 years. Lots and lots of murder scenes - so many to choose from.

The plan was to develop a mainstage show in three parts, using the three festivals that we could get into: Rhubarb!, Fringe and Summerworks. We'd do one act at each festival and that way develop some traction and buzz for the complete show that would be performed later on. That was the strategy.



KEITH BEATY/TORONTO STAR

NADIA ROSS: "Dealing with words, no words and what words work" In *Breeding Drum-Majors* at Rhubarb fest.

THEATRE SCENES

By JON KAPLAN

DORA DELIGHTS

Presented as part of a sharp-edged series of vignettes demonstrating the problems with award-giving, the 14th annual **Dora Mavor Moore Awards** proved to be the most entertaining celebration in years.

VideoCabaret took a number of awards in the small theatre division, including outstanding new play (**Michael Hollingsworth**'s **The Great War**) and outstanding production (Hollingsworth's **The Life And Times Of Mackenzie King**). **Jim Plaxton**'s lighting got the nod for King, as did **Astrid Janson**'s costumes for The Great War.

The directing award was a tie between **Daniel Brooks** and **Daniel MacIvor** for **The Lorca Play** and **Jan Komarek** for **Dance Of The Blue Harlequins**. The company of women won the female performance award for Lorca, and **Guillermo Verdecchia** picked up the male award for **Fronteras Americanas**.

Rounding out the division awards were **Teresa Przybylski**'s set design for **Machiavelli In Love** and **Allen Cole**'s musical direction for **A Play About The Mothers Of Plaza De Mayo**.

Two dominate

Two productions dominated the mid-size theatre division. **Theatre Passe Muraille**'s production of **The Stone Angel** captured outstanding play production, direction (**Maureen White**) and performances (**Anne Anglin** and **Richard McMillan**). The **Follows Latimer** production of **Forever Plaid** was named outstanding musical production and won awards for male musical performance (the four-man cast) and sound (musical [illegible]

DEBRA FRIEDMAN



The Great War and The Life And Times Of Mackenzie King — both by Michael Hollingsworth — got Doras.

Doras were the **Pauline McGibbon Award**, given to designer **Glenn Davidson**, the **Silver Ticket Award**, going to retiring theatre administrator **June Faulkner** and the **Brenda Donohue Award**, given to the board of the **Performing Arts Lodge** for setting up a retirement home for performers.

POOR ALEX RETURN

John Sime, the [illegible] **Alex Theatre**, changed his mind building. He hopes — one of the favourites of the small-theatre community — as a holdover theatre for successful productions.

Would it have killed you to put in our names? I mean we WON, you can at least put in our names when we won, no?

According to the **Theatre Centre**'s **David Duclos**, Sime approached **Cynthia Grant** and the Centre to look into the possibility of keeping the Poor Alex going following the Fringe of Toronto, which was to have been the last group to use the space. Programming for the space is being coordinated by a group co-chaired by Grant and **Sara Meurling**.

"The Theatre Centre is interested in assisting the continuation of the theatre, and we'll spend the next few weeks exploring and studying how the Theatre Centre can participate," says Duclos.

Beginning in 1986, the three companies both produced their own shows at the Poor Alex and rented out the space. They vacated the premises in May.

There are tentative plans to redesign the Poor Alex for late-night shows and dancing, as well as regular performances. Groups interested in renting the space should [illegible] proposals by July 15 to the [illegible]lex office, 2nd floor, 296 [illegible]vick.

BIAN DRAMA

As part of CKLN's week-long celebration of **Lesbian and Gay Pride Day** (June 27), **Queeradio 93**, the radio station is broadcasting several radio theatre pieces.

Queer Morning Live on Saturday (June 26) includes **Miss Ann**, a radio play by a black prisoner in the States. On Sunday at 12:30 pm, the station offers **A New Way Of Living Together**, a South Asian lesbian folk tale about two women who fall in love. The show, produced by **Iman**, features **Gita Saxena, Lipika Banerjee, Kaushalya Bannerji** and **Cheryl Vardon**.

NIGHT BLUES

The saga of a woman singing the blues, gets [illegible]

writer/director **Hrant Alia** composer **Norman Symon**

Presented in Alianak's p cal 50s B-movie style, the tures jazz singer **Elaine K** as a woman seeking against the man who has l betrayed her.

"She goes from being a lover to a figure whose aches to get even with who's abused her for year now tossed her aside for woman," says Kilpatrick also performing in the Downtown Jazz festival.

"There's dialogue along full jazz score, played b **Danny McErlain**. I know ous drama — I've made m in rehearsals, and that's honey," says the Atl singer who's lived in Can dozen years but not lost h ern accent.

"I've been singing this music for over three dec this score is among the m lenging I've tackled."

Presented by **The Grim** and **Canadian Rep**, Lad Night opens tonight (T June 24) and runs to July 3 Passe Muraille Backspace erson). 363-2416.

DRAFT BENEFIT

The monthly play-readi **First Draft** holds a benefit day (June 28) to raise fun production of **Sanctuary**, duced in August's Summ Festival.

The entertainment incl Celtic-influenced band **Young & the Mere Mort** reading of **Benj Galland Curator's Park**.

The show starts at 8 p Clinton Tavern (693 Blo $4. 539-8895.

RUSSIAN FUNDI

Another benefit, spons **Lucid Film Company**



LAN: Best play, *The*

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awards. This postmodern spoof culminated with novelist Michael Ondaatje presenting the group with a Dora for best workshop of a play about the Doras.

Kiss also bagged prizes for director Harold Prince, set designer Jerome Sirlin, lighting designer Howell Binkley and conductor Jeffrey Huard. Apart from Drabinsky and Live Entertainment partner Myron Gottlieb, only Huard was on hand to accept his award.

Indeed, several of the award winners in all categories were missing for various reasons, prompting *Nigredo Hotel* lighting designer Paul Mathiesen to insist that he was the genuine article and not just another *designated* accepter.

Of the many winners who did attend, the most affecting acceptance speech was by *Forever Plaid* musical arranger James Raitt, who boasted of having worked on more than 30 productions, including a couple of Broadway busts, since being diagnosed with AIDS. "And

In the small theatre division, *The Lorca Play*, a collaboration involving Daniel Brooks and Daniel MacIvor, tied with Jan Komarek's *Dance Of The Blue Harlequins* for best direction. Following the pattern of *Forever Plaid*, *The Lorca Play*'s female cast members shared the top acting award.

Best male performance went to writer-performer Guillermo Verdecchia's *Fronteras Americanas*, which is being remounted at Tarragon at the start of next season.

Paul-André Fortier's *La tenations de la transparence* won as best new choreographic work.

Also awarded were the Silver Ticket Award for longstanding contribution to Toronto theatre to retired Young People's Theatre general manager June Faulkner, the Pauline McGibbon Award for an emerging young artist to set designer Glenn Davidson and the Brenda Donohue Award to the board of the Performing Arts Lodge.

Dora Mavor Moore Award winners

Following is the complete list of winners for 14th annual Dora Mavor Moore Awards, handed out last night at the St. Lawrence Centre.

Large Theatre

New Play/Musical: *Kiss Of The Spider Woman*, Terrence McNally, John Kander and Fred Ebb.
Production (Musical): *Kiss Of The Spider Woman*, Live Entertainment Corp. of Canada.
Production (Play): *Whale*, Young People's Theatre.
Direction: Harold Prince, *Kiss Of The Spiderwoman.*
Male Performance (Musical): Brent Carver, *Kiss Of The Spider Woman.*
Female Performance (Musical): Kate Hennig, *Ratbag.*
Male Performance (Play): Hardee Lineham, *Richard 03.*
Female Performance (Play): Fiona Reid, *Fallen Angels.*
Set Design: Jerome Sirlin, *Kiss Of The Spider Woman.*
Lighting Design: Howell Binkley, *Kiss Of The Spider Woman.*
Costume Design: Mark Thompson, *Joseph And The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat.*
Sound Or Music: Jeffrey Huard (musical supervision/conductor), *Kiss Of The Spider Woman.*

Mid-size Theatre

New Play/Musical: *Bob's Kingdom*, Neil Munro.
Production (Play): *The Stone Angel*, Theatre Passe Muraille.
Production (Musical): *Forever Plaid*, Follows Latimer Productions Inc.
Direction: Maureen White, *The Stone Angel.*
Male Performance (Play): Richard McMillan, *The Stone Angel.*
Female Performance (Play): Anne Anglin, *The Stone Angel.*
Male Performance (Musical): Neil Bartram, Paul Castree, John Devorski and Brian Hill, *Forever Plaid.*
Female Performance (Musical): Sharl Saunders, *Nigredo Hotel.*
Set Design: Graeme S. Thomson, *Bob's Kingdom.*
Lighting Design: Paul Mathiesen, *Nigredo Hotel.*
Costume Design: John Ferguson, *The Queens.*

Sound Or Music: James Raitt (musical continuity, arrangements and supervision), *Forever Plaid.*

Small Theatre

New Play: *The Great War*, Michael Hollingsworth.
Production: *The Life And Times Of Mackenzie King*, VideoCabaret.
Direction: (tie) Daniel Brooks and Daniel MacIvor, *The Lorca Play*; Jan Komarek, *Dance Of The Blue Harlequins.*
Male Performance: Guillermo Verdecchia, *Fronteras Americanas.*
Female Performance: The company, *The Lorca Play.*
Set Design: Teresa Przybylski, *Machiavelli In Love.*
Lighting Design: Jim Plaxton, *The Life And Times Of Mackenzie King.*
Costume Design: Astrid Janson, *The Great War.*
Sound Or Music: Allen Cole (musical direction), *A Play About The Mothers Of Plaza De Mayo.*

Theatre For Young Audiences

New Play: *In Search Of Dragon's Mountains*, Young People's Theatre.

New Choreography

Paul-André Fortier, *La tentation de la transparence.*

Just too much work to look up our names, right?

Kiss cleans up at Doras

Seven Toronto theatre awards add to kudos garnered south of the border

BY H. J. KIRCHHOFF
Theatre Critic

TORONTO — There was joy in the Live Entertainment Corp. last night, as *Kiss of the Spider Woman* dominated the Dora Mavor Moore Awards honouring plays produced in Toronto in the past year.

Kiss took seven of the 12 awards in the large theatre division, including outstanding new play or musical; outstanding production; direction (by Hal Prince); and performance by a male in a musical, for Brent Carver, who earlier this month received a Tony and a Drama Critics Circle Award in New York in the same category.

Five of last night's Dora Awards for *Kiss* were accepted by stand-ins. Musical director Jeffrey Huard was on hand to accept his, and the outstanding production award was accepted by Live Entertainment partners Myron Gottlieb and Garth Drabinsky. Gottlieb acknowledged the work of director Hal Prince, and Drabinsky commented, "The odyssey is over, after a year .... It's about time we should be able to mount productions of new musicals in Toronto, and know they will be seen all over the world."

Kiss of the Spider Woman had its premiere in Toronto last summer before it went to London's West End, where it won the London Evening Standard Award for best musical. It is now playing on Broadway (which is why Carver could not come to pick up his Dora), and picked up seven Tony Awards earlier this month, as well as being voted best musical of the season by the New York Drama Critics Circle and earning five Drama Desk Awards.

The Drabinsky-produced *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* also took a Dora, for costume designer Mark Thompson, giving Live Entertainment Corp. eight of the 12 large-theatre awards.

The winners were announced during a gala presentation at the St. Lawrence Centre's Bluma Appel Theatre (where *Kiss* premiered), hosted by a six-person team of actors — David Fox, Patricia Hamilton, Ann-Marie MacDonald, Daniel MacIvor, Billy Merasty and Djanet Sears — who also performed the show-within-an-awards-show entitled *The Doras, The Play*.

The satirical play — written by MacIvor and Jason Sherman, directed by Richard Greenblatt and with music by Boko Suzuki — is about the travails of six artists who join together to produce a Dora Award-winning play. At the end of the night, author Michael Ondaatje made a surprise cameo appearance to present an award to the six for "outstanding production of a workshop of a play about an awards show."

One of the largest hands of the night came for *Forever Plaid* musical director James Raitt, who in accepting his award said that it helped to prove that people with AIDS could accomplish things. "Since I was diagnosed with AIDS, I've done the music for about 30 productions of *Plaid*, two off-Broadway hits and one Broadway flop," Raitt said. "I think I have at least two flops left in me."

The Canadian Stage-Theatre Columbus production *Rathag* received only one award — for Kate Hennig, for outstanding performance by a female in a musical — despite having a field-leading nine nominations. Neil Munro's *Bob's Kingdom*, which had nine nominations in the mid-size theatre division, received two Doras, one for Munro, for outstanding new play or musical, and one for Graeme S. Thomson's set design. *The Stone Angel* took four Doras in the mid-size theatre division, including outstanding production, outstanding direction (for Maureen White), and both performance awards (for Richard McMillan and Anne Anglin).

The small-theatre awards were spread out fairly evenly among seven productions, although Michael Hollingsworth's two shows, *The Great War* and *The Life and Times of Mackenzie King*, took two awards apiece.

One unusual feature of this year's awards was the presentation of two Doras to collective nominations — to the seven women of *The Lorca Play* and to the four men of *Forever Plaid*. (While accepting their award, *Lorca* spokeswoman Maria Vacratsis made a point of telling the *Plaid* guys that her group had no plans for after the show.)

In the large theatre division, the winners were: for outstanding new play or musical, *Kiss of the Spider Woman*; for outstanding production of a play, *Whale*; outstanding production of a musical, *Kiss*; direction, Harold Prince for *Kiss*; performance by a male in a play, Hardee Lineham, for *Richard III*; by a female in a play, Fiona Reid in *Fallen Angels*; performance by a male in a musical, Brent Carver, in *Kiss*; performance by a female, Hennig in *Rathag*; lighting design, Howard Binkley for *Kiss*; costume design, Mark Thompson, for *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*; outstanding sound or music, Jeffrey Huard for *Kiss*.

In the mid-size theatre division: for outstanding new play or musical, Neil Munro's *Bob's Kingdom*; outstanding production of a play, *The Stone Angel*; production of a musical, *Forever Plaid*; direction, Maureen White, for *The Stone Angel*; performance by a male in a play, Richard McMillan for *The Stone Angel*;performance by a female in a play, Anne Anglin for *The Stone Angel*; performance by a male in a musical, Neil Bartram, Paul Castree, John Devorski and Brian Hill, for *Forever Plaid*; female in a musical, Shari Saunders for *Nigredo Hotel*; costume design, John Ferguson for *The Queens*; outstanding sound or music, James Raitt, for *Forever Plaid*.

In the small theatre division: for outstanding new play, Michael Hollingsworth's *The Great War*; outstanding production, VideoCabaret's *The Life and Times of Mackenzie King*; outstanding direction, a tie between Jan Komarek, for *Dance of the Blue Harlequins*, and Daniel MacIvor, for *The Lorca Play*; performance by a male, Guillermo Verdecchia, for *Fronteras Americanas*; outstanding performance by a female, the company of *The Lorca Play*; set design, Teresa Przybylski for *Machiavelli in Love*; lighting design, Jim Plaxton for *The Life and Times of Mackenzie King*; costume design, Astrid Janson for *The Great War*; outstanding sound or music, Allen Cole for *A Play About the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo*.

In the new category of outstanding new play for young audiences, Young People's Theatre's *In Search of Dragon's Mountain* was named the winner, and Paul-André Fortier received the new choreography award for *La tentation de la transparence*.

Designer Glenn Davidson received the 1993 Pauline McGibbon Award, for contributions to theatre in Ontario. The $7,000 prize, and a medal designed by Dora de Pedery-Hunt, were presented by former Ontario lieutenant-governor McGibbon herself. The $1,000 Brenda Donohue Award, for services to the industry, was presented to Performing Arts Lodges. Araby Lockhart, last year's winner, made the presentation, to PAL board president Elsa Franklin and vice-president Theresa Kowall.



Garth Drabinsky, left, and Myron Gottlieb won the outstanding production award at Dora Mavor Moore Awards ceremony last night for Kiss of the Spider Woman.

(DAVID LEVESQUE and Staff)

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THE SUNDAY STAR
July 4, 1993

Bizarre double bill promises to be buzz of Fringe

By Mira Friedlander
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

ON THE FRINGE

There were knots, rather than crowds, at Day 1 of the Fringe Festival of Toronto, the diehard fringers who hit the pavement early to catch 78 companies performing on six stages over 10 days.

They disdain waiting for "the buzz," preferring to make their own discoveries, and they'll be heralding the bizarre double bill of *Vengeance* and *He Made The Stars Also*, at the Bathurst Street Theatre.

The former, written and directed by Nadia Ross and Diane Cave, probes the inner thoughts of Clytemnestra (Ross), minutes before she axes hubby Agamemnon (Ernie Grunwald) to death for sacrificing daughter Iphigenia.

Part of a trilogy-in-progress, *Vengeance* was inspired by a two-week workshop on Greek tragedy and eschews a linear plot in favor of haunting visual images and minimum text. Geoff Wiebe is a leather-clad and hooded warrior shadowing an ashen-faced Ross in floor-length ivory satin gown. (When Clytemnestra kills the tautly muscled, bikini-clad Agamemnon, it is in a claw-footed Victorian tub.)

The partner show, *He Made The Stars Also*, is written by Michael McMurtry, last year's Fringe discovery. McMurtry's performance skills were much acclaimed in the potent *Enthusiasm Of The Species*, but he's still got a way to go as a playwright.

Borrowing from the absurdists, he uses non sequiturs, overlapping and nonsense lines, all with great panache, but at the moment one-liners reign supreme over depth and the material is thin, even for a work-in-progress.

A businessman (McMurtry) sits in a chair on a bare stage trying to work out a relationship via cellular phone while his assistant (Jane Spidell) and a salesman (Jim Allodi) constantly interrupt.

There are hilarious moments (like the one in which Spidell tells of losing McMurtry's dog and wonders whether to come home with the leash) and three delightfully off-kilter characters strongly rendered by the actors, but a self-conscious cleverness has got to go.



LEATHER WARRIOR: Geoff Wiebe stars in *Vengeance* at Bathurst Street Theatre as part of Fringe Festival of Toronto.

When you look at murder scenes of women over and over, Vengeance is something you long for at some level.

This was part one of the Alistair Trilogy. Again, the fringe offered us a chance to try to build something from scratch. We didn't need something perfect to show back then, just interesting seeds that might get a chance to grow later on.

The Globe and Mail, Wednesday, July 7, 1993

NOISES OFF

Festival set to soar on the wings of M. Butterfly

FOR the 18th time since 1975, a motley horde of film scribes, publicists and general hangers-on crowded into a Toronto room yesterday for a yearly summer ritual — the "opening press conference" of the **Festival of Festivals**.

With a heat wave outside, this one took place in an air-conditioned oasis of the Park Plaza hotel and offered up mounds of Italian food (in recognition of this year's Italian showcase at the fest) and gallon upon gallon of cold beer and wine (courtesy of several corporate sponsors).

The best line of the day came from Air Canada exec **Stephen Smith**, representing one of the festival's major sponsors. He commented to the crowd — in a cryptic but refreshingly non-boosterish phrase — that "you might think having Air Canada sponsor the Festival of Festivals is a bit like having McDonald's support an exotic food festival. . . ." (Well, yes, now that you mention it. . . .)

The big news of the day, however, came from festival deputy director and "artistic guru" **Piers Handling**, who announced that the opening gala this year will be the world premiere of **David Cronenberg**'s *M. Butterfly*, the Toronto director's film version of **David Henry Hwang**'s Broadway hit, starring **Jeremy Irons** (*Damage*) and **John Lone** (*The Last Emperor*).

Cronenberg, looking relaxed in a turquoise polo shirt and off-white shorts, said he'd just flown in yesterday from London, where he's been working with the film's composer recording the score. Now he's buckling down for five final weeks of mixing in Toronto.

Cronenberg's *Dead Ringers* — which also starred Irons, in a double role — was the opening gala at the 1988 festival. Asked how it feels to be the only director to have two of his films selected to premiere in the festival's prestigious opening spot, Cronenberg said: "It's a fantastically good augury for the film — the symmetry is perfect."

Irons, he pointed out, is the only leading actor he's ever worked with twice while he is the only director Irons has ever worked with twice: "It's a perfect case of kismet."

Cronenberg, who shot the film on location in China and Hungary (where Budapest stood in for Paris) and in a Toronto studio, says that both Irons and Lone have promised him they'll attend the festival premiere.

So far, fest organizers have few other confirmations of VIPs who'll show up for the 10-day bash. One is **David Thewlis**, representing the British film *Naked*. Thewlis won the best actor award at Cannes this spring for his *Naked* performance (under director **Mike Leigh**, who picked up the Cannes best director award for the same picture, his first since the black comedy *Life Is Sweet*). Another confirmed attendee is **Nanni Moretti**, the Italian director who'll be the subject of a Festival of Festivals' retrospective — part of this year's "Italian Renaissance" theme, showcasing contemporary filmmakers from Italy.

Handling also announced yesterday that British director **Ken Loach**'s *Raining Stones* and newcomer **Tran Anh Hung**'s *The Scent of the Green Papaya* — both also winners of prizes at Cannes — will be featured in the fest, along with a program of new movies from Taiwan.

At the end of Monday's performance of *Vengeance/He Made the Stars Also*, actor **Nadia Ross** made a dramatic plea to the Fringe of Toronto Festival audience. She urged them to turn out for today's rally in support of Buddies in Bad Times Theatre and The Inside Out Collective (organizer of the Toronto Lesbian and Gay Film and Video Festival). Both groups had grants withheld last week by a vote of Metro Council's management committee, which approved $7.5-million in grants to more than 200 other cultural groups.

"This is a tragedy," Ross told her audience. "We have to fight this."

Similar announcements were being made all over the Fringe Festival, where the matter has been the subject of much furious discussion over the past few days. Many of the Fringe's actors, directors and playwrights, of course, have worked at Buddies, which has one of the most active new play development programs around, gay or non-gay.

The committee's recommendations — that Inside Out's $4,000 grant be denied, and that Buddies' $26,500 grant be withheld pending meetings between the theatre and the Metro cultural affairs department — come up for vote before the full council today. The 9:30 a.m. rally is timed to coincide with the beginning of the meeting.

As the demonstrators demonstrate and the councillors meet, the threatened groups and their supporters will be holding a press conference elsewhere in Metro Hall. Buddies artistic director **Sky Gilbert** will be there, along with Inside Out's **Liz Czach**. Also expressing their support will be playwright **Tomson Highway**, Festival of Festivals' **Helga Stephenson**, writer and rights activist **June Callwood** and, on behalf of Actors Equity, **Gale Garnett**. They will be joined, we are told, by Toronto City Councillor **Kyle Rae** and Metro Councillor **Olivia Chow** (just sticking her head in on the way to the Metro meeting).

Buddies general manager **Tim Jones** says that when the matter gets to council, "we're expecting a pretty heated debate."

The Fringe crowd eagerly awaits the results.

Noises Off Hotline:
(416) 585-5679

The push back against QUEER was often happening and people who didn't like QUEER didn't hide their disdain very much.

The community back then was pretty united and would respond really quickly, usually. We hadn't been all completely destroyed by the impact of AIDS quite yet, and we hadn't been scattered to the winds quite yet by the strong reassertion of past ways that was to come.

We still had some fight in us.

CANADA'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER
THE GLOBE AND MAIL
Toronto, Thursday, July 8, 1993 ■ 50 cents

A Fringe full of surprises

BY H.J. KIRCHHOFF
Theatre Critic
Toronto

A double bill, **Vengeance/He Made the Stars Also**, offers two half-hour slices out of the middle of works in progress. The first of these, written by Nadia Ross and Diane Cave, and starring Ross, Ernie Crunwald, Mark Shields and Geoff Wiebe, is a highly stylized take on Agamemnon's death at the hands of his wronged wife, Clytemnestra, with references to the legends of King Arthur and Cinderella. Ross is a striking presence, tiptoeing her way around the stage on a stool as she is followed/threatened by Wiebe in amazing heavy-metal leather warrior gear.

He Made the Stars Also, by Michael McMurtry, features Jim Allodi as a piggish businessman, swivelling in his office chair while making deals and breaking hearts. Jane Spidell has a tasty role as his secretary/mistress, and McMurtry is gently funny as a salesman who can't get the boss's attention, although he does reach the secretary.

DRONTO'S WEEKLY NEWS AND ENTERTAINMEN

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NOW

THEATRE REVIEWS

By JON KAPLAN
and JILL LAWLESS

SWIFT VENGEANCE

VENGEANCE, written and directed by Diane Cave and Nadia Ross, with Ross, Ernie Grunvald, Mark Shields and Geoff Wiebe; and **HE MADE THE STARS ALSO**, written and directed by Michael McMurtry, with McMurtry, Jane Spidell and Jim Allodi. Presented by Sto Union, Pill and Storage and the Fringe of Toronto at the Bathurst Street Theatre (736 Bathurst). Friday (July 9) at 11 pm, July 10, 3:30 pm. $7. 516-4314. Rating: **NNN**

These two half-hour plays — both edgily funny, both only semi-realized — make a prickly, enjoyable double bill.

Vengeance is the more satisfying of the two, a brooding, pulsing little portrait of revenge distilled from **Aeschylus'** story of Clytemnestra's murder of her husband Agamemnon. Stripped down and stylized, it's a neat bit of meta-mytholygy that sketchily but suggestively probes the double standards and violence against women in western mythology, with a strong central performance by **Nadia Ross**.

He Made The Stars Also, a sketch of imploding relationships and non-communication set in a romance novel company, seems embryonic, though the quirky, wounded monologues **Michael McMurt** has written are given spark and sustenance by **Jane Spidell** and **Jim Allodi**.

– JL



Vengeance, by Diane Cave (left) and Nadia Ross, is a neat bit of metamythology.

Extraordinarily strong slate proves Fringe bigger and better than ever

By JON KAPLAN

FRINGE WRAP

The weather wasn't the only thing that was hot last week. The fifth annual **Fringe of Toronto** generated enough dramatic volts to power a small city.

Overall, the Fringe offered the best quality in a number of years, with shows such as **Oh, Baby, Into, Cafe Naked, Greek, Vengeance, Horse-Radish For Robert, Expectation, Red Winter** and **Straight**

THEATRE SCENES

And Narrow getting thumbs up from audiences and reviewers. These and several other productions deserve longer runs than the six performances the Fringe can provide.

Audiences increased to 17,000, which means that the artists — who get all box office receipts — pocketed $120,000 from the 10-day festival.

Companies often use the Fringe as a workshop situation, finding out in front of an audience what succeeds and what doesn't. Among those shows with strong ideas still in development are **Women In Utero, Makbeth, Tra La La We're Married, Ophelia's Garden, Get Stuffed! The Musical** and the operatic **Unrequited Pine**.

The festival's memorable performers included **Rena Polley, Liza Balkan, Adrian Churchill, Paul Herwig, Karen Hines, David Jansen, John Graham Davies** and the Godot-like buffoon ensemble in **Going**. Best prop was the huge, sick earth — complete with polluted lungs, stomach and heart — operated on by three doctors in **Meta-Physical Theatre**'s **Earthlings**.

GREGORY'S GIFT

Toronto theatre in the mid-90s wouldn't be the same without **Gregory Nixon**. The producer of the Fringe since its inception five years ago, Nixon is stepping down — though remaining on the board — to pursue other projects, especially multimedia works.

He's steered the Fringe from a festival of some 40 shows to this year's 78 productions, increased the venues to six and audiences by the thousands. The $24,000 budget of 1989 has grown to nearly 10 times that amount — during a recession. And he's leaving a deficit-free balance sheet for his yet-to-be-chosen successor.

He's not done it alone, of course. This year's team includes general manager **Marcia Kredentser**, festival apprentice **Michele Ballagh**, programer **Jennifer Ross**, production managers **Andrea Lundy** and **Roger West**, volunteer coordinator **Keith Cole** and publicist **Carrie Sager**.

Among the artists and groups introduced or given a Fringe boost during the past five years are **James O'Reilly**, clowns **Mump, Smoot, Pochsy** and **Napalm, Death Waits, Gwendolyn, Stiletto Company, Pea Green Productions, Del Artie Productions, Augusta Company** and **Wild Pig Theatre**.

The Fringe regularly offers opportunities to a new generation of theatre artists. Each year nearly 80 per cent of Fringe participants are emerging artists or people exploring new areas of creativity.

For the first five years of the Fringe, it's been Nixon's baby. The Toronto theatre community and audiences owe him a huge debt for providing constantly renewed life to the local theatre scene.

HOT FRIDGE

Symptom Hall, the newest performance space in town, holds its first interdisciplinary festival — a ser featuring more than 25 recogniz and emerging dance, music, the tre, poetry, performance and visual artists.

Dubbed the **Fridge Festival**, the series recognizes the connectedness among disciplines that festival artistic director **Patrick Pennefather** sees as the wave of the future.

"Many of the artists who responded to the call for applications are people whose work hasn't had much exposure," says Pennefather, who characterizes his own work as musical mime theatre and frequently collaborates with dance artists.

"This sort of festival is different from the various other performance festivals in Toronto, in part because the work here tends to be more risky, with fewer limitations."

Among those involved are theatre artists **Philip Cairns, Darren O'Donnell** and **Tricia Fish**, comic **Mark Lonergan**, dancers **Lori Baxter** and **Yasmina Ramzy**, musicians **Maria Piazza** and **Shaved Monkey**, performance artist **Jenny Keith** and visual artists **Stuart Milliken-Collier** and **Julia Shure**.

The Fridge Festival runs to Saturday (July 17), with different shows at 8 and 10 pm. 160 Claremont. 667-1343.

• **Continued on page 55**

THEATRE

Long hot SummerWorks

This was going to be part 3 of the Alistair Trilogy, but it didn't turn out the way we wanted it to, so we went into doing the Alistair Trilogy with only two parts, and had to find the third during rehearsals for the final show

SummerWorks '93 heats up the Tarragon, Annex and Theatre Centre stages August 19 to 29 with everything from 18th-century sex to modern-day East Bloc politics. eye writers Elizabeth Mitchell and Mary Lou Zeitoun sifted through 40 upcoming productions and found love, death and related theatre weirdness.

A quick look at the twenty shows lined up at the Annex Theatre and Theatre Centre suggest that this year's SummerWorks is a veritable theatrical orgy. Sex and violence have always made for good play material.

What would an orgy be without the Marquis de Sade? This 18th-century writer of erotica makes Madonna look like Mother Teresa. Now actress, playwright and Va Va Venus member Ali Riley has got her hands on Sade's legendarily depraved play **Philosophy in the Bedroom** and decided to merge the worlds of 1790s France and 1970s suburbia.



Post-PMS blues: Company Without a Mandate's The Guru Within

While the original deals with a no-holds-barred initiation of an ingenue into the mysteries of sex, Riley's version introduces the dying Marquis to a group of tricked-up teens from the early '70s. In the ethos of glitter rock, bisexuality and *Last Tango in Paris*, sheer indulgence had its last hurrah, and this bastard offspring of Sade's play revels in the gap between the New York Dolls and *Christiane F.*

"These kids had all the excesses of the hippy movement without the idealism," says Riley, who refers to the Marquis as "The Sade."

Presenting alternating scenes from both eras, each character in Sade's France has a modern counterpart. Nadia Ross's appearance as the Marquis heightens the androgyny of the '70s and acts as a conduit between both worlds. Under the direction of Jim Millan, the rest of the cast — Valerie Buhagiar, Jeffrey Hirschfield, Robert Eaton, Kirsten Johnson, and Tracy Wright (whose performance will be phoned or video'd in from Ottawa) — act out Riley's interpretation with ironic humor.

"His writing about sex is laughable," says Riley. "Reading these works now, it's hard not to snort at them."

Apparently we've since learned a lot in the decadence department.

Moving from the debauched to the debunked, playwright and actor Bruce Beaton zooms in on the much-celebrated incident of fraternization between German and English soldiers on a Christmas Day in World War I in his play **First World** — and smashes romanticized notions of war and its heroes while he's at it.

With Yeats as his initial inspiration, Beaton went on to meld the sing-song quality of Robert Service, the starkness of Beckett and the potent rhythms of Stravinsky, with a little Eliot and Kipling thrown in for good measure.

"It's *Billy Bishop Goes to War* meets Samuel Beckett," he says, adding that the play's no-man's-land set makes the show "completely and utterly static."

Fresh from his stint as Mercutio in the Die in Debt and Kytes production of *Romeo and Juliet*, Beaton finds *First World* a taxing follow-up. "I'm a fairly physical actor and it's a huge challenge to make this play dynamic within my prescribed constraints."

THE WAR ON THE HOME FRONT

The workings of a convicted child murder's mind are not your standard theatrical fare, but then again, David Demchuk's handling of the subject in his play **Stay** is pretty unique.

Originally produced in New York City, *Stay* is rural Manitoba's answer to *The Executioner's Song*.

Commuting death sentences in the late 1950s was all the rage in America. Being the nice, neighborly guy that he was, Prime Minister Diefenbaker decided to follow suit, but many commutes became stays of execution, a form of bureaucratic torture that placed convicts in a punishment purgatory. Demchuk takes us into these hellish confines, letting us in on some of the murderer's motives, and blurs the distinction between innocence and deviance.

This psychological mind twister puts Rod Serling on the Prairies and places the audience in a moral quagmire.

Complaining about government inefficiencies has always been a popular national pastime. Doing something about it, however, is another story. George F. Walker clicked into this mindset when he wrote **Rumors of Our Death**, which premiered at the Factory Theatre in 1980 but hasn't been picked up by the professional circuit since.

Originally a musical, Walker's play is a tongue-in-cheek account of a fictional country where the King's clued-out policies are fodder for his complacent subjects. Producer and director Maureen Oxley, who knows a topical subject when she sees one, campaigned to make the play a drama. Once she secured the rights to do so, actors were soon knocking on her door, and she managed to attract the likes of Earl Pastko, among others. If Pastko's performance is anything like his Lucifer in *Highway 61*, this show will be a treat.

THE DEVILTRY CONTINUES

There are other productions that would seem to be interesting variations on our chosen themes, such as John P. Moore's **Wonderful Dancer**. After a successful collaboration with director Colin Taylor, he and Taylor are back with this allegory about the power of memory and the impact of that first pre-adolescent erotic experience.

And then there is this for relief — wouldn't life be fab if there was a pill to kill PMS? No questions asked, just pop it and shut up. Well, that basically what's discovered in the year 2043 in Company Without a Mandate's **The Guru Within**. This comedy with a kick takes a stab at the self-help movement, telling women to ditch all that repression shit and validate their anger.

Athol Fugard's **Statements After an Arrest Under the Immorality Act** deals with an interracial relationship in South Africa where such unions are outlawed. Actor and founder of Naked Mask Productions Thabiti Dawe draws on the tradition of his homeland, Trinidad — where interracial and intercultural harmony is much more the case than in the rest of the world — with hopes of giving this compelling drama an interesting touch.

Oh, there's also Screaming Despot Productions' **The House of the Sleeping Monkeys**, an allegorical black comedy dealing with paranoia; **Short Sharp Mamet**, a presentation of rarely performed fast 'n' loud mini-Mamets; **Cinderella/Kamasutra**, in which Nadia Ross has a turn in the tale of Cinderella as told by one of her ugly, less popular sisters; and **La Donna Immobile/The Immoveable Woman**, a community production that grabs Italian machismo culture by the balls.

If you're exhausted now, just wait until after you've seen a few of these shows. The combined energy of all these companies is sure to steam up both theatres.

So stop thinking decadence is a brand of ice cream, and indulge. — ELIZABETH MITCHELL



Sabina Fella and Michael Achtman combine forces in Nazi/Jew/Queer & Lebensborn

SIMONE JONES

***

Some of the Tarragon's SummerWorks shows (at both the Main Space and the Extra Space) share a timely take on Toronto's ethnic and political climate. Bigotry seems to be one thing on many artists' minds.

"I was shocked when I came to Toronto because there are a lot of very subtle jokes about Jews all the time," says Sabina Fella, author of **Lebensborn**. "It's not like 'JugensRat!' (Jewrat) or anything, but it's there. When I hear that sort of thing my hair stands on end."

About a year ago, Fella and friend Michael Achtman discovered that they were independently writing pieces protesting neo-Nazism. Achtman's **Nazi/Jew/Queer** and Fella's *Lebensborn* evolved into a combined production for the festival.

The show is controversial: Achtman plays a Jew who denies his Jewishness ("I'm not Jewish" is his first line). He also sympathetically portrays a Nazi whose convictions are so powerful that they appear seductive, providing a possible insight into the popularity of this brutal and insane philosophy.

Fella plays a 'Lebensborn girl,' one of the young women selected by Hitler to be inseminated by Aryan soldiers. The fact that Fella is herself seven months pregnant adds an unexpected poignancy to her role and a surprising touch of comedy.

"It's a cabaret-style piece," says Fella in her accented English. "After my character sleeps with the SS guy there's a really funny song and dance number called 'I've Got Something in the Tummy for the Fuhrer'."

PRIDE AND PERSECUTION

Czech novelist Jaromir Novak take a more sombre look at European politics and the restriction of freedom. Novak was famous in Czechoslovakia for two books — *The End* and *The Ravages of Time* — which were circulated through the underground photocopy network. These books landed him in prison for two years, and upon his release in 1988, he fled to Canada.

Novak's **The Gray Zone** — produced by Open Mind Productions and directed by Todd Vercoe — relates his escape and exile. "The story is about family, and about the dangers of losing our freedoms in speech, communication and thought," says Vercoe.

Novak escaped, but old women of the 17th century had nowhere to run when they were persecuted by pious townsfolk. The worst thing, says Alma Foco, author of **Rosemary and Thyme**, is that these women were powerful healers, not evil spell-casters. She should know. In writing this story of witch hunting, Alma used a real witch as a consultant.

"Tamara has been wonderful," she says of her resident witch. "She let me use her

CONTINUED ON PAGE 30

Fringe no movable feast but snack pack for senses

ON THE FRINGE



Theatre

Geoff Chapman

Early fringe buzz suggested the double bill of Sto Union's Cinderella *Kama Sutra* and Michael McMurtry's creation *Constantine Gavrilovich* would fascinate.

The first, written by Diane Cave and Nadia Ross, is a curious retelling of the fairytale from the perspective of the Ugly (Step)Sisters. The cast of five (Ross bemusedly-gawky and alien in the title role) looked like refugees from a twisted *Nutcracker*: There was verse, stylized speech and movement, an esthetic prince and a commentator in a sort of abstract theatrical painting-by-numbers. The uglies (Peter Lynch and Earl Pastko) were amusing but for me, the meaning was inscrutable. It's the second part of *The Alistair Trilogy*, due at Theatre Passe Muraille in January — perhaps all will be clear then.

THEATRE SCENES

By JON KAPLAN

SUMMER WORKOUT

A festival such as SummerWorks provides a good chance for new writers to offer their works and for other pieces to receive workshop presentations. The brief **Cinderella Kamasutra**, for instance, whets the appetite for **Sto Union**'s full production of the script, with two related pieces, in the new year.

throughout the show there is a feeling of expectation that is never fully realized, mainly because *Cinderella/Kamasutra* is the second of a trilogy of works starting with ***Breeding Drum Majors*** and concluding with ***Vengeance***. As a result of having caught the journey in middle passage, the action seems somewhat disjointed. The complete presentation of ***the alistair trilogy***, scheduled for Theatre Passe Muraille next Jan. 12-Feb. 6, will likely be more satisfying. — **S.R.B.**

ON STAGE

Unhappy ever after

CINDERELLA/ KAMASUTRA

Starring Peter Lynch and Earl Pastko. Written and directed by Diane Cave and Nadia Ross. Theatre Centre, 1032 Queen St. W. Thursday, Aug. 26, 6:3 p.m.; and Saturday, Aug. 28, 3:30 p.m.

So Union's ***Cinderella/Kamasutra***, brainchild of writers/directors Diane Ca Nadia Ross, Michael McMurty and Lou Cohen, deconstructs Disney's Cinderella st retelling it from the ugly sisters' viewpoint. No rosy cheeks or cuddly, singing rodents here. The show's creators mine the story's darker origins, flushing out its dark humor and sexuality.

Peter Lynch and Earl Pastko play the two lascivious stepsisters. Ross is Cinderella, with Mark Shields and Geoff Weibe rounding out the grounded cast as Alistair and the prince respectively.

The mood of the piece is appropriately brooding. The effect is that of the dark before the storm. But in the short run — the piece runs just under half an hour — this plays out as a disadvantage.



Cinderella/Kamasutra



More SummerWorks madness, Page 23

umalia of sex, violence and religious dementia.

Melodrama and slapstick are the major ingredients here, which is why the play's sophomoric tone tends to irritate rather than amuse. Our two starving losers spend far too much time wrestling with a big couch, and not enough time being funny.

The inadvertent entanglement — literally — of next-door neighbor and Girl Guide cookie saleswoman Donna (Linda Barnett) is even less convincing. Somehow we're supposed to believe that after being whacked on the head, tied up, and robbed of her cookies, Donna falls madly in love with Ben — and then breathlessly agrees to a naughty shower.

Well, OK, I'll try to suspend my disbelief. There's lots of good stuff in this play. But Huisman's writing doesn't help the cause. He needs to tighten his script and director Tracey Hway needs to cool down the melodrama to put some fat on *Fast*. — **M.H.**

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Directing
Political Choices / Political Restraints

Script: *Mary Medusa*
by Shawna Dempsey and Lorri Millan

Deconstructing Dames:
Women and a "New Poetics"

Finally, people were starting to write about women and the work we were doing in the art form and in the industry. Trisha Lamie did a lot of good in that regard, in her own quiet way.

by Trisha Lamie

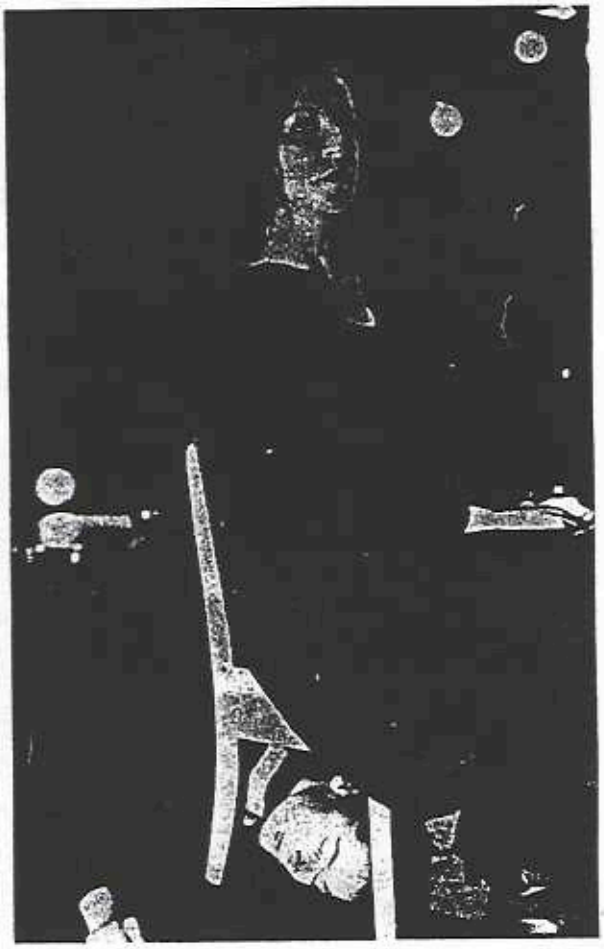
In the eternal darkness, the crow, unable to find any food, longed for light and the earth was illuminated. (Simone Weil)

Darkness, Light, Hunger, Desire, Waiting are all strongly linked for me in Art, and in creation. The Bible says "In the beginning was the word and the word was made flesh". There is a strong link between the text or the word and the body or the visual, between textuality and sexuality.

When I was five, I wanted to be a saint when I grew up. When I was ten, I lowered my standards: I wanted to be a nun. When I was fifteen, I wanted to be an "actress". This progression might seem a little odd. Perhaps you had to grow up a Catholic in Cape Breton, as I did, to get the connection. For me, there is a very strong link.

When I grew up, I did become an "actress", and worked for many years in regional theatre. At the same time, I continued my involvement with performance art that began with my studies at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, where I studied with artists such as Joseph Beuys, Vito Acconci, Daniel Buren, and Laurie Anderson. During those years, I would travel to New York to see my "heroes": The Wooster Group, Mabou Mines, Richard Foreman, and especially Robert Wilson. One day I had a terrifying and exhilarating thought. I could dream no longer about working with Robert Wilson. I had to, in fact, *become* "Robert Wilson". In other words, I identified the need to create, and take responsibility for, my own work.

As a woman actor I realized that I had problems with not having a voice, problems with vision and visuality. I didn't want to be the "object of the male gaze" (Mulvey 14–37); I wanted to become the "Director as Beholder, Ironic Recuperator of the Maternal Gaze" (Cole 5). It was a transforma-



Candid Stammer's performance piece *But Love is Too Simple to Save Us* oriented the power struggles of genderized behaviour in terms of spatial relations. Here the two female characters work out the complex relations in an effective performative "shorthand" in which a character demonstrates a subordinate position by sleeping with her head under the chair. Seen here Trisha Lamie in the chair and Denise Duric as the sleeper.
PHOTO: JIM ALLODI

tion from objectivity to subjectivity. It was empowering.

I began the process by working and studying with a number of experimental companies that have been instrumental in the realization of my own vision and aesthetic: in Montreal, video company Agent Orange, and in New York, Squat Theatre, Ping Chong, and Butoh artist Natsu Nakajima.

I emphasize the need to mis-read and re-read the works in the most minimal way in order that a new text and a new meaning can emerge.

We were trying to break with the way stories were told. We didn't like the roles we had in them.

From 1989 to 1991, I attended the MFA Directing program in theatre at York University. While there, two of my own pieces of work were produced. The first, *Agnus Dei*, was a deconstruction of Strindberg's *Dream Play*, and the second, *Full of Flame and Crying*, was inspired by and a "response to" Brecht's *Caucasian Chalk Circle*. Presently, I am working as a director, performer, and teacher and am developing my latest piece of work tentatively called *The Rhetoric of Blindness*.

My work reflects both my personal and theoretical influences. Quite simply, the greatest influences on my work have been my mother, my father and my aunt Amelia. I would describe my work as spiritual autobiography, Rorschacks of my own experience. Autobiography draws on the past, and I am intrigued by the past and its effect on the present. I find it particularly useful when dealing with the classic text as catalyst. A Butoh artist once wrote:

> To live in today's world is to be surrounded by misleading symbols. There is dark uneasiness everywhere. But we shake hands with the souls of those who have gone before us, and they give us strength. (Hoffman 74)

In my own creations over the past number of years, I have abandoned the aesthetics of traditional narrative structures and method acting in favour of deconstructed texts, montage, various music and sound scapes, dance, stylized movement, and actors' personal experience and personal narratives. My overall focus is on the visual image as an alternative mode of expression, to explore a spiritual and sexual iconography that I find more inherently "female", and to create a balance and integration between the feminine / masculine principle.

Upon reflection, a critical analysis of *Full of Flame and Crying* reveals that it attempted to explore what Sue Ellen Case calls "a new poetics ... contemporary feminist theoretical practice in the deconstruction of traditional systems of repre-



Creating her own theatre during her MFA in directing at York University, Trisha Lamie mounted *Full of Flame and Crying*, her own "response" to Brecht's *Caucasian Chalk Circle*. In the preshow two video cameras trained at the auditorium made the audience's presence as performative as the dance by the two children (Hanna Singer and Luna Iljic).
PHOTO: TRACY GLAS

sentation, methods of production, and culturally encoded perceptions of gender" (Case: Methuen, 115).

I am highly influenced by the theories of Derrida, Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, and Hélène Cixous. In *Feminism and Theatre*, Sue Ellen Case advocates within a new poetics the development of a new female form or aesthetic:

> Luce Irigaray describes creating a form constantly in the process of weaving itself ... embracing words and yet casting them off, "a concern not with clarity but what is 'touched upon'." Cixous calls it "working the in-between". It can be elliptical rather than illustrative, fragmentary rather than whole, ambiguous rather than clear, and interrupted rather than complete ... the feminine form seems to be without a sense of formal closure – in fact, it operates as an anti-closure. (Case: Macmillan, 129)

Paradoxically, despite my fascination with and respect for theory, my process as a director in developing the work is instinctual as opposed to analytical, informed rather than dominated by theory.

For the purpose of this article, I am using *Full of Flame and Crying* as an example of my working process. In the development of this piece, the resulting "performance text" (i.e., what is presented to the audience: text, actors, lighting, music / sound, stage design, etc. and the meaning the viewer derives from these) became quite ephemeral, and the loose knit of images and text yielded many meanings. This is very much a reflection of the process. The work in a sense has a life of its own. The process involves fragmentation because the images come independently, they don't follow in sequence. The rehearsal process is not linear, it is fragmented. There is no formal construction, the work just gradually becomes woven together. The work for me is very personal. To quote one of my favourite quotes: "Since I know nothing, I will do whatever occurs to me" (Yvonne Rainer). In an artistic process you have to travel blind. You don't know where you're going. The work reveals itself to you.

Working with an assortment of fragments and images from traditional texts, I emphasize the need to mis-read and re-read the works in the most minimal way in order that a new text and a new meaning can emerge. This process begins and ends with what I like to call the point of unknowing, or the point of mystery. I enter the text only to the point where instinct and analysis intersect, and stopping at this point prevents me from further intellectual analysis of the script. At this point, I abandon the literary text (Brecht's *Caucasian Chalk Circle*) as an entity, and my work becomes only inspired by it and a response to it.

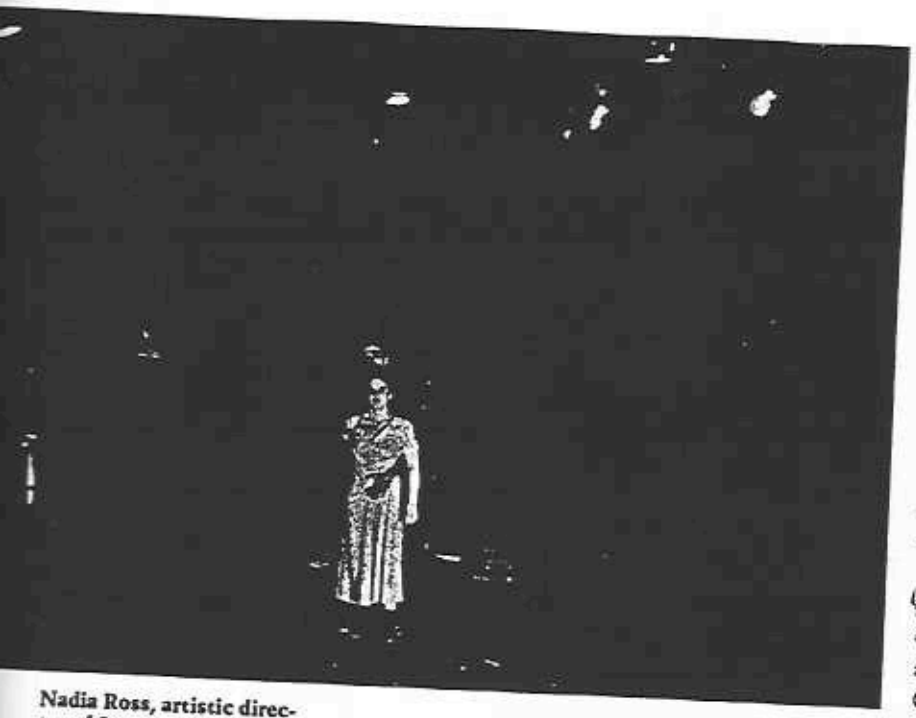
With the help of JoAnne Fishburn and Ruthe Whiston and the fourth year acting ensemble, we began to find meaning in and through the text in our own way, exploring the themes in *Chalk Circle* of mother and child, images of war, the circle and cyclical structures and redemption. I brought in other texts that aided in exploring some of these ideas, which included texts of T.S. Eliot, the Bible, Jenny Holzer, Heiner Muller's *Hamletmachine* and text and images from Muller's *Explosion of a Memory*, some text I wrote myself, and childhood personal prayers and autobiographical material from the actors. The prayers and Jenny Holzer text were spoken by several of the actors in their various ethnic or religious languages: Yugoslavian, Spanish, Yiddish, Hebrew, as well as English. This elicited a powerful emotional response from both the actors and the audience. The text remaining from *Chalk Circle* consisted of two monologues, several fragmented lines, and the title of the piece: *Full of Flame and Crying*.

I like actors to write material about who they are. In *Full of Flame*, I initiated this with questions about their mothers, their first memories, what it is like for them to be a man or a woman, and what were their dreams. I discourage artifice or contrived fiction: I want to know the truth from them. The actors' texts make a vital contribution to the work, but I use it only with their permission. This autobiographical text appeared on video monitors which lined the side walls of the performance space, and added a documentary dimension, contrasting and interrupting the highly stylized and formally constructed body of the stage performance.

This formal stylization was achieved through a multiplicity of elements honed from this particular group of actors' training and gifts. As a group, they were particularly strong singers, stage fighters, and dancers, and had specialized training in Suzuki technique. For example, I like to use

These are key trends that were becoming visible

In many ways, the work is impossible to reproduce because it is site-specific and actor-specific. **Full of Flame** ***reflected the lives of everyone who worked on it ... as they were at that particular time and place.***



Nadia Ross, artistic director of Sto Union, presented *Breeding Drum Majors* in the Rhubarb Festival in 1993. This work is a deconstruction of Büchner's *Woyzeck* and is part of her larger work *Alistair*. Influenced by images culled from both theatre and dance the work creates striking multi-media tableaux that reposition the verbal text in performance. Seen here Nadia Ross as Marie, held by Geoff Wiebe as the Drum Major, with Ed Fielding as the Village Idiot and Earl Pasko as Woyzeck observing in the background.
PHOTO: DIANE CAVE

ballroom dancing as an element in a lot of my work, and in this particular instance I chose the tango, which became a metaphor for the battle of the sexes, incorporating stage combat choreographed predominantly by the actors. The show also featured several motets and madrigals sung in multiple harmonies, juxtaposed against the contemporary recordings of Madonna and Dead Can Dance.

The approach to acting abandoned the traditional Stanislavskian method, in favour of choreographed sequences of movement and language based on counting, which I jokingly refer to as "acting by numbers", or a Derridean "absence of presence". The highly stylized work involved trance-like states of being, and yet the actors were only themselves, and had immediate presence. The Stanislavski method forces actors to work from a belief in a character which often, especially for women, aligns them with unhealthy or negative culturally encoded gender roles. I use an emphasized stylization because it interrupts ideas of reality and allows for Brechtian alienation, preventing the actors from focusing on presenting psychological realism. This interruption and alienation effect is reinforced by the video sequences. Through exaggeration and distortion, culturally encoded gender roles were questioned and challenged.

The movement, text, and music were woven together with, or smashed up against, set, prop and lighting elements such as The Last Supper table, a statue of the Virgin Mary, a chaise-longe/psychiatrist's couch, a children's painted plastic ball representing the world, a wind-up baby Jesus doll, a baptismal font, and a twenty-foot-high metal sliding door which opened with light and smoke to represent birth and death.

I am quite fond of presenting works that are ambivalent and diverse rather than unified in their nature. This helps me with the problem of closure and allows the audience to actively read the work in any way they choose. I didn't want it to make "perfect sense". I was juxtaposing salient images from the creation myth with other elements of the *mise en scène*. This re-working of the creation myth is a recurring motif in many of my pieces. The myth of genesis has permeated our idea of who we are as women. We haven't been able to escape it. The continuing resonance of this myth contributes to my sense of ambivalence as a woman living in this culture today.

Along with myself, I would like to present the voice of four other women theatre artists who are developing or forging new paths in the creation of a new poetics: Nadia Ross, Diane Cave, Eileen O'Toole, and Wendy Agnew.

Nadia Ross is Artistic Director of Sto Union and is in the process of developing *Alistair*, a play in three pieces: *Breeding Drum Majors* (a deconstruction of Büchner's *Woyzeck*, presented at the 1993 Buddies in Bad Times Rhubarb Festival), *Cinderella / Kamasutra*, and *Vengeance*. Nadia describes her own work as follows:

> My work is imagistic, self-referential, and is persistently searching for a kind of "language" which can define and present a contemporary experience. I can name Pina Bausch's *Tanz Theater Wuppertal* and *DV8* from London, England as strong influences. My productions include a variety of media, use movement in non-naturalistic ways, remove language as the focal point of the piece, but still insist on clarity of "character" and "story".

Diane Cave, a freelance director and writer, has to date produced such shows as *Victorian Peep Show: A Clown Spiel* (Fringe of Toronto 1990), in which Nadia Ross is one of two clowns/lunatics planning to put on a peep show. A battle ensues when both clowns want to play Queen Victoria of England. However, one of the clowns insists that the other must play a pig farmer from Brighton. The play concerns itself with class structure and censorship. Her best known piece, *The Break Down*, draws heavily on her experience in nursing, and was produced in Berlin and in Toronto. Both productions were directed by Herbert Olschuk, a German director and actor with the Berliner Ensemble. She is currently directing a workshop of *Body and Soul*, a new work by Governer General Award winner John Mighton. Diane muses:

The first play I directed was *Hamletmachine*. I started on non-linear, non-narrative "synthetic fragments". I believed that if you wanted to do naturalism, you could do it better on TV or film. Although I'm still pursuing non-naturalistic theatre with Nadia, I've realized that I've begun to appreciate the story. It's just *how* you tell that story. But I don't want to do it TV style. Theatre has to be elevated. It's a false medium. It's not TV.



Challenging audience perception of language and representation, Diane Cave's *The Breakdown* was performed in German and English. Cave, seen here as Ursula-Marie Gottert, plays not only with the idea of a linear story but also with the creation of an opportunity for spectators to become conscious of their own role in narrating the performance.
PHOTO: DIANE CAVE

Eileen O'Toole is a solo performer (a.k.a. The Ukelele Lady), best known for her street and nightclub performances in Toronto. Most recently, she has been performing *Lester's Girlfriend* (soon to be published by Gutter Press) at various venues around town (the Theatre Centre and Buddies in Bad Times). It is a work she has been writing and performing in bars for three years. The R&D at the Theatre Centre in January 1993 gave her the opportunity to pull the whole thing together and expand it. She transformed the theatre into the "As You Like It Tavern" with a live rock and roll band, the Satanatras, the Collective Unconscious Collective dancers, one pregnant waitress, a tattooed bagpiper named Curly, and an assortment of audience plants including bootleggers and a fourteen-year-old drug dealer. In an interview Eileen O'Toole described her own evolutionary process:

> I only started to write three years ago, before that I used other peoples' material: beat poet stuff, 20th century, the 50s down to 20s and 30s, and Don Marquis stuff. It's funny, I do other peoples' work from memory but I read my own stuff. The impetus to write was nothing earth shaking, it was simply a case of getting to the club one night and realizing I didn't have any new shit memorized. And I had this strange urge to write the line "I was out with my boyfriend Lester" and I just vomited three stories right there on teeny tiny pieces of paper. And I got up and people fell down. The same thing happened the next week. I have such a great love for playing the streets and playing nightclubs. The theatre types neglect the places where people actually go and they're trying to create something sacred that already is sacred. They're playing for the forest when the tree is standing right in front of them, and the tree becomes negligible because it's so obvious. They're brushing over this already congregation of people. Wherever people gather

There were a number of small independent companies, like this one, existing at the same time. It was a movement to shake up 'good' theatre - the well made play. It was anti-bourgeois and rooted in punk and grunge. It was DIY culture. We were working in basements and dive bars. The straight kids hated us.



Pow Pow Unbound led by Wendy Agnew, Darren O'Donnell, and Steven Seabrook sets out to confront audiences with performances that debunk the "conspiracy of 'good theatre'", by developing an interrogative vocabulary of the arts. Seen here from the production of *Stage*, from L to R, front row Darren O'Donnell, Bruno Miguel, Stephan Seabrook, Andrea Freeman, Amy Tatian; back row, Richard Ferram, Clinton Walker, Glen Christie.
PHOTO: WENDY AGNEW

for pleasure there's a vitality that's ready to be tapped into. All I'm doing is tapping into it. The best of performers make it work so that it's memorable and entertaining.

Wendy Agnew is a performer, writer and co-artistic director of Pow Pow Unbound, with Darren O'Donnell and Steven Seabrook. Pow Pow gained notoriety this year with *A Horrible Night of a Man of War* (a wild deconstruction of *Richard III*), and the antics of the mock ritual *Stage*.

Wendy Agnew's poetry was prominently featured in Pow Pow Unbound's *Horrible Night of a Man of War*: "The brain of God is located in Mary Magdalene's cunt." She says that in her work in the group she's dealing with the child trying to explode patriarchal myths, so we become either co-opted into the society or else we do what we can to empower ourselves by reworking those myths through humour.

Wendy Agnew desires "to create a theatre of abstraction and illusion, and to develop a vocabulary which includes visual art, dance, sound and ritual. To create a theatre that is chaste, to create a dialogue which allows for the debunking of the conspiracy of 'good theatre.' To give fit to the misfit. To involve ourselves in acts that have nothing to do with theatre". Wendy has just completed a children's book.

Although I've only given a small sampling the number of individuals and companies p ducing innovative theatrical work in Toronto, i necessary to at least mention a number of wom in particular who are contributing to the e lution of a "new poetics". If time and space h permitted I would have wanted to include t works of Victoria Ward, Diane Flacks, the ARTiE company, JoAnne Fishburn, Alisa Palm and Marion de Vries, to name but a few. ■

Note

I would like to thank JoAnne Fishburn and Marion Vries for their invaluable contribution to my own work as well as to the writing of this article.

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The Alistair Trilogy

Daring drama a jolt to the system

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More bounce to the ounce

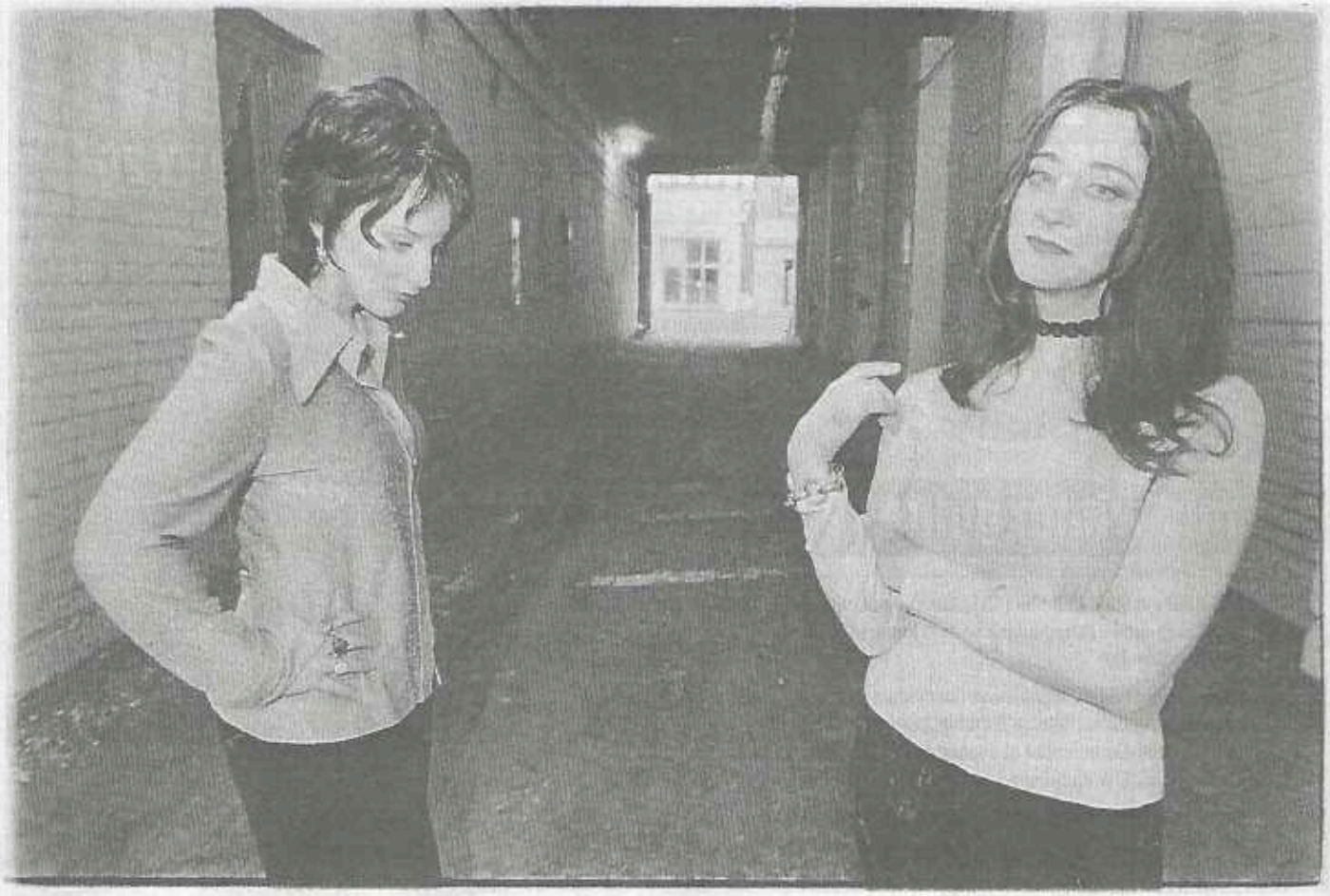
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Writer/directors Diane Cave (left) and Nadia Ross

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Nadia Ross (left) and Diane Cave

DEBRA FRIEDMAN

Alistair is my Father's first name. I did this show to try and understand the stories that men tell about women. Don't get me wrong, I loved my Dad and he was an amazing talent. But he was a man from that era, an era where women were second to men.

Ultimately, violence is the tool used to squash any living thing. I thought if I could deconstruct murder scenes in famous plays, maybe I could in there find the patterns that continue to squash the living amongst us.

NADIA ROSS DIANE CAVE

Duo's compelling mythic collage lets imagination run riot

By JILL LAWLESS

At a time when the arts are under fire, Diane Cave and Nadia Ross are guerrillas fighting for the imagination's liberation.

The two artistic directors of STO Union create innovative theatre with few ground rules but with a firm basis — they reject the comforting certainty of history, of ideology, of stories themselves.

Sitting across from them as they talk about forging a new aesthetic and rewriting the rules by which theatre is made is a heartening experience — it is evidence that someone still cares, that passionate skeptics still flourish. Yet the seriousness of their purpose is mixed with a nothing-is-sacred delight in bursting the limits society imposes on creativity.

The duo's new piece, The Alistair Trilogy, boldly puts history and mythology through the blender, dicing up three famous tales to give voice to their hitherto silent — or silenced — female characters.

Primal foundation

Using deconstructionist cut-and-paste, the piece strips the tales of their mythic quality, laying bare their primal foundation — in the words of the play's prologue, "Sex, murder, sex, violence and more sex." In the process, the work makes startling imaginative juxtapositions, like recreating Electra as Manson Family member Squeaky Fromme.

Though this is the pair's first effort at co-writing and co-directing, Cave and Ross have been collaborating since they met at University College's drama program at the University of Toronto a decade ago, a partnership cemented by a common stint apprenticing as directors with Germany's famed Berliner Ensemble and Vienna's Burgtheater.

Since then, each has developed into a versatile artist. Cave is known as both the imaginative director of pieces like Deborah Porter's No More Medea and as a playwright — her drama The Breakdown received productions in Germany and Toronto.

Ross is a hypnotic performer, frequently associated with the work of deft local deconstructionists Daniel MacIvor and Daniel Brooks (Jump, The Lorca Play). As a director she worked on Death Waits' absurdist family musical When There Was No Money Left In The World.

"Our idea is to take existing texts and reinterpret them," says Ross, consuming tea and cigarettes at an Annex restaurant. "We want to see what else is in there, what happens when you explode the storyline. It's very important for us to question linear narrative, because we feel linear narrative closes off a lot of possibilities.

"Left, right and centre, the imagination is the one thing that is being attacked. Our imaginations are getting less and less vibrant."

"The German playwright Heiner Müller says that industrial societies immobilize fantasy," says Cave over pasta and decaf. "So the political task of art today is to mobilize the imagination. That's what we're trying to do."

The three parts of The Alistair Trilogy — Vengeance, Breeding Drum Majors and This Is Electra Speaking — set a triad of stories loose from their moorings. Clytemnestra's murder of Agamemnon and the tale of avenging Electra from Aeschylus' Oresteia, plus the climactic murder of prostitute Marie by her male companion from Georg Büchner's seminal modern drama Woyzeck, burst into a fragmentary collage of images.

The workshop versions of the pieces, presented over the last year, were full of startling images — raw and violent, detached and ironic, or disarmingly funny — and a jolting rhythm that left audiences searching for meaning.

Reassuring beginning

By freeing us from the lulling familiarity of a story — with its reassuring beginning, middle and end — Cave and Ross want to set our imaginations free.

"Brecht used to announce what a scene would be before it happened," explains Ross. "Since the audience knew what was going to happen, they wouldn't be lulled by narrative. They wouldn't get sucked into a story and not have to think or work or imagine.

"We don't say what is going to happen in a scene, but we start a scene out, so you have expectations about what is going to happen next. And then we break it. So the audience has to work to figure out their own story, or whether they want a story, or how their preconceived notions about how things should work are censoring their imaginations and their freedom."

"Our narrative is like a dream — and dreams are where the subconscious is most free."
Diane Cave

"There is a kind of dream narrative in our work," adds Cave. "It's not realistic — we don't have a narrative and yet we do, we don't have characters and yet we do have characters. You have to make a kind of sense and at the same time there's no sense. It's like a dream — and dreams are where the subconscious is most free."

The three parts of the trilogy are linked by the figure of Alistair, a would-be historian trying to piece together history from the charred remains of the library at Alexandria. History, the play stresses, is a skewed and incomplete picture — a theme underlined by the fact that the stories in the trilogy centre on women but have traditionally been told by men.

"Alistair is the confused narrator of history," says Cave. "He tries to put his finger on things, but he doesn't quite get it. By looking at women through the ages, the piece takes a political and social look at the way in which history has been changed or subverted. History is an interpretation, like literature is an interpretation."

"We are looking at history as a narrative," notes Ross. "It's not anything true — it's just another story. And when history becomes a narrative, all the things you count on to define the way you live become fiction. Then nothing is sacred."

Though both Cave and Ross continue to work in more traditionally structured environments — Cave will direct and Ross will perform in John Mighton's new play Body And Soul at Passe Muraille this spring — this project allows them to run riot with their desire to experiment and redefine.

Collaborating between themselves and with the actors, they're trying to find a new way of working.

"There is a lot of chance in our work," says Ross, "a lot of walking down the street and seeing something in a window, buying it and bringing it into rehearsal. Often it becomes integral to the play. The last scene of the Woyzeck piece was found in the 99-cent tape department at Honest Ed's.

"We work by trying to see what is going on around us, taking things organically rather than imposing our view. That's a hard thing to do. But the rigidity of the usual process of doing a play works against the development of a new aesthetic. People are used to doing things a certain way, and that doesn't allow us to reinvent things.

"People might ask why we want to reinvent the wheel. Well, by reinventing the wheel we might find out that the wheel causes certain problems. Or we might discover something else.

"I think we have to find new ways to communicate to an audience. We have to relearn what the medium of theatre is really about, and we have to find a way to use the medium to communicate directly to people. I think stories do not communicate. What does? I'm looking at images right now — but I'll soon find out whether that works."

The pair's training in Germany, just as the Berlin Wall was crumbling in the late 80s, gives them a distinct perspective on the Canadian theatre scene and a desire to forge a probing Canadian voice.

"We obviously have a lot of German influence, beginning with Pia Kleber, who directed the UC Drama Program," reflects Cave.

"And spending time in Europe, you get a different view of what North America is. It's still a colony in many ways, and you see that history when you get over there.

Young voice

"At the same time, we are really trying to find our own voice. In Canada we have a kind of freedom. We're the young people.

"The Germans are so burdened by their history — but then, at least they have something to react against. When we lived in East Berlin, just before the Wall came down, it was easy to see who the enemy was. It was this oppressive government that didn't let you travel and had the Stasi watching you.

"But in our society — and this is a problem for many of the eastern writers who moved to the West — you don't know where the attack is coming from, where the oppression is coming from. We may have fewer boundaries here, but we also have nothing to react against."

"I think we do have boundaries, but they're so pervasive, so spread out and thinly coated that they're invisible," says Ross. "We have to find them in order to react against them.

"But then," she continues, cheerfully embracing a contradiction, "asking for an enemy is asking for a signifier, asking for a father or a god, someone to oppose. That's what has crashed for us. The signifiers aren't there.

"In Vengeance there is a signifier. With Woyzeck we explore the fact that the signifier is fading. By the time we get to Electra there is no signifier. We are free to do what we want.

"But what do we do with that freedom?" ●

theatre when + where

THE ALISTAIR TRILOGY, written and directed by Diane Cave and Nadia Ross, with Ross, Peter Lynch, Earl Pastko, Mark Shields and Geoff Wiebe. Presented by STO Union and Theatre Passe Muraille at Passe Muraille Backspace (16 Ryerson). Previews Tuesday (January 11), opens Wednesday, January 12, and runs to February 6, Tuesday-Saturday at 8 pm, Sunday 2 pm. $7.50-$15. Sunday pwyc. 363-2416.

selected resume

- 1994 **The Alistair Trilogy** (writers/directors, actor Ross)
- 1992 **When There Was No Money Left In The World** (director Ross); **The Lorca Play** (actor Ross , Dora award); **Jump** (actor Ross)
- 1991 **The Breakdown** (playwright Cave); **Topless Upside Down** (playwright/director Cave)
- 1990 **The Breakdown** (German-language production, Theatre unterm Dach, Berlin); **Victorian Peepshow** (playwright/director Cave, actor Ross); **No More Medea** (director Cave)

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Impressive troika decries patriarchy

The Alistair Trilogy 363-2416

Written and directed by Diane Cave and Nadia Ross. Set by Paul Mezei and Sandra Wheeler. Lighting by Bonnie Beecher. Sound by Brad Hilliker. A STO Union production to Feb. 6 at Theatre Passe Muraille Backspace, 16 Ryerson Ave.

BY VIT WAGNER
THEATRE CRITIC

Given that stage collaborators Diane Cave and Nadia Ross are on the record as eschewing linear narrative on the grounds that it "closes off a lot of possibilities," it's curious how comfortable they seem to be expressing certitudes on a thematic level.

It's true that STO Union's *The Alistair Trilogy* — written and directed by Cave and Ross and featuring Ross as principal performer — doesn't offer much in way of a "story."

This stylishly realized 70-minute production, newly opened at Theatre Passe Muraille Backspace, is a purposely disjointed triptych that strives to deconstruct material from other theatrical sources: The opening piece, "Vengeance," derives from Aeschylus's *The Oresteia*; the second, "Breeding Drum Majors," from Georg Buchner's *Woyzeck*; the third, "This Is Electra Speaking," from Heiner Muller's *Hamletmachine*.

The material is presented in a way that, according to its creators, is intended to liberate the audience's imagination. And certainly there's plenty of room for interpretation, when it comes to determining what in fact is going on. Less ambiguous, however, is the way in which the pieces decry the destructive, victimizing ills of the patriarchy.

While this view might be valid, it is pursued with a doctrinal certainty that invites no debate. It might be argued that a linear storyline underscored by a less obvious subtext would leave more for the audience to work out.

In any case, it also must be said that Cave and Ross show a collective aptitude for theatrical expression that is consistently impressive, sometimes breathtakingly so. The most memorable of several eye-popping dramatizations is an imaginative enactment of the murder of Iphigenia (Ross) by her father, Agamemnon (Earl Pastko), in which the release of the young woman's soul is expressed by having plastic wrap pulled slowly up from inside her dress.



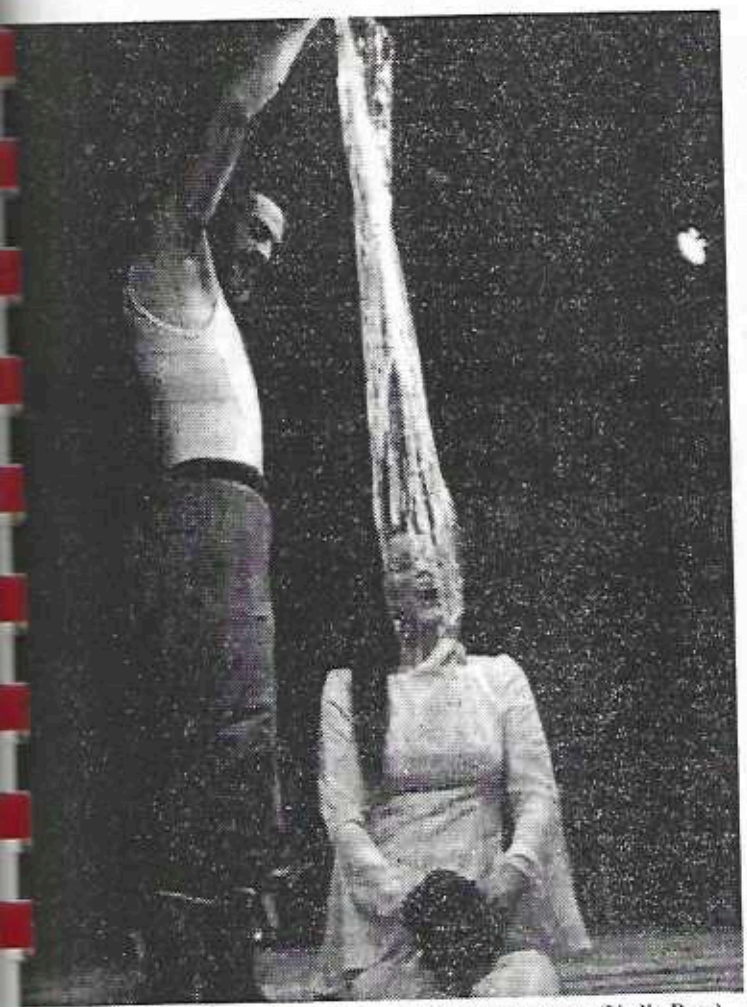
SOUL RELEASED: Iphigenia (Nadia Ross) is murdered by her father, Agamemnon (Earl Pastko).

Ross, with a pasty, half-dead look, is a striking presence throughout, as she portrays a haunting gallery of female victims, including Marie, the murdered prostitute in *Woyzeck*. Supporting cast members Pastko, Peter Lynch, Geoff Wiebe and Mark Shields (as the narrator figure, Alistair) are fluidly integrated.

At least as much credit is due to designers Paul Mezei and Sandra Wheeler (set), Bonnie Beecher (lighting) and Brad Hilliker (sound) for imbuing the work with an appropriately dream-like atmosphere.

THEATRE REVIEW / *Arresting images and bold performances mould taut series of set-pieces*

Putting a female spin on male mayhem



Agamemnon (Earl Pastko) draws the soul from Clytemnestra (Nadia Ross) in The Alistair Trilogy.

BY H. J. KIRCHHOFF
Theatre Critic

IF you like a "well made play" — with a strong story-line consisting of a beginning, a middle and an end — STO Union's *The Alistair Trilogy* may not be your cup of theatrical-tea.

But if you like a well done play — with bold, colourful performances, arresting imagery and pulse-quickening action — this is just what you're looking for.

Writer-directors Diane Cave and Nadia Ross have deconstructed the works of other playwrights — Aeschylus's *Oresteia*, Georg Büchner's *Woyzeck* and Heinar Müller's *Hamletmachine* (a take on Sophocles' *Electra*) — and used the pieces to construct their own taut, gripping and often amusing series of scenes and set-pieces.

These are old, almost primal stories of rapine, revenge and murder — men's stories — retold from the points of view of the women characters. Even if the "plots" blur and fold in on themselves, the themes and symbols are clear throughout. A sympathetic, disciplined and hard-working cast, led by the commanding presence of Nadia Ross (who plays all the female characters), doesn't miss a beat for the entire hour-plus of the production.

The staging, on a multitilted, rough-hewn-plank set designed by Paul Mezei and Sandra Wheeler, is ingenious and resourceful, and sometimes scary. (Ross, especially, seems recklessly to court physical injury.) The characters, observed and commented on by the Alistair of the title (Mark Shields), pose above and to the sides, march slowly around the fringes and crawl up from underneath; an office chair on rails proves to be a surprisingly flexible prop. (The voice-over segments were recorded by former University of Toronto drama head Colin Visser in a plummy Oxbridge accent that pulses with irony.)

The language, drawing on great theatrical works and poems (by Anne Hébert and Bertolt Brecht, among others), is sharply imagistic, alive with blood, vengeance and anger. But it is the individual scenes — Apollo (Geoff Wiebe) dickering with Cassandra over the price of a kiss; Agamemnon (Earl Pastko) slaughtering Clytemnestra, drawing her soul from her body with a flourish; Büchner's prostitute Marie, murdered over and over and over again by Woyzeck; Electra/Ophelia's revenge, spiced by a speech from mass-murderer Charles Manson (Peter Lynch) — that stay in the mind long after the play has ended.

At the Theatre Passe Muraille Backspace until Feb. 6.

THE ALISTAIR TRILOGY

DIRECTED AND WRITTEN BY DIANE CAVE and NADIA ROSS

Starring Nadia Ross, Mark Shields, Earl Pastko

Rating: ★★★

Dry Lips Oughta Move To Kapuskasing.

"Acting is my living, writing is my passion," says Cardinal, sipping a cool one in

Like the time Cardinal was at a loss as to how to continue the play and was open to inspiration.

20-29 at the Poor Alex, 296 Brunswick Ave. Says **Miles Cohen**, one of the Spikes, "We are a pro-

creator **Karen Hines** and **Ed Sahely**'s *Love On The Rocks*, **Jason Sherman**'s *Merchant Of*

Letter when it was aired over Deutsch radio. Tickets $10. Info at 506-0683. — **C.W.**

ONSTAGE

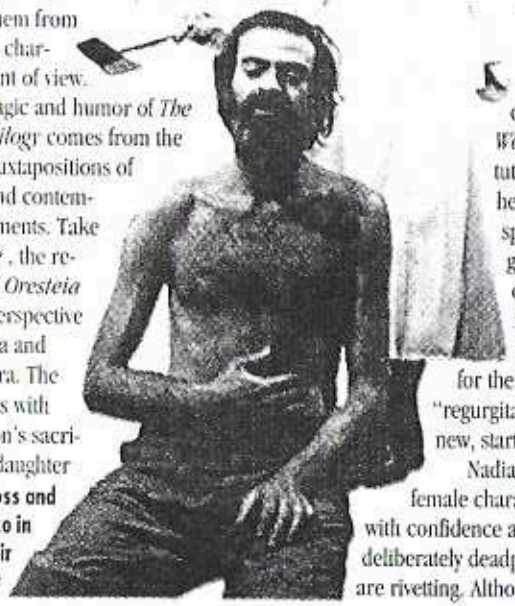
Hurling up the classics

THE ALISTAIR TRILOGY

Starring Peter Lynch, Earl Pastko, Nadia Ross, Mark Shields and Geoff Wiebe. Written and directed by Diane Cave and Nadia Ross in collaboration with the company. The Theatre Passe Muraille Backspace, 16 Ryerson Ave. To Feb. 6. $12, 363-2416.

STO Union's *The Alistair Trilogy* uses an eclectic mix of music, imaginative choreography and historical texts to create a mesmerizing theatrical experience. The trilogy revisits Georg Buchner's *Woyzeck*, Aeschylus' *Oresteia* and Heiner Muller's *Hamletmachine*, retelling them from the female characters' point of view.

The magic and humor of *The Alistair Trilogy* comes from the evocative juxtapositions of classical and contemporary elements. Take *Vengeance*, the reworking of *Oresteia* from the perspective of Iphigenia and Clytemnestra. The story begins with Agamemnon's sacrifice of his daughter Iphigenia. In a manner both funny and horrific, a pasty-faced Iphigenia clutches a baby doll and sings a country and western ditty called "Every Girl Needs A Daddy Like Agamemnon." In a different scene, existential angst about having to make life choices is interrupted by another cowboy tune.



Nadia Ross and Earl Pastko in The Alistair Trilogy

The staging is rich with surreal details — props pop out of the actors' mouths, birds fall from the rafters. In a scene derived from *Woyzeck*, the prostitute Marie, after giving head to a soldier, spews a mouthful of green peas. The frequent spitting-up images seem to serve as metaphors for the act of retelling — "regurgitating" the texts in new, startling forms.

Nadia Ross plays all the female characters in the piece with confidence and control — her deliberately deadpan performances are rivetting. Although neatly packaged in deconstructionist discourse, *The Alistair Trilogy* transcends academic exercise — a breathtaking experience not to be missed. — **LAURA KOSTERSKI**

HEAD OF SNAKES

Starring Debra Kirshenbaum, Caitriona Murphy, Ross Manson and Jim Jones. Written and directed by Moynan King. Buddies in Bad Times Theatre, 142 George St. To Jan 23. $10-12 (PWYC Sunday matinee), 863-9455.

Suppose the devil is a woman. Does that mean our fall from grace was the result of a lovers' tiff?

In *Head Of Snakes*, Lucifer ("Lucy" for short), forever barred from paradise, makes a living by running a group home for juvenile delinquents. She also appears on a *Shirley*-style show to present her side of Creation.

Head Of Snakes cleverly rolls together two popular TV formats: the sitcom based on lovably troubled youths, and the bare-all-pain talk show. Complete with musical segues (by a live house band), it's a play that will never be on TV — it's too good.

As with any true sitcom, the plot is slender. Marguerite, the new girl in the home, is potentially violent and has a God fixation. On learning Lucy is really Lucifer, she decides to save everyone by performing an exorcism, although the other delinquents aren't into it.

Intercut with this is the talk show. To the sympathetic head-bobbing of the host, Lucy rambles, trying to determine where things went wrong.

From the weary benevolence of Debra Kirshenbaum's Lucy-fer to the menacing schizophrenia of God, er, Gord (Ross Manson), the cast is excellent. Caitriona Murphy, as Marguerite, is often hilarious, and Jim Jones, as Paul, reveals the hidden inadequacies masked by his Beavis and Butt-head manner.

Moynan King's writing is incisive and witty. Shows like hers deserve to have better production values. As this is a Buddies' seed show, the only way to ensure another, richer run is to go see this show now. It won't disappoint you. — **ROBERT ARMSTRONG**

LE PAYS DANS LE GORGE

Starring Marthe Turgeon, Diana LeBlanc and Lénie Scoffié. Written by Simon Fortin. Directed by Gilbert Lepage. Théâtre Français de Toronto at Canadian Stage, 26 Berkeley St. To Jan. 23. $17-24, 534-6604.

Stepping into the sepia-toned world of *Le Pays Dans Le Gorge* is a bit like entering a Victorian parlor. First impressions are of a formal stiffness, but once you are comfortably settled into a favorite chair, cigar and sherry in hand, the room takes on a solid, enjoyable feel.

Le Pays Dans Le Gorge (which will have its English-language premiere at the Tarragon this spring) is the story of the legendary Quebecoise soprano Emma Albani (née Lajeunesse), whose 1872 Covent Garden debut took London by storm. L'Albani quickly became a diva, eventually enjoying private audiences with Victoria, the queen of queens. The play is equally the story of Cornelia, Albani's sister and accompanist, whose needs always come second to those of the singer. Yet it is Cornelia, we are led to believe, who may have been the happier of the two.

Playwright Simon Fortin skilfully handles the story's historical sweep (L'Albani's 40-year career, then slide into poverty and relative obscurity) through a series of seamless flashbacks, although this does place unreasonable demands on the actors to age gracefully, and occasionally gives the story the feel of an overstuffed suitcase. But in Emma and Cornelia, Fortin has written perfect foils.

Played superbly by Théâtre Français artistic director Diana LeBlanc, Cornelia is earthbound and wise, in contrast with Emma and her myopic and romantic pursuit of artistry's holy grail. Missing from Marthe Turgeon's Emma is the suggestion of a vicious streak — a take-no-prisoners, career-at-all-costs attitude that would explain the second act plot twist.

Thoroughly delightful is Lénie Scoffié's Queen Victoria. She is a deserving scene-stealer and Fortin has handed her some drop-dead funny lines. As Eva, the ingenue soprano who comes to meet her idol Emma, Nathalie Morais has a strong voice — a blessing as she is required to sing nine short pieces throughout the play.

In all, a production as well-made as fine English china: elegant but hardy and good enough for an empire. — **CHRISTOPHER WINSOR**

洋溢矛盾的性格及野心
名人特德瑞納傳記面世

（綜約十七日英聯社電）講到流行比納的短短的一生，實在適中的。

五十五歲的瑞納三世（Robert Edward Turner, III），是TBS有線新聞網（TNT）卡通網絡（Cartoon Network）的創始人，現時兼任「勝利者」（Victory）的東主，在遊艇賽事之前，還是有史以來最著名的快艇賽駛人。

瑞納曾結婚三次，最近一次是與電影明星珍芳達共聯愛巢中心的個性和重寫紀錄的欲望，正如布比所說的，「如果你離開他的隊伍，他能把有你在內的錄影帶也拆掉。」

是拿事機名，他具有典型狂戀症患者的個性，靠服用鋰控制自己的情緒。

布比出生於肯塔基，是耶魯大學畢業生，投資銀行家，過去曾當（新聞週刊）的採訪記者。他寫了本描繪瑞納的生平，曾訪問了差不多三百人，有些事情使他大感意外。

比布說：「很我大吃一驚的是，竟然沒有人說他一句壞話。」

「有些人不喜歡他，有些人很愛他，有些人對他褒不關心，但沒有一人說：『這家伙是個蛋蛋』。」

比布說：「同時，瑞納的個性就以一個迷宮：一分鐘內出現不下十種才幹，他的作風是不斷地迎接挑戰和對抗阻礙，他可以一下子就準備無畏地對人作出評估，一摸手就爽快地確定聘用對方。」

最近一次是與電影明星珍芳達共聯愛巢中心的個性和重寫紀錄的欲望，正如布比所說的，「如果你離開他的隊伍，他能把有你在內的錄影帶也拆掉。」

來來數月，瑞納將與超瑞電影經典有典型狂戀症患者的個性，靠服用鋰控制自己的情緒。

布比還相信瑞納日內將轉入一個廣播電台。

「目前他是位極有權威的人物，他望基，是耶魯大學畢業生，投資銀行家及我們生活的世界，亦有不可估量的影響力。」



特德瑞納與珍芳達

《阿利斯泰爾三部曲》
(The Alistair Trilogy)

——即所謂「以金髮利益爲依歸」的諷會或父權式司法制度。

女性在故事裏可以扮演主角，但通常故事是她們永沒可能寫出來的。長久以來，女性都苦於不能道出自己的故事，解決的方法只有模仿男人寫出以對白爲主的寫作技術。（阿利斯泰爾三部曲）裏的女性，既被征服而附屬於男性；三個故事由阿利斯泰爾交織在一塊，敘述過程，歷史成了各別人講述的故事，成了故事。

《Vengeance》

改編自艾爾賈·詹姆（Arcadia）的（狼與狗）（The Cheated）取題於（Lysistrata）的（Breeding Drum Major）

這是「現代戲劇之父」巴克納（George Buchner）的（Woyzeck）的另一算告版本，說的是一名被女孩好友慣札克殺死的故事。

（This is Electra Speaking）

改編自馬勒（Heiner Muller）的（哈姆雷特機器）（Hamletmachine）。描述的是馬父現仇的伊萊克特拉（Elektra）是個街頭少女，在北德的父權式司法制度裏得不到公正的對待，其有用的武器是她的身體。

（阿利斯泰爾三部曲）由巴克納（George Buchner）的（Woyzeck）的另一算告版本，說的是一名被女孩好友慣札克殺死的故事。

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改編自馬勒（Heiner Muller）的（哈姆雷特機器）（Hamletmachine）。描述的是馬父現仇的伊萊克特拉（Elektra）是個街頭少女，在北德的父權式司法制度裏得不到公正的對待，其有用的武器是她的身體。

梅艷芳二月十二日在拉斯維加斯演唱

繼去年十月二十三日在多倫多共慶新春，同時同行的還有大衛冰場（Varsity）的一場歌手倫永亮。票價分一百二十元、八十元、五十元及三十元四種。訂票請電一八零零·六四六·六四六八。

艷芳將到美國拉斯維加斯的Grand Garden）演出一場，與歌迷共慶新春。同時同行的還有大衛冰場（Varsity）的一場歌手倫永亮。票價分一百二十元、八十元、五十元及三十元四種。訂票請電一八零零·六四六·六四六八。

AMAZING ALISTAIR

THE ALISTAIR TRILOGY, written and directed by Diane Cave and Nadia Ross, with Ross, Peter Lynch, Earl Pastko, Mark Shields and Geoff Wiebe. Presented by STO Union and Theatre Passe Muraille at Passe Muraille Backspace (16 Ryerson). To February 6, Tuesday-Saturday at 8 pm, Sunday 2 pm. $7.50-$15, Sunday pwyc. 363-2416. Rating: **NNNN**

An adaptation, of sorts, of Aeschylus' Oresteia, Georg Büchner's Woyzeck and Heiner Müller's Hamletmachine, **The Alistair Trilogy** approaches its sources with voracious delight — it doesn't so much rework them as chew them up and spit them out. Shifting the focus from male narrator to female subject, the hour-long piece fractures story and character to the point where they almost disappear.

Some viewers will see this as maddeningly willful obscurity, but others will be energized by the challenge to their sense of narrative.

Creators/directors **Diane Cave** and **Nadia Ross** wield inventive, occasionally dazzling, theatrical imagination to produce a show full of visual surprises and sense-tingling images, including Agamemnon's unforgettable murder of Iphegenia.

Combining tight orchestration with a spontaneous and playful — critics may say unfinished — quality, the piece ranges confidently from horror and anger to irony and absurdity, aided by **Brad Hilliker**'s evocative sound score. Ross's subtle, spectral performance in the female roles is well supported by the rest of the cast, especially **Earl Pastko** as the murderous men and **Mark Shields** as the bemused narrator Alistair.

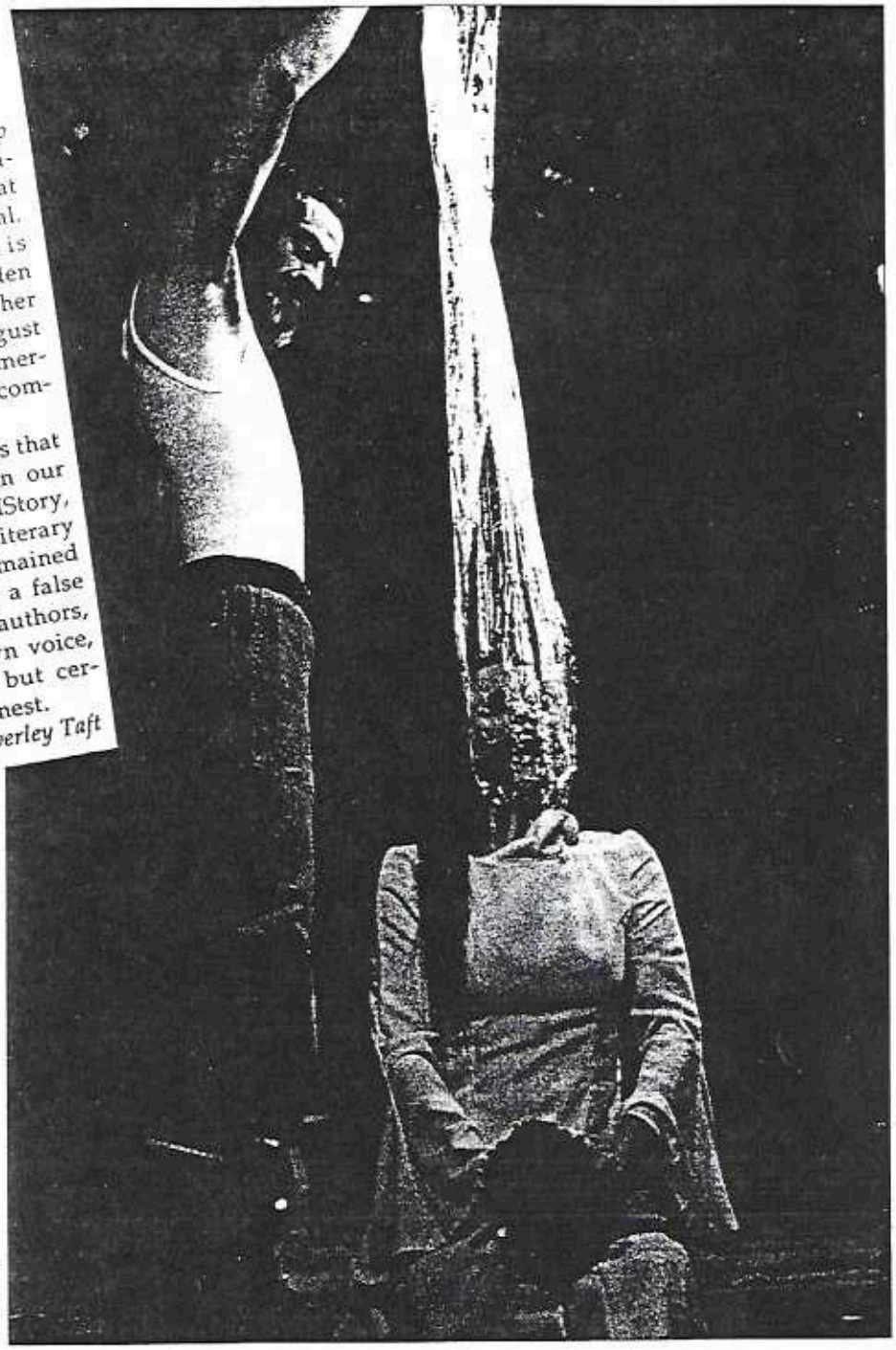
– JL

Nav Magazine

hands or hair or headdress sticking up from a foggy and moatlike area separating audience and stage — are what make this production truly theatrical. Another unforgettable moment is Ross putting her face into a wooden drawer full of water — and at another time, vomiting her horror and disgust down into the moat. Ross is mesmerizing and the entire cast is fully committed to this gothic work.

With all three pieces, the key is that these women (whose stature in our mythology and therefore our HIStory, is greater than that of mere literary figures) had, in most cases, remained silent victims, or were given a false voice by presumptuous male authors, have now been given their own voice, not necessarily definitive, but certainly more accurate and honest.

- *Beverley Taft*



JIM ALLODI

***Earl Pastko and Nadia Ross give an intense startling performance in* The Alistair Trilogy.**

Toronto

THE ALISTAIR TRILOGY

Produced by STO Union and Theatre Passe Muraille, at Theatre Passe Muraille, Jan 11-Feb 6. Text & Direction: Diane Cave & Nadia Ross. Sets: Paul Mezei & Sandra Wheeler. Lights: Bonnie Beecher. Costumes: Deborah Hiscock. Stg mgmt: Ruthe Whiston. Cast: Peter Lynch, Earl Pastko, Nadia Ross, Mark Shields, Colin Visser, Geoff Wiebe

Billed as a comedy (not without some irony), *Vengeance, Breeding Drum Majors* and *This is Electra Speaking* function together as very black humour, flowing almost seamlessly one into the next. The truth in these retellings of HIStorical works is very dark and the delivery follows suit. Mezei and Wheeler's startling wooden design — at eye level with the too-close-for-comfort spectators (TPM's Backspace is usually a pit with the audience looking down at the stage) forces the audience to confront the action and the actors.

Having both worked with the Berliner ensemble, Ross and Cave bring the Brechtian notion of alienation to this work, particularly evident in section two, a re-examination of Buchner's *Woyzeck*. Here, Marie, the murdered prostitute, is able to explore her feelings prior to the murder, a scene repeated so that actors and audience can also explore this event and its implications for male-female relations.

Vengeance looks at the murderous union of Clytemnestra and Agamemnon. The third in the trilogy, *Electra*, is based on Heiner Muller's *Hamletmachine*.

Each story is told with an intensity of language (including a speech by Charles Manson) and an intensity of performance that is startling. The repetition of certain simple but haunting images — such as a chair rolling back and forth on tracks on the stage, coming dangerously close to the edge and the audience each time, and Ross'

Metrotones Steel Orchestra, Ecuadorian musicians Son de Luz and others, with proceeds going to the Canadian Fund for World Development, at 8 pm. $25. Minkler Auditorium, Seneca College, 1750 Finch E. 491-5870.

JUKKA-PEKKA SARASTE — The Ontario Fed of Symphony Orchestras holds a fundraising concert featuring the Toronto Symphony Orchestra performing under conductor Jukka Pekka Saraste, with piano soloist Alexei Lubimov, at 8 pm. $75. Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe. 366-8834.

KIWANIS AWARDS NIGHT — The East York Symphony Orchestra performs Rimsky-Korsakov's Scheherazade, featuring the winner of the Kiwanis flute competition, at 8 pm; preceded by a talk at 7:30 pm. $15, stu $13. Ontario Science Centre auditorium, 770 Don Mills. 467-7142.

SUNDAY FEBRUARY 20

EVENTS

TONY BROWNING — Canadian Amateur Musicians presents a cantata reading with Tony Browning, from 2:15 to 4 pm. $4, mbrs free. St Anne's Anglican Church, 270 Gladstone. To register call 588-1207.

PAPER FUN FOR KIDS — The Japanese Paper Place presents a workshop for kids on using paper to make masks, collages, mobiles and jewelry, from 2 to 4 pm. $25. The Far Fifty, 26 Noble. To register call 369-0089.

STORYTELLING FOR CHILDREN — Montgomery's Inn presents traditional stories for kids ages four and up, at 2 pm. $3, child $2. 4709 Dundas W. 394-8113.

TOURS AT MCMICHAEL — The McMichael Canadian Art Collection features tours of the Group of Seven exhibit at 1 pm and of the special exhibitions and First Nations art at 3 pm. $6, stu/srs $3, fam $13, under 5 free. 10365 Islington, Kleinburg. 893-1121.

MUSIC

MILLENIUM — The CBC Broadcast Centre presents a concert of music for the 21st century, with violinist Scott St. John, pianist Rena Sharon, french horn player Jamie Somerville and oboeist Suzanne Lemieux, at 2 pm. $15, stu/srs $10. Glenn Gould Studio, 250 Front W. 205-5555.

2 + 1 + 2 — The Art Gallery of Ontario presents a concert of period Italian renaissance choral music, at 2 pm. Free w/ gallery admission ($7.50, stu/srs $4, fam $15, child free). 317 Dundas W. 977-0414.

SUM OF THE PARTS — Arraymusic performs a concert of contemporary solos, trios and parts of the whole, at 8 pm. $15, stu/srs $9. Du Maurier Theatre Centre, 231 Queen's Quay W. 973-4000.

JACKSON BROWNE — Massey Hall presents Jackson Browne in concert at 8 pm. $35.50. 178 Victoria. 870-8000.

CARNIVAL OF THE ANIMALS — The Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra presents a multidisciplinary performance of the classic tale Carnival Of The Animals, with guests the Hamilton Ballet Youth Ensemble, at 2 pm. $12, child $8. Hamilton Place, 50 Main W. Hamilton. (905) 526-6555.



Theatre Columbus co-artistic director Leah Cherniak resurrects her Victorian character in Still.

Nightingale calls out to youngsters

By JON KAPLAN

theatre

SIBLINGS STRATEGIZE — In **Pure Motives**, Rose Cullis' psychological mystery, two sisters share a dream in which they are accomplices in the murder of one of their fiances. **Ellen Ray Hennessy** and **Astrid Van Wieren** star in the production directed by **Paulina Gillis**. It previews February 2, opens **February 3** and runs to February 20, **Theatre Centre**, 1032 Queen West.

MUSICAL FAIRY TALE — **Sally Han** directs **The Nightingale**, Vancouver playwright **John Lazarus**' musical adaptation of the **Hans Christian Andersen** story about a glorious-voiced nightingale rejected by the Chinese emperor for a jeweled replica. The play for young audiences deals with the beauty of nature, the importance of music and the role of the artist. Previews February 5, opens **February 9** and runs to March 20. **Young People's Theatre**, 165 Front East.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT — In **Little Sister**, five teens are caught up in media images, leading to eating and emotional disorders that stem from trying to look and act "normal." **Joan MacLeod**'s play, directed by **JoAnn McIntyre**, is produced by **Theatre Direct Canada**. Previews February 7, opens **February 8** and runs to February 26. **Canadian Stage**, 26 Berkeley.

BIRTHDAY PRESENCE — As part of **Theatre Columbus**' 10th anniversary season, artistic directors **Leah Cherniak** and **Martha Ross** revive their two eccentric Victorian characters, Nada and Nishtoo, in **Still**, a piece that celebrates a decade-long artistic relationship. Previews March 11, opens **March 15** and runs to April 3. **Theatre Passe Muraille Backspace**, 16 Ryerson.

FUTURE SHOCK — In a futuristic society where physical contact and intimacy are replaced by virtual reality equipment, characters try to find their own brand of happiness. **John Mighton**'s new play, **Body And Soul**, directed by **Diane Cave**, features **Maggie Huculak, Randy Hughson, Ron Gabriel, Nadia Ross** and **Jane Spidell**. Presented by **Crow's Theatre** and **Theatre Passe Muraille**, the show opens **March 4** and runs to March 27. **Theatre Passe Muraille Mainspace**, 16 Ryerson.

LYIN' EYES — Writer/designer/performer **Ken Garnhum**'s **Pants On Fire** — his first two-hander — offers a look at the natural history of lying and a glimpse at love in today's world. **Andrew Massingham** appears with Garnhum in a **Duncan McIntosh**-directed production which should captivate visually as well as dramatically. The piece previews March 17, opens **March 22** and runs to April 17. Tarragon Extra Space, 16 Ryerson.

This is NOT a STO Union production. I was a performer in it. John Mighton's plays are in some ways eerily twenty five years ahead of their time. I do wonder how the texts hold up after all of these years because the ideas were certainly ahead of us all.

SUBSTANTIVE EDITING — The Freelance Editors' Association holds a two part workshop on substantive editing, today and Mar 5 from 10 am to 1 pm. $105, mbrs $90. Victoria College, University of Toronto, 73 Queen's Park. To register call 691-4954.

WATER-BASED SILKSCREEN — Open Studio presents a workshop on advanced water-based silkscreening techniques, today from 10 am to 5 pm and tomorrow from 1 to 5 pm. $100, mbrs $75. 520 King W. To register call 368-8238.

ASIAN REVISION — Asian ReVision, a symposium for youth of Asian background, featuring workshops on sexuality, mixed race issues, media misrepresentation and history, takes place from 9 am to 6 pm. Free. 519 Church Community Centre. 363-4582.

TRAPUNTO AND SHADOW QUILTING WORKSHOP — The Etobicoke Quilter's Guild presents a workshop on trapunto and shadow quilting, from 9 am to 3:30 pm. $30, mbrs $25. Neilson Park Creative Centre, 56 Neilson. 279-9448.

GREAT HORNED OWL — The Kortright Centre holds a talk on the great horned owl today at 6:30 and 9 pm. Free w/ site admission ($4, srs/child $2.25). Pine Valley S of Major Mackenzie, Kleinburg. 661-6600.

TOURS AT MCMICHAEL — The McMichael Canadian Art Collection holds a tour of its Group of [illegible] at 1 pm, and [illegible]ons art, today [illegible]am $13, un[illegible]893-1211.

[illegible] Concert Se[illegible]Couperin and [illegible]struments, at [illegible]ld $5. East [illegible]928-1257.

[illegible]ilton Philhar[illegible]ce of Romeo [illegible] Ballet Thea[illegible] [illegible] and tomorrow at 2 pm. $15, $32, stu/srs $13-$29. Hamilton Place, 50 Main W, Hamilton. (905) 526-6555.

SUNDAY FEBRUARY 27

EVENTS

PINK TRILLIUM AWARDS — The Trillium Monarchist Society pays tribute to athletic, artistic and business contributions to the gay and lesbian community with an awards ceremony, at 6 pm. $25. Betty Oliphant Theatre, 404 Jarvis. 960-9788.

FAMILY DANCE PARTY — Toronto Country Dancers presents an old-time dance for all ages featuring caller Bill Russell and fiddler Anne Lederman, from 3 to 4:30 pm. $2.50, under 4 $1. St George Church, 205 John. 531-3179.

CANADIANA — The Royal Ontario Museum presents family activities on the music, traditional dances and crafts of early Canadian settlers, from noon to 5 pm. Free w/ museum admission ($7, stu/srs $4, child $3.50, fam $15). 100 Queen's Pk. 586-5797.

• Continued on page 61

DEBRA FRIEDMAN

THE TORONTO STAR
ENTERTAINMENT
Monday, March 14, 1994 Page B3

Technology and human desires

Body And Soul 363-2416

Written by John Mighton. Directed by Diane Cave. Set and lighting by Steve Lucas. Costumes by Wendy White. To March 27 at Theatre Passe Muraille, 25 Ryerson Ave.

By Vit Wagner
THEATRE CRITIC

Playwright John Mighton has never been one to shy away from big ideas.

His first play, 1988's *Scientific Americans*, touched on nuclear physics, the bomb and first-strike capabilities. That was followed by *Possible Worlds*, which explored the existence of parallel realities, and *A Short History Of Night*, a historical drama that examined the relationship between religion, superstition and science.

Body And Soul, a new Mighton offering at Theatre Passe Muraille, is no less ambitious. It uses the potential for computer-generated sexual intercourse as the focal point for a wry, provocative and entertaining discussion of relationship between technology and human desires and needs.

The play is constructed from a series of parallel plots that eventually converge. The main story involves the emotionally estranged relationship between Henry (Randy Hughson) and his wife, Sally (Jane Spidell). Henry, humorously depicted by Hughson as a man with too much time on his hands and too little understanding of what he wants to do with it, volunteers for a program designed to test virtual reality as a means to sexual gratification.

His situation is mirrored by that of Sally's sister, Jane (Nadia Ross), a mortician who spurns the awkward advances of a colleague (Andrew Scorer), preferring to make it with a corpse. For this, she is sued by the mother of one such deceased (Maggie Huculak).

In this pointed juxtaposition between virtual sexuality and necrophilia, it is the latter that comes across seeming marginally less perverse. At least an actual human being, however insentient, is involved.



BODY AND SOUL: Nadia Ross (left) plays a mortician who makes it with a corpse, and Maggie Huculak is mother of said corpse in Theatre Passe Muraille play.

Throughout the play, Mighton asks the audience to consider the way that technology distorts our perception of what we need. On a basic level, our needs — food, shelter, etc. — don't change, however much the supposedly myriad possibilities created by technology might confuse the issue. When Jane repeatedly asks Henry why he can't be satisfied with what he already has, the question is meant to resonate on a larger level.

Mighton also takes on the dubious notion of technology as a democratizing force in society because of the options it avails. Henry, for instance, initially seems somewhat skeptical about this proposition, but later regurgitates it with the zeal of a prophet.

The play, in some small respects, could be better served by the production. The performances are consistently well-focused, with Hughson a particular standout. But director Diane Cave sometimes has problems getting the actors on and off the stage, which makes for awkward scene changes.

Once the performers are where they're supposed to be, however, the ideas and the humanity of the situation is effectively communicated.



Director John Mighton's simple stage direction: 'A celestial nymph enters and sits beside Henry,' is interpreted by Eryn Dace Trudell (above) as a Far East-flavoured, seductive and gracefully muscular dance.

THEATRE REVIEW / *No one in Body and Soul, now running at the Theatre Passe Muraille Mainspace, seems capable of a normal relationship. But then, one of the play's central issues is: what's normal?*

Letting the sparks fly

BY H. J. KIRCHHOFF
Theatre Critic
Toronto

BODY AND SOUL
WRITTEN BY JOHN MIGHTON
Directed by Diane Cave
Starring Randy Hughson, Nadia Ross and Jane Spidell
Rating: ★★★

THERE are two overlapping and inter-related stories in John Mighton's slightly surreal comedy-drama *Body and Soul*, one about necrophilia and another about "teledildonics" — virtual sex, with computer-generated images and sensations.

Sex and death, sex and not-life. Talk about dysfunction. Nobody in Mighton's play, running at the Theatre Passe Muraille Mainspace, seems capable of a normal relationship. But then, one of the play's obvious central issues is: what's normal?

Jane (Nadia Ross) is a mortician who loves her work not wisely, but too well; at least, until she is caught out by the mother (Maggie Huculak) of her most recent — freshest? — lover. Jane is sued and fired, and becomes a hot item on the TV talk-show circuit.

Jane's estranged sister, Sally (Jane Spidell), has problems of her own. Her husband, Henry (Randy Hughson), has lost interest in sex, except in the most abstract and philosophical terms. When Henry reads that an experiment in computerized sex is looking for test subjects, he volunteers. (Of course, when asked to choose the parameters of his computer sex partner, he pretty much describes his long-neglected wife.)

The 75-minute play skips along on the surfaces of its oddball relationships, but generates a lot of comic and thematic energy simply by placing them together and letting the sparks fly, especially when the two streams meet. Mighton's script is full of juicy scenes and lines, and the actors milk every nuance from his archly high-conversational language.

The three leads are superb, and Maggie Huculak and Andrew Scorer turn in nifty performances in several supporting roles each (although Scorer's shaved head lends all his characters a certain inevitable physical sameness). I especially liked Huculak's hyper-prurient talk-show host, interviewing Scorer as the author of a self-help book that tells people how to win arguments by making up facts. "It's helped a lot of people achieve their goals in a very short time," he tells her.

Director Diane Cave keeps the sexual bits modestly if dramatically stylized, and fleshes out the substantial skeleton of Mighton's script with a lot of clever stage business. Steve Lucas has provided a soaring, starkly beige, leaf-crowned set, which Lucas supplements with dramatic lighting and other surprise effects.

Mighton's simple stage direction, "A celestial nymph enters and sits beside Henry," is interpreted here as a Far East-flavoured, seductive and gracefully muscular dance, choreographed and performed by Eryn Dace Trudell in jungly lights behind a literal waterfall. (On another level, some clumsy scene changes are converted by lighting and exotic music into small, dark dances.)

By the end, Jane has been "cured" — sort of — by a stint in a psychiatric hospital, and the two sisters are together again. Sally and Henry are separated, but he has found a good relationship with another man, one who plays the woman when they have computer sex. "I'm still attracted to women," Henry tells Sally. "But he understands me."

Unfortunately, there's no particular resolution to these plummy themes and subplots. It's not often a new play seems too short, but *Body and Soul* cries out for a second act; as it stands now, the ending feels more like a lull than a conclusion.

At the Theatre Passe Muraille Mainspace until March 27.

BODY SKELETAL

BODY AND SOUL, by John Mighton, directed by Diane Cave, with Maggie Huculak, Randy Hughson, Nadia Ross, Andrew Scorer and Jane Spidell. Presented by Crow's Theatre and Theatre Passe Muraille at Passe Muraille Mainspace (16 Ryerson). To March 27, Tuesday-Saturday at 8:30 pm, Sunday 2:30 pm. $11-$22, Sunday pwyc. 363-2416. Rating: **NNN**

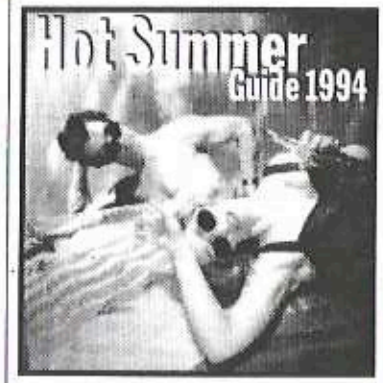
What, asks **John Mighton** in his new play, is the future of desire? In an era when it's possible to find satisfaction through the technology of virtual reality, what hope is there for human contact?

This is tantalizing territory, but **Body And Soul** is a skimpy drama. Scarcely an hour and a quarter long, it's an episodic collection of scenes sketching the paths of drifting-apart couple Sally (**Jane Spidell**) and Henry (**Randy Hughson**) and Sally's necrophiliac sister Jane (**Nadia Ross**).

One of Mighton's main themes is that communication is difficult and most of the time we fail — his characters talk without connecting and feel bewildered and hurt by their failure. Mighton conveys this groping sense with delicacy and skill, and his dialogue is often insightful, frequently funny and full of ideas.

But like **Steve Lucas**'s spare set, which tends to dwarf the human figures onstage, Mighton's ascetic script creates skeletal characters. This **Diane Cave**-directed production doesn't succeed in filling in the gaps. The actors have to work in shorthand, and though they are all skilled, they don't always manage a sense of character. – JL ●

Afronubians and Agbeokuta assess Africaribeat action



• Continued from page 84

SUNDAY, JULY 31

EVENTS

NATURAL TIE DYE — Todmorden Mills Heritage Museum and Arts Centre presents a workshop on tie dyeing using dye made from fruits and vegetables, for kids ages six to 12, from 1 to 3 pm. $5, mbrs $4. Pottery btwn Broadview and Bayview Ext. To register call 425-2250.

SCARBOROUGH ASTROS SOCCER — The Scarborough Astros play the Montreal Ramblers, at 6 pm. $10. Birchmount Stadium, Kingston Rd and Birchmount. 243-3333.

SUMMERWORKS PREVIEW — The Idler Pub presents preview readings of plays from the SummerWorks festival, at 8 pm. No cover. 255 Davenport. 962-0195.

CITADELS OF WEALTH — The Royal Ontario Museum presents a guided walk around downtown Toronto's historical and contemporary sights, at 2 pm (rain or shine). Free. Meet at Yonge and Front (look for the blue umbrella). 586-5514.

CHILDHOOD MEMORIES — Montgomery's Inn presents a tour of their current exhibition of children's treasures from 1840 to 1940, at 2 pm. $2.50, students $1.50, child $1, fam $6. 4709 Dundas W. 394-8113.

CARIBBEAN MUSIC FESTIVAL — Caribana 1994 presents the annual Caribbean Music Festival, featuring calypso, steel pan, reggae and dance bands, today and tomorrow at times tba. Price tba. Olympic Island, Toronto Islands (take ferry from foot of Bay). 925-5435.

FLAG FOOTBALL — The Cabbagetown Football League presents recreational/competitive flag football for gay-positive players of all levels, today and every Sun from 12:30 to 2:30 pm. Free.



DEBRA FRIEDMAN

Nadia Ross appears in Wagner's Das Rheingold, part of the operatic Ring Cycle, opening June 17 at the Theatre Centre.

BRUCE TRAIL DAY HIKES — Out & Out, an outdoor sports and recreation club for gays, lesbians and their friends, presents day hikes along various sections of the Bruce Trail, today and every Sun. Free. For details call 925-9872 ext 2800.

MUSIC

FESTIVAL DE LA MUSICA TROPICAL — The Forum presents a tropical music festival, at 6 pm. $19.50 reserved, lawns $15.95. Ontario Place, 955 Lakeshore W. 870-8000.

CABARET DIVAS — The city of North York presents a cabaret and musical theatre performance featuring cabaret divas, from 7:30 to 9 pm. Free. Mel Lastman Square, 5100 Yonge. 395-7350.

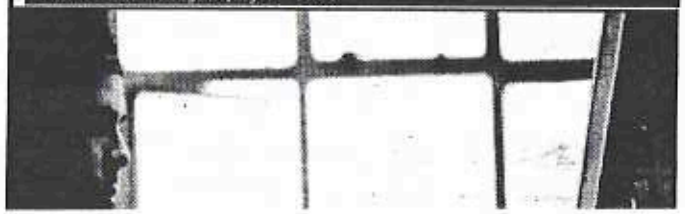
AFRICARIBEAT — Harbourfront Centre presents Africaribeat, featuring performances by Tarika (3:30 pm), Afronubians (8 pm) and Agbeokuta (9 pm) at Molson Place, and Tabarruk (9:30 pm) at the Water's Edge Cafe. Free. York Quay Centre, 235 Queen's Quay W. 973-3000.

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The Globe and Mail, Tuesday, June 21, 1994

REVIEW IN BRIEF

THEATRE / *Das Rheingold* Adapted by Stephen Seabrook and Robin Fulford. Directed by Stephen Seabrook. Starring Philip Shepherd, Nadia Ross, Kirsten Johnson, Veronika Hurnik and Mark Shields. At the Theatre Centre until July 2. Rating: ★★

Often confusing, but seldom boring

WAITING for the doors to open to *Das Rheingold*, the audience is crammed elbow-to-elbow in the Theatre Centre's tiny lobby, mostly muttering impatiently. Suddenly the lights go out and an amplified voice commands us to get to our seats, right now! The show will start in two minutes and we *must be seated!* We arrive successfully, and the show does begin in two minutes, which at last Friday's midnight opening was about 12 minutes late. Never mind.

This is Wagner as interpreted by Stephen Seabrook and Robin Fulford, co-creaters of a projected series of adaptations of the four operas making up Wagner's epic *Ring Cycle*. In this episode, the dwarf Alberich steals the Rhinegold and forges the all-powerful Ring, over which various gods, goddesses and giants intrigue, dicker and squabble. In Wagner, they sing all this, accompanied by a huge orchestra; in Seabrook-Fulford, they mostly declaim, loudly, accompanied by four or five guys with sound boards, drumsticks, tape decks and other gear, both electronic and musical.

If you're generally familiar with the story, you'll probably recognize it in this adaptation. If not, you may wonder what's going on out there. But if it's often confusing, it's seldom boring; as a director, Seabrook pretty much keeps the pedal to the floor from beginning to end, and the actors seem delighted to go over the top with him. The music (by Richard Feren and Justin C. Roddy) isn't the "onslaught" the press material promises, but it is frequent, mostly loud and often effective.

The cast is full of veteran actors and flamboyant personalities, and they deliver the turgid lines — much of the text, apparently, is taken directly from Wagner's libretto — with crisp timing, boundless energy and a ton of good humour, which is especially noteworthy, since most of the play is performed on a stage littered with broken glass. There are some eye-catching scenes and effects, but too much of the play is performed at a shout, which still doesn't help its comprehensibility much.

Finally, *Das Rheingold* doesn't offer much new about Wagner or his work. Punk Rhinemaidens and a Nazi (yawn) Wotan sure don't do it, and I still don't understand why Loge is in a dress or why the Rhinegold is a belly dancer.

H. J. KIRCHHOFF

This was NOT a STO Union production. I was a performer in it.

There were a bunch of us doing this kind of work, just messing with texts, taking classics and twisting them around or cutting them into pieces and rearraging them.

Yes, we were burning down the house, but it needed to go. Change was coming and it had to get out of the way to make room for other voices, other ways of telling stories, other structures.

theatre
REVIEWS

By JON KAPLAN
and JILL LAWLESS

KNEE SLAPPERS

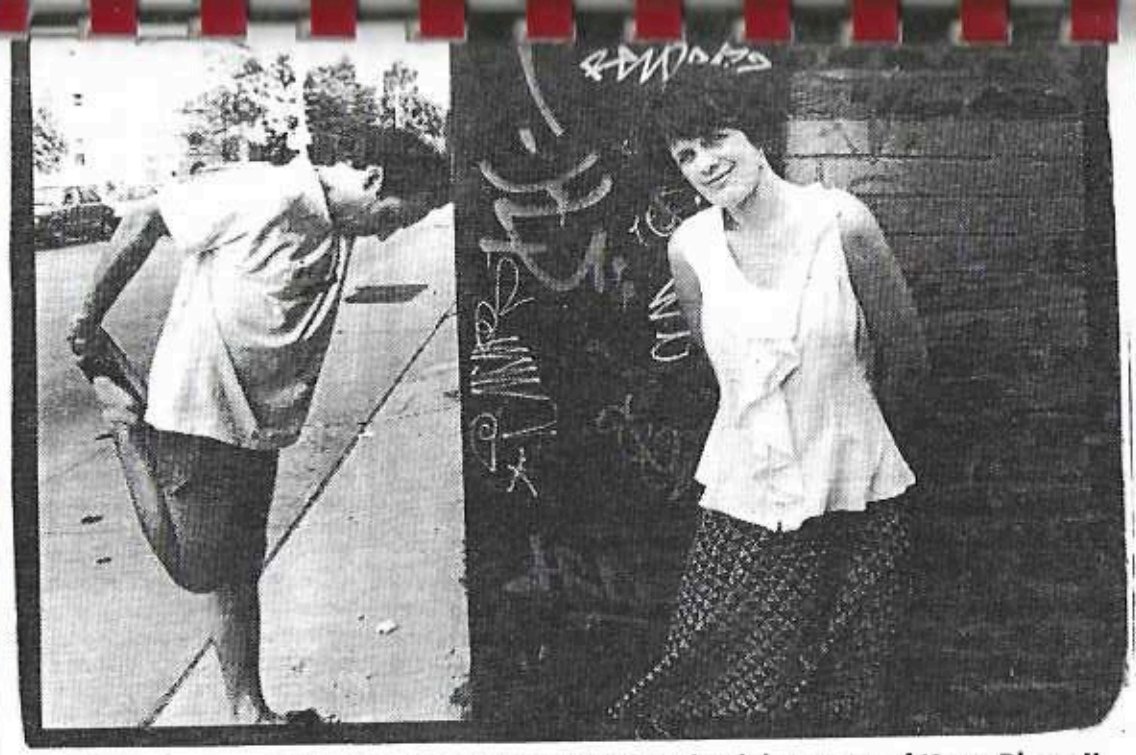
KNEE PLAYS II, created and performed by Leah Cherniak, Mark Christmann, Christopher Earle, Maggie Huculak, John Jarvis, Alisa Palmer, Martha Ross, Brooke Johnson, Oliver Dennis and Donald Adams, creative director Jennifer Brewin. Presented by Theatre Columbus at Theatre Passe Muraille Mainspace (16 Ryerson). To June 26, Thursday-Friday at 8:30 pm, Saturday 7 and 10 pm, Sunday 2:30 pm. $13-$15, Sunday pwyc. 363-2416. Rating: **NNNN**

Like its namesake joint, **Knee Plays** is strong and flexible but unreliable, apt to give out and twist unexpectedly.

Unpredictablity is the soul of this project, dreamed up by **Leah Cherniak** and **Martha Ross** of compelling clown company **Theatre Columbus**, which has a group of artists creating a series of 10-minute plays based on a single word.

The word is "leaving," and it lends many of the pieces an air of wistfulness, providing a tart undercurrent to the show's humour. The pieces are necessarily rough, and many play like germs of good comic ideas still in development — **Maggie Huculak**'s piece about a newly single woman tortured by a restaurant full of obscenely happy couples, **Christopher Earle**'s dark study of a group fleeing an unnamed threat, **John Jarvis**' piece about a miserable and unsuccessful clown.

Most fully rounded are the actual knee plays, performed with the curtain raised a couple feet off the stage. As so often happens, the change in perspective is eye-opening.



Donald Adams and Martha Ross help build the playful energy of Knee Plays II.

The project produces a special chemistry that transcends the uneven material. The talented ensemble — rounded out by **Mark Christmann, Brooke Johnson, Oliver Dennis, Alisa Palmer** and **Donald Adams** — has a playful energy that produces some lovely group comedy, particularly in Palmer's hilarious community-choir vignette and the train station scenes that book-end the show. – JL

HOARSE OPERA

DAS RHEINGOLD, by Stephen Seabrook and Robin Fulford, directed by Seabrook, with Philip Shepherd, Nadia Ross, Kirsten Johnson, Alex Poch-Goldin, Andrew Scorer, Veronika Hurnik and Mark Shields. Presented by Xcess of This and Platform 9 at the Theatre Centre (1032 Queen West). To July 2, Tuesday-Sunday at 9 pm, July 2 at midnight. $6-$12. Sunday pwyc. 538-0988. Rating: **NNN**

Stephen Seabrook's theatrical conjugation for **Das Rheingold** runs loud, louder, loudest. Streaming the **Wagner** opera through Nietzschean philosophy and DC Comics, he and co-writer **Robin Fulford** — collaborating with the company — create a world defined by the desire for, and abuse of, power.

Many of the visuals are striking, thanks to **Steve Lucas'** black and white set and expressionist lighting, **Rodney Brent**'s fantastical costumes and elements of Seabrook's direction.

Some of the performances are equally strong, notably **Philip Shepherd** and **Nadia Ross** as head god Wotan and his wife Fricka — here Mr. and Mrs. Fuehrer — **Alex Poch-Goldin**'s tricky Loge, first orthodox Jew and then little-girl drag, and **Andrew Scorer** as a high-stepping, multiple-personality giant.

But the work of some other actors is silly and surprisingly pedestrian. Much of the text is so unintelligible because of the volume that it's hard to sort out a narrative without some knowledge of the original opera, snippets of which are retained in **Richard Feren** and **Justin C. Roddy**'s sound design. There's a theatrical vision at work here, but much of its intent is as closely guarded as the sought-after Rheingold itself. – JK

FRONT PAGE CHALLENGE

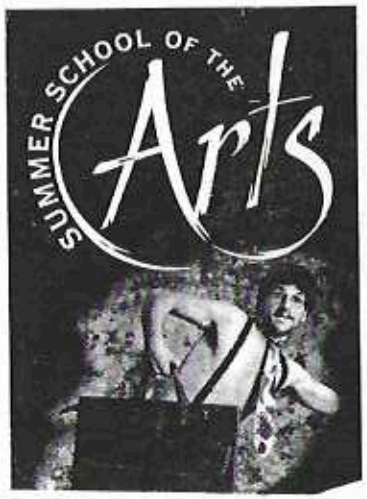
THE FRONT PAGE, by Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur, directed by Neil Munro, with Stuart Hughes, Michael Ball, Peter Millard, Mary Haney, Alison Woolridge and Wendy Thatcher. Presented by the Shaw Festival at the Festival Theatre, Niagara-on-the-Lake. Runs in rep to October 16. $30-$50, Sunday evenings $20-$25. 1-800-267-4759. Rating: **NNNN**

Director **Neil Munro**'s Chicago, circa 1928, is a savage world of sharks, vipers, ferrets and voracious praying mantises. In the midst and their associates are concerned with little but sex and violence — human values literally go out the window.

The **Ben Hecht/Charles MacArthur** play could be — and has been — done as a fast-paced screwball comedy, but the ever-inventive Munro gives a dark tone to the work, which centres on the attempts of reporter Hildy Johnson (**Stuart Hughes**) to leave the business and settle into marriage. But neither his strong-willed boss, Walter Burns (**Michael Ball**), nor Johnson's own addiction to the scent of journalistic blood make the change easy.

After an intentionally slow start, Munro swirls the play's 25 characters in a finely choreographed, manipulatively paced ensemble production with some of his trademark techniques — overlapping lines, offstage speeches — that emphasize the script's irony and cynicism and minimize its emotional warmth.

Among the fine performances are Ball's nefarious Burns, with the instinct of a pro wrestler, Hughes' slick and cocky Johnson, **Mary Haney** as a not-quite-stereotyped golden-hearted prostitute, **Peter Millard** as a prissy reporter and **Wendy Thatcher** as the stiff-laced mother of Johnson's determined fiancee (**Alison Woolridge**). – JK



LAURENCE ACLAND



Nadia Ross plays a nun in The Earth Is A Witch, The Witch Is A Saint, The Saint Is Applause.

Death Waits on historical sisters

By JON KAPLAN

WHICH WITCH? — Prolific young poet/playwright **Death Waits** creates five nuns who want to stake a claim in history in **The Earth Is A Witch, The Witch Is A Saint, The Saint Is Applause**. **Daniel Brooks** directs a cast that includes **Janet Burke, Clare Coulter, Maggie Huculak, Trisha Lamie, Nadia Ross** and **Tracy Wright** in the season launch at **Theatre Passe Muraille**, previewing November 8 and opening **November 11**. 16 Ryerson. 504-7529.

GAY TIMES — A little-known page of Toronto history is on parade in **John Wimbs** and **Christopher Richards' Molly Wood**, the tale of the gay Alexander Wood — whose name graces two streets in the ghetto — caught in an 1810 sex scandal. A company headed by **Richard Partington, Louis Negin, Mark Burgess** and **Terence Bryant** is directed by **Ned Vukovic**, whose company **Lovers and Madmen** opens the show on **October 25** at the **Bathurst Street Theatre**. 736 Bathurst. 947-0303.

PAST IMPERFECT — The new **Nightwood Theatre** trio — artistic co-directors **Alisa Palmer** and **Diane Roberts** and producer **Leslie Lester** — collaborates on **Wearing The Bone**, with writer/director Palmer returning to the combination of text and music that inspired her earlier hit, A Play About The Mothers Of Plaza De Mayo. In Bone — which previews November 15 and opens **November 17** at the **Theatre Centre** — a woman deals with a past she has abandoned but that hasn't abandoned her. 1032 Queen West. 538-0988.

PRISON PALS — An Englishman, an American and an Irishman are uncomfortable bedfellows sharing a Lebanese cell in Irish playwright **Frank McGuinness' Someone Who'll Watch Over Me**, which launches the **Tarragon Theatre**'s 25th anniversary season, previewing November 1 and opening **November 8**. **Colin Taylor** directs a cast that includes **Philip Akin** and **Brian Tree**. 30 Bridgman. 531-1827.

SOUTHWARD HO — One of Toronto's most exciting new companies, **Wild Pig Theatre**, presents **Manfred Karge's Conquest Of The South Pole**, in which four unemployed men try to overcome the crushing inertia of their lives by reenacting the 1911 "conquest" of the South Pole. The inventive **Josephine Le Grice** directs a cast that includes **David Jansen, Kevin Bundy, Duncan Ollerenshaw** and **Soo Garay**. The show opens **October 19** at the **Tarragon Extra Space**. 30 Bridgman. 531-1827.

DIVINE DECADENCE — **Buddies in Bad Times** opens its new home and its new season on **October 12** with artistic director **Sky Gilbert's More Divine** — a play about philosophy and the concept of theatre — based on the imaginary friendship between Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault, who fall for the same young man. Among Gilbert's cast are **Mark Christmann, Jason Cadieux, Randall Lanthier** and **Mark Lonergan**. 12 Alexander. 975-8555.

PRIVATE PASSIONS — Lucy Maud Montgomery's tempestuous private life bore none of the Pollyanna qualities of her famous creation, Anne of Green Gables, as **Don Hannah** shows in **The Wooden Hill**, inspired by Montgomery's journals. The production opens **September 29** at the **Bluma Appel Theatre**, with **Canadian Stage**'s **Bob Baker** directing a cast headed by **Rita Howell**. 27 Front East. 368-3110.

QUEBEC CONNECTION — After the death of his wife, a man moves to northern Ontario and finds love with an eccentric woman in **Stone And Ashes**, a play by Governor General's award winner **Daniel Danis**, translated by **Linda Gaboriau**. **Factory Theatre**'s **Jackie Maxwell** directs. **Elizabeth Brown, Todd Duckworth** and **Ann Baggley** in this tale of love, loyalty and betrayal, previewing November 5 and opening **November 9**. 125 Bathurst. 864-9971.

HIGHWAY TO HELL — The talented **Dave Carley** presents a revised version of **Into**, the 1993 Fringe hit about four commuters — an urban nun, a love-buffeted woman, an angry young man and a high-energy businessman — caught in a months-long traffic jam. **Bill Lane** directs the **Theatre Passe Muraille/Theatre Cognito** co-pro with **Geoffrey Bowes, Marium Carvell, Michael Waller** and **Gina Wilkinson**, opening **September 30** in the **Passe Muraille Backspace**. 16 Ryerson. 504-7529.

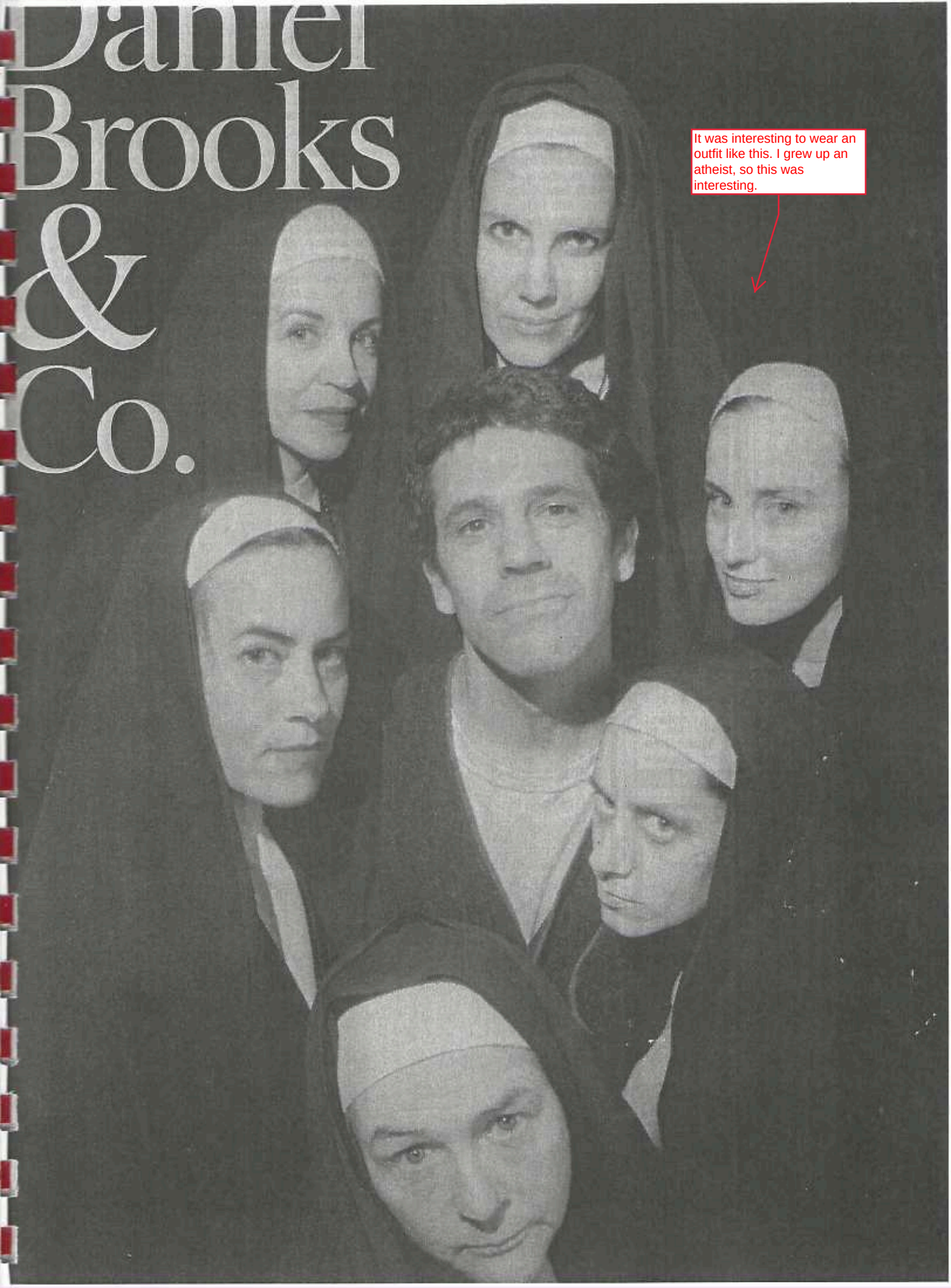
1994 FALL GUIDE • THEATRE • 1994 FALL GUIDE

This is NOT a STO Union production. I was in it as a performer. Why Jacob Wren decided to do a show about nuns, I will never know. It was an unhappy production. Lots of tension in the air.

But it makes me think of these patterns, once again I am in a show with a bunch of women, which didn't happen too often back then.

Shows with no words and shows with a bunch of women. Playing nuns. Hmmm.....

Daniel Brooks & Co.



It was interesting to wear an outfit like this. I grew up an atheist, so this was interesting.

Troupes? and our phone numbers? Bwahahahahaaaa.... oh it was such a different world!

Troupes for almost every taste

Continued from D8

Rooms have both been winners.

Phyzikal Theatre
203-0808
Founder Philip Shepherd's movement-based work has included *Hollowed Hal.*

Platform 9 Theatre
539-8355
Mainly produces the work of playwright Robin Fulford, creator of the acclaimed and oft-produced *Steel Kiss.*

Second City
863-1162 Box: 863-1111
Established sketch-comedy, improv company is renowned for its development of comedic talents and its funny show titles.

Shadowland Production Company
203-0946
Island-based outfit fashions props for VideoCabaret's *History Of The Village Of The Small Huts* and has annual entry in Caribana Parade.

Skylight Theatre
536-3127 Box: 392-3846
Mainly devoted to outdoor summer performances of Shakespeare in North York's Earl Bales Park.

Solar Stage
221-9855
Located in North York's Madison Centre.

Stiletto Company
927-1991
Always a hit at the Fringe, this young troupe is currently reviving *Derailed* at Factory Studio Cafe.

Sto Union
539-9590
Co-founders Nadia Ross and Diane Cave create non-linear narratives with strong emphasis on visual expression.

Summerworks Theatre Festival
469-0889
Annual August event is a spin-off from the Fringe and, like its predecessor, keeps on growing.

Tapestry Music Theatre



LEAH CHERNIAK:
Theatre Columbus

A vital, cheap-rent facilitator of small, emerging companies. It has two locations to serve the theatre community.

Theatre Columbus
504-0019
Co-founders Leah Cherniak and Martha Ross have put their own distinctive spin on classical clown-style performance.

Theatre Direct Canada
537-4191 Box: 537-4193
An award-winning company known



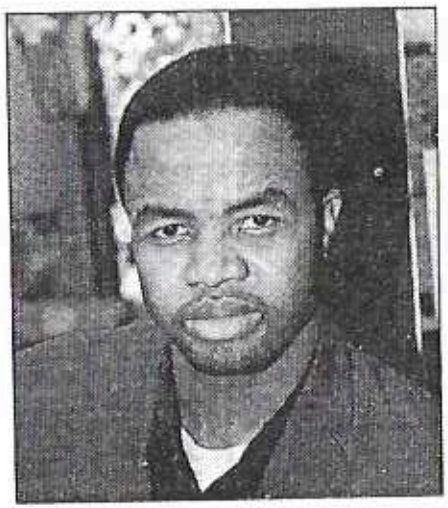
NADIA ROSS:
Sto Union

mainly for created challenging, issue-oriented theatre targeted at teens.

Theatre français de Toronto
534-7303 Box: 534-6604
Toronto's only professional French-language theatre runs the gamut from Moliere to Michel Tremblay.

Theatre Gargantua
260-4660
Facilitated the evolving stage production of Jacquie Thomas's *The Trials.*

Theatre Passe Muraille



COLIN TAYLOR
Theatre Wum

504-8988 Box: 504-7529
Founded in 1968 at Rochdale College, TPM retains much of its formative interest in taking risks and bucking the establishment.

Theatre Resource Centre
597-8711
Troupe founded by the late Richard Pochinko has had an important influence on the clown-based performance movement.

Theatre Smith-Gilmour
504-1277

Commedia tandem M
and Dean Gilmour hav
world with their adaptat
surrealist Julio Cortazar,
So.

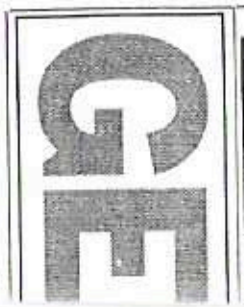
Theatre Wum
653-7788
Hot young director C
company investigates
American experience.

VideoCabaret
864-1725
One part Michael
(*The History Of The V*
Small Huts) plus one pa
lor (mastermind behind
ter political spoofs, inclu
ry, Tory) adds up to sma

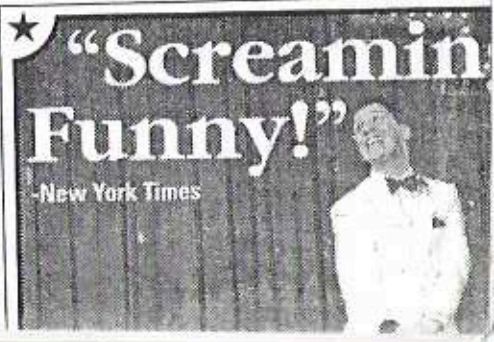
We Are One Theatre Pr
516-9320
Caribbean-oriented co
joyed considerable cros
with such works as *P*
West Indies.

Workman Theatre Pro
583-4339
Operating out of the
torium and Queen and
company investigates m
sues.

Young People's Theat
947-9580 Box: 862-222
It's no secret that YP
to kids to see works c
superior quality to tho
their parents.
— Description









VIRTUAL ZOMBIES: Jim Allodi and Caroline Gillis part of cast locked in repetitive sequences in engrossing performance.

This show was a major turning point. It pissed people off and lines were drawn. All of this was happening in 1995 - the turning point year - when our world began to fall apart. This play was about the reality that we had lost the war. Aids, capitalism, commercialism, conservative forces... back then we knew we had no time left to save the planet and nobody was really talking about it. Feminists were made fun of and treated like radicals and excluded. You could no longer afford to live in Toronto. Our friends were dying horrible deaths. Communities were gutted. This play was a scream in a pillow from someone who felt powerless to do anything about their dying world

Words and movement mostly missing in action with weird mix of styles

Excerpts From The Emo Journals

504-7529

Created and directed by Nadia Ross and Daniel MacIvor with Daniel Brooks. Set by Paul Meizei. Lighting by Andrea Lundy. Costumes by Ali Riley. Music by Richard Feren. A STO/Union-Theatre Passe Muraille co-production to Feb. 26 at TPM Backspace, 16 Ryerson Ave.

BY VIT WAGNER
THEATRE CRITIC

It's either a play with almost no text or a dance piece with very little actual dancing. Any way you slice it, *Excerpts From The Emo Journals* is peculiar and befuddling avant-garde theatre.

The work, newly unveiled in the Backspace at Theatre Passe Muraille, is the creation of co-directors Nadia Ross and Daniel MacIvor, with considerable atmospheric input from composer Richard Feren. And it's possible to detect each artist's tendencies in what we see and hear on stage.

Ross's penchant for non-linear narrative, MacIvor's fondness for symmetry and syncopation, and Feren's predilection for synthetic and sampled minimalism all figure prominently in the mix. Also featured are the projections of slides by Paulette Phillips, as well as a 16mm reel by Greg Bennett, and a large, illuminated photograph of a child's face by Guntar Kravis.

The performers — Caroline Gillis, Jim Allodi, Mark Shields and Volker Buerger — act as zombies, locked in restrictive, repetitive sequences. Gillis, for instance, spends a lot of time walking a rectangular pattern, during which she stops to scoop a cup of water from a small, sunken trough in the centre of the stage, then slides the cup into an opening at the side of the set, before retrieving another empty cup from a second opening, followed by a repetition of the entire process. Allodi paces around, occasionally stopping and posing as if poised to run, only to continue as before.

Scripting is scant. Words are muttered, mumbled or mouthed — when they are used at all.

The elements cohere — to the extent that the performance has a self-contained sense of purpose and logic. It's obvious that the collaborators know what they're doing. Most of the time, they seem to be doing it rather well.

The convergence of visual and aural elements, as well as the well-drilled movements and gestures of the performers, create an effect that is frequently engrossing and almost never boring.

It is even possible that there is a point. If so, it is one that the show's creators have chosen not to share with the audience. I can tell you that the press material promises an apocalyptic theme — underscored in the piece itself by a loop of the partial song lyric "It's the end of the world . . . ." Certainly, there is something monotonously purgatorial about the characters' circumstances.

But who knows? Maybe *Excerpts From The Emo Journals* isn't about anything more than its own sense of itself.

In search of a story



THEATRE REVIEW

EXCERPTS FROM THE EMO JOURNALS

Created and directed by Nadia Ross and Daniel MacIvor

Performed by Jim Allodi, Volker Buerger, Caroline Gillis and Mark Shields

At the Theatre Passe Muraille Backspace in Toronto until Feb. 26

Rating: ★★

Reviewed by H. J. Kirchhoff

"The landscape of *Excerpts from the Emo Journals* penetrates the roots of psychic paralysis through the language of symbol and movement. In 1991, a hunter stumbles across three skeletons in an abandoned farm house in Emo, Ont. Next to the furnace is an empty aquarium in which a series of journals are found. A play about the coming rapture."

I quote this press material at length as a service to Globe readers, because there's no way on earth to guess either "plot" or intentions from seeing the work, a Sto Union production at the Theatre Passe Muraille Backspace.

Emo Journals is a textless sound-image performance piece, in which the four actors interweave and repeat several series of stylized movements and striking tableaux, all of it accompanied by Richard Feren's synthesizer-and-samplings soundscape.

The 55-minute work opens with Mark Shields posed in a dim spotlight, mourning over Volker Buerger's apparently dead body, while portentous percussive chords play over an electronic-sounding buzz. Shields slowly moves away, and the body is dragged off-stage to a distorted version of *The End of the World*, ending with gunshots.

Shields poses stage right and Caroline Gillis enters, slowly, dips a cup of water out of a trough in the stage, passes it into a hole in the set wall, receives the cup back from another hole, and repeats the movement several times. Jim Allodi enters and begins his own quirky dance, crossing paths with Gillis until she collapses. They perform a seductive, repetitious dance, to the strains of *Sentimental Journey*. Buerger re-enters and "dances" with Shields. Gillis and Allodi evolve from slow-motion, no-contact movement to frenzied coupling.

And so it goes. There are some projections, including a recurring one of a multi-pierced punk, and a large photograph of a beautiful child. The four actors — and imaginative lighting designer Andrea Lundy — produce many eye-catching images, of romance, mystery, love, betrayal and death. (Co-creators Nadia Ross and Daniel MacIvor are dab hands at this sort of thing.) But there are too many scenes that linger interminably, when one longs for something, anything, to happen. And a little story wouldn't hurt.

in education, health care, culture... It is a cruel and unfriendly
find the video records I have of this era one day. They are a
cence gone.

friends and colleagues, in their twenties and thirties, young,
ive men in their prime, die horrific long drawn out deaths. We
to experience this. As we watched, the world treated them
ey wanted the people we loved to die. It took a lot of fighting
ntion and care and to change attitudes. It was the battlefield
my urban generation and it changed us for good - we were
ame people and we weren't the same communities when the

SoulPepper is founded, celebrating the classics. The great
ator as the centre of power is re-instated and the time and
r voices' is gone.

es unafordable to live in.

scatter for good, leaving Toronto to never come back.

Mel Lastman takes office in 1998.

o has become pure spectacle.

es decide to switch strategies. If Soulpepper will give them an
ey take it. Performers who once were hired, are no longer
ng gets much, much more 'commercial' and polarized.

es talk about applying for over twenty grants and being
of them.

purging in Toronto of the alternative and a re-assertion of
he commercial mainstream.

s happening, you could feel it everywhere. And we did a show
end. The end of us, the end of life, the end of story, the end
end of our world as we know it.

The best thing that can be said about *Excerpts From The Emo Journals* is that it's only 55 minutes long. Fifty-five long and infuriating minutes. The arrogance! The elitism! Don't be fooled by the claim that *The Emo Journals* is some kind of stylized, non-verbal or symbolic investigation into madness and the psyche. This show is a high-pedigree hoax.

If three men and a woman taking measured, funereal steps, sporting the glassy-eyed look fish get when you club them (not just average fish, but serious and alienated fish who've read too many French philosophers), repetitious arm movements imbued with some major (but private) significance, the occasional incoherent mumble, a constantly loud soundtrack and barrage of 16mm images is your idea of a new and exciting theatre aesthetic, then you can have it.

Or if passing a tea cup through a hole in the wall and having it passed back through another hole a few feet away, drinking water scooped from an aquarium in the floor or unveiling (in slow motion) a large back-lit photograph of a young girl is your idea of narrative, you can have it.

This kind of staged minimalism always gets sold as some great statement about the "end of story" or the inauthenticity of conventional narrative devices. Bullshit. It's just lazy storytelling.

According to press materials, this mess has something to do with the discovery in 1991 of three skeletons in a farm house, along with some journals. Who cares about press materials? Who cares about the kind of insight gleaned from reading a program note or preview article? If a show, in this case *Emo*, requires prior knowledge of such basic information as Who? What? Where? — information that the performance itself is either unwilling or unable to provide — then the show is a failure. Art that matters a damn communicates.

Justice demands that people stay away in droves. Only then will these talented collaborators get the message that this kind of nonsense is unacceptable. "End of story?" Story isn't dead. My love



Emo Journals: A general 'huh?' in its direction.

eye

Dear diary, not again

EMO-TING

Dear *eye*,

Re: Christopher Winsor's review of *Excerpts From The Emo Journals*, On Stage, Feb. 16.

In all frankness, I've had moments of grumbling and gnashing my teeth about theatre I didn't like in Toronto. Everyone has. I'd been overheard at the wrong time, or quoted, I'd have been run out on a rail a hundred times. Congrats, for your nerve. (The main writer of *Emo*, I believe, won a TAC Writing grant last year to write it; to write what, exactly...?) In that spirit, admittedly an ungenerous one, I felt like shouting "Hurrah!" after I read your review. On reflection, I've begun to feel more ... philosophical.

As you say, rightly, the artists involved are a talented group of people. But I believe that their theatre has had its day. I often wonder whether other people have grown as impatient as I have with their quirky, middlebrow cool, easy alienation, loopy, pre-WWI post-modernism.

The theatre that has been done by people well-represented in the Emo group has more or less been ascendant for the past five years. I believe that it is representative of an important step in our theatrical maturation. These practitioners have done what they can, which is to set up targets, like 'language,' or 'meaning,' and then shoot at them to the delight of audiences pleased by such things. It's an intelligent stratagem to make a virtue of one's weaknesses. For a time. Then one must examine one's hostilities, and grow up. I hope that we are ready to reconnect to our 2,500-odd year tradition of striving to build the best theatre culture we can. And yet, how can you blame them for not writing plays: who is going to do them, if they write them ...? I only hope that there is an audience out there, eager to mature with our theatre artists and take the next step to adulthood.

Yours,

David Fraser, Toronto

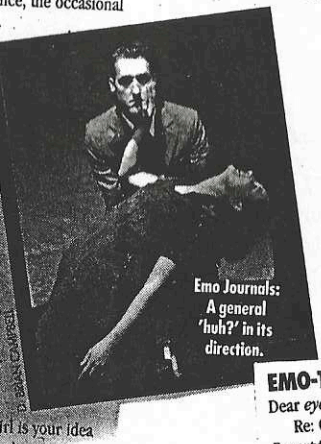
Next page has a better copy of the letter and I will find the full review. It's missing the last line which I believe was "Story isn't dead. My love for theatre is."

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ead. My love

Dear diary, not again



Emo Journals: A general 'huh?' in its direction.

EMO-TING

Dear *eye*,

Re: Christopher Winsor's review of *Excerpts From The Emo Journals*, On Stage, Feb. 16.

In all frankness, I've had moments of grumbling and gnashing my teeth about theatre I didn't like in Toronto. Everyone has. I'd been overheard at the wrong time, or quoted, I'd have been run out on a rail a hundred times. Congrats, for your nerve. (The main writer of *Emo*, I believe, won a TAC Writing grant last year to write it; to write what, exactly...?) In that spirit, admittedly an ungenerous one, I felt like shouting "Hurrah!" after I read your review. On reflection, I've begun to feel more … philosophical.

As you say, rightly, the artists involved are a talented group of people. But I believe that their theatre has had its day. I often wonder whether other people have grown as impatient as I have with their quirky, middlebrow cool, easy alienation, loopy, pre-WWI post-modernism.

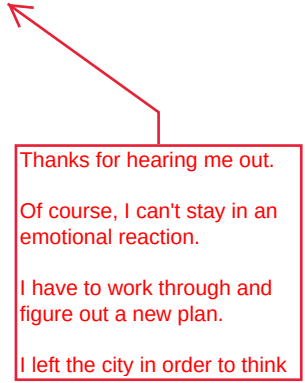
The theatre that has been done by people well-represented in the Emo group has more or less been ascendant for the past five years. I believe that it is representative of an important step in our theatrical maturation. These practitioners have done what they can, which is to set up targets, like 'language,' or 'meaning,' and then shoot at them to the delight of audiences pleased by such things. It's an intelligent stratagem to make a virtue of one's weaknesses. For a time. Then one must examine one's hostilities, and grow up. I hope that we are ready to reconnect to our 2,500-odd year tradition of striving to build the best theatre culture we can. And yet, how can you blame them for not writing plays: who is going to do them, if they write them …? I only hope that there is an audience out there, eager to mature with our theatre artists and take the next step to adulthood.

Yours,

David Fraser, Toronto

Of course, when someone writes something like that, in that era, there was nothing you could do about it. It existed in a print paper for thousands and thousands and thousands of people to read, if they cared to. You couldn't talk back or defend yourself. Your only option was to go mad.
Here I was being 'told' by men who loved the sound of their own voices that I should stop being silly and messing around with their good tradition.
This is always the same tone and same way that you get 'spoken to' and diminished.
I have emotional responses to these kinds of things. I let them out by writing about them. Writing helps, but only somewhat.
This is my emotional response to that letter:
Inspired by Artaud,
I screamed nonsense and flashed my tits and walked around like a zombie mumbling to myself.
You think I am crazy, worthless, unworthy of the vote, of owning property, of deciding what is to be done with my own body. Then that is how I will behave.
You diminish me, you show me the face of hate every time I don't behave in exactly the way you want me to behave, you smash your fist in the wall next to my head, you terrify me to the point where I am shitting in my pants. I am shitting. Really shitting. I don't know what I am shocked by more, the familiar fist coming at me or the shit in my pants.
Poof! I become a ghost that can squeeze through cracks and re-appear to haunt you when you least expect it.
In our dying world filled with the corpses of a generation, you give to the wealthy and take from the poor. You dis-empower. You throw people out into the streets. You take away people's capacity to educate themselves.
I vomit out your 2,500 years into a spell of madness – I will make you so utterly insane as I mess with your well-placed words, I will rip them apart. I will make you insane with my complete dis-respect and my turbulence. I will disturb you until you reveal yourself, once again, for exactly who you are, and you finally must look at yourself for exactly who you are.
As a woman, I will not save you this time when you see your reflection. You will be on your own to deal with the sorrow - oh the sorrow!

I keep working on releasing the emotions and then realizing that change is deeply challenging for people and they tend to lash out.


Thanks for hearing me out.
Of course, I can't stay in an emotional reaction.
I have to work through and figure out a new plan.
I left the city in order to think

A ROUND OF APPLAUSE FOR THE WINNERS OF THE 1995 CHALMERS AWARDS



These exceptional artists have opened the doors to new worlds of theatre, music, dance, visual arts, crafts and film for audiences across Canada and beyond.

As winners of the 1995 Chalmers Awards, the biggest awards program for the arts in Canada, they join over 100

Winning this was a major turning point. I write about this in other posts. Winning the 5k cash, I could buy a car and go down to southern US -I had to get out of Toronto.I had to get away and this was my out. I used to say "I'm running to the hills", and I was, I just didn't know that it was literally hills I would end up in.

These exceptional artists have opened the doors to new worlds of theatre, music, dance, visual arts, crafts and film for audiences across Canada and beyond.

As winners of the 1995 Chalmers Awards, the biggest awards program for the arts in Canada, they join over 100 artists from across the country who have received Chalmers Awards for their outstanding contributions to Canadian culture. Honouring achievement over long careers and recognizing the promise of younger artists since 1972, the Chalmers are among the most prestigious awards for the performing and visual arts in North America.

(left to right - lower row)

Cristine Richey, Toronto, - In the Gutter and Other Good Places
M. Joan Chalmers Documentarian Award for Film and Video

Maurice Podbrey, Montreal, Centaur Theatre Company
M. Joan Chalmers Award for Artistic Direction

Ken Garnhum, Toronto -Pants On Fire
Floyd S. Chalmers Canadian Play Awards

Paterson Ewen, London, Ontario
Jean A. Chalmers Award for Visual Arts

Joan MacLeod, Vancouver - Little Sister
Chalmers Canadian Play Awards: Theatre for Young Audiences

Robert Lepage, Quebec City -Needles and Opium
Floyd S. Chalmers Canadian Play Awards

(left to right - upper row)

Paul Dolden, Vancouver - L'ivresse de la vitesse
Jean A. Chalmers Awards for Musical Composition - Composer

Alex Pauk, Esprit Orchestra, Toronto
Jean A. Chalmers National Music Award

Jean-François Denis, Montreal
Jean A. Chalmers Awards for Musical Composition - Presenter

M. Joan Chalmers, O.C., O. Ont.

Walter Ostrom, Indian Harbour, Nova Scotia
Jean A. Chalmers Award for Crafts

Jane Marsland, Toronto, Danny Grossman Dance Company
M. Joan Chalmers Award for Arts Administration

Geoff Kavanagh, Toronto -Ditch
Floyd S. Chalmers Canadian Play Awards

Diane Cave, Toronto -The Alistair Trilogy
Floyd S. Chalmers Canadian Play Awards

Rachel Browne, Winnipeg
Jean A. Chalmers Award for Creativity in Dance

Nadia Ross, Toronto, - The Alistair Trilogy
Floyd S. Chalmers Canadian Play Awards

Dennis Foon, Vancouver -The Short Tree and the Bird That Could Not Sing
Chalmers Canadian Play Awards: Theatre for Young Audiences

$195,000 was awarded to these winners in a ceremony at the Winter Garden Theatre in Toronto on May 15.

The Chalmers Awards and a related program of training grants are funded through an $11 million endowment given by the Chalmers family and held in trust by the Ontario Arts Council Foundation. The Ontario Arts Council manages the selection process.

The Ontario Arts Council Foundation is grateful for the support of

CANADA'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER
THE GLOBE AND MAIL
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I used the $5,000 dollars that came with the award (10k split between collaborator Diane Cave and myself) to buy a second hand car and I drove south. I stayed with people who lived in the National Parks and we travelled nomadically from one park to the next together for a while. In the south is where the idea for Recent Experiences was born, a family saga spanning multiple generations.

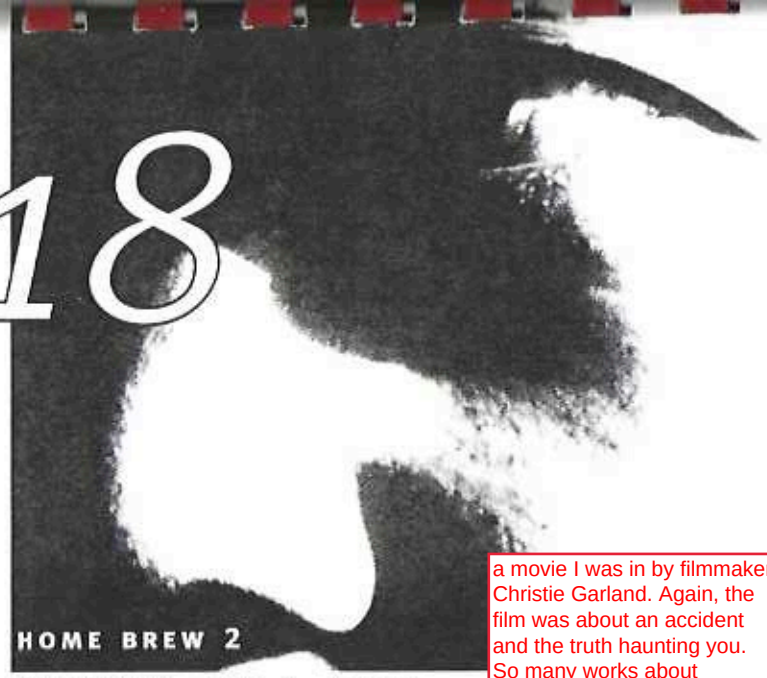
This trip marks the absolute bottom in my world, the end line, the place where there is only one way it can go and that is back up or….dead.

In the sacred deserts of Arizona, a tiny shift happened that I would not recognize or see until years later.

Unbeknown to me, I had begun my healing story.



This came out when I had subleted a place in Montreal when I got back from the United States. I spent months without talking to a single person. Montreal can be lonely that way. Then this photo came out, on the cover of C magazine and it was everywhere in Montreal. I'd walk around and see myself with a head wound. Still, nobody recognized me and I was left alone. It was the perfect image for the end of the 1990's. We had certainly lost the battle.



SATURDAY, MAY 1, 9 PM

THE ROYAL

a movie I was in by filmmaker Christie Garland. Again, the film was about an accident and the truth haunting you. So many works about accidents and women in the 90's. My couch surfing years had begun as I travelled around, working where I could. I came back to Toronto to do this.



INSTANT DREAD
Dawn Wilkinson, Canada
35mm, 13 minutes, 1998
World Premiere

Kauri, a stylist at the Max n' Relax Salon, dreams of a spirit who gives her a magical shell pouch. Inside, she finds a secret ingredient for her new invention. Unexpectedly, the product gives everyone instant dreadlocks and Kauri is faced with the charge of selling out her culture.

"The story is about how black hairstyles are read as political statements. I want to show the problem of identifying straightened hair with oppression and dreadlocks with liberation... "
—Dawn Wilkinson

Montréal-born Dawn Wilkinson has made Dandelions, *a personal journey into her Canadian identity, that went on to achieve international recognition. She is currently developing* Instant Dread *into a feature film, the first in the* Sherroxx Trilogy.

WOMEN ARE NOT LITTLE MEN
Lisa Hayes, Canada
16mm, 15 minutes, 1998
Toronto Premiere

Contemporary and archival images are contrasted against the text of a 1950's industrial safety and training manual, exposing and critiquing the widespread belief in the existence of a weaker sex.

Lisa Hayes has completed three short films, all of which were inspired by actual people and events in her life. Her works have been exhibited internationally and have been broadcast in France, Canada, the USA and Australia. She is a coordinator with the Liaison of Independent Filmmakers of Toronto and continues to make films.

THE WAY I SEES IT
Jan Bird, Canada
16mm, 7 minutes, 1998
Canadian Premiere

Stares and catcalls from construction workers... a springtime hassle for some women with the right feminine look. This work makes us watch the achievements of that

construction using humorous sound metaphors.

Subsequent to her graduation from Trent University, Jan Bird studied film and photography at various institutions including OCAD, and more recently, Sheridan College. The Way I Sees It is her first "finished" short film although she claims to have twelve more works in progress!

BLIND SPOT
Christy Garland, Canada
16mm, 15 minutes, 1998

This film tells the tale of one of our worst nightmares – being the driver involved in a hit-and-run accident. A modern day morality play which debunks any lessons meant to be taught. As always, the sub-text is the most intriguing.

Christy Garland is a filmmaker living and working in Toronto. Blind Spot *is her first dramatic short film. Other credits to her name are an experimental short,* Sports Figure; *a short documentary,* My Own Protection, *and a series of super 8, 16mm and slide projections for the 1997 mixed media theatre piece,* Recent Experiences, *directed by Nadia Ross and Death Waits. Christy Garland is planning to shoot another short film in the spring of 1999 and is developing a feature screenplay.*

I AM ALWAYS CONNECTED
Phillip Barker, Canada
16mm, 5 minutes, 1998

This silent film is about inseparable connections, like those between light and shadow, the mind and the body, and the intellectual and the instinctual. The film is a new construction from footage originally made for a 1984 installation piece. "*Connected* was filmed on a small country road near Nijmegen in The Netherlands. I painted the canvas backdrop based on photographs taken at the location. I returned to the same location ten years later. All the trees that lined the road have been completely cut sown, due to some disease, I think."

Phillip Barker is a visual artist, photographer, filmmaker and educator. His films and installations have been exhibited internationally.

THE POMEGRANATE TREE
Garine Torosslan, Canada
16mm, 3 minutes, 1998

A collage of Byzantine imagery, drawings by Eli Langer and variations on the theme of red, this work takes cut-and-paste to new heights.

Garine Torosslan was born in Lebanon of Armenian heritage. Previous works by this prolific visual artist, photographer and filmmaker – Girl from Moush, Drowning in Flames, My Own Obsession – have all screened internationally.

SLIP
Deborah Kirkland, Canada
16mm, 7 minutes, 1999
World Premiere

Desire drives the cars of these two women. A sassy short in which sleep gives no rest. By day, a casual encounter occurs between two women; by night, the sparks of passion burn.

Deborah Kirkland works as a cultural administrator in Toronto. Slip *is her first film.*

SWELL
Carolynne Hew,
16mm, 5 minutes,

A retreat from the heaven, and from desire, is charted ered with digital tinting and haunt visions.

Carolynne Hew is maker who has community for first film Bangs at the Toronto Festival and has vals internationa film, swell, *also and MIX New working on a sh Nakka women.*

MODERATION
Timothy Murth
16mm, 2 minutes,
World Premiere

Moderation is Philosophy in a This minimalist pushes the boun sibilities of sou

PERFORMANCE

THEATRE OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

AMBUSH RUB theatre's take on the 1996 Jenny Jones talk show fiasco in which a gay man revealed his crush on a straight friend who later killed him. Apr. 10-11. 8pm, PWYC & food bank donation. Apr. 12-27. Fri-Sat 8pm; Sun 4pm. $10-12 ($8-10 with food bank donation). The Lab. 8 Britain. 863-3959.

CAROLAN'S FAREWELL The troubles in Belfast are the backdrop to this portrait of a life derailed by the futility of violence. Apr. 10-26. Wed-Sat 8pm; Sun 2:30pm. $15-24. Wed 24or-1. 231 Queens Quay W. 973-4000.

L'INSOMNIE Black comedy about a man caught in a vicious cycle of sleeplessness and anxiety. Apr. 16-May 3. Wed-Sat, 8pm; Apr. 26 & May 3, 3:30pm; Apr. 20 & 27, 2:30pm. $15-28. Theatre Francais de Toronto. 26 Berkeley. 534-6604.

THE ORESTERIA Director Josephine Le Grice injects a dose of contemporary insight into the Greek classic about a society undergoing rapid social change. Apr. 16-26. Tue-Sat, 7:30pm; Sat-Sun 2pm. PWYC. Studio Theatre, 235 Queens Quay W. 533-6100.

PASSION Stephen Sondheim's soaring musical drama about yearning and love. Apr. 10-May 10. Mon-Sat, 8pm; Wed, 2:30pm; Sat, 2pm. $23-52. Bluma Appel Theatre, St. Lawrence Centre, 27 Front E. 386-3110.

RECENT EXPERIENCES New 'micro-epic' touching on childbirth, parenthood and death, by Nadia Ross and Death which its. Apr. 14-20. PWYC. 469 King W. 614-4609.

Educ **LOME** Oscar Wilde's play, presented by the Theatre tions. ince Centre. Apr 10-12, 8:30pm. Free. 317 Adelaide W, 597-8711

Canadi **K** Provocative and humorous journey through the back schools of Toronto. By David Rubinoff. Apr. 15-May 4. Tue-Sat, 50-16. Sun 2:30, PWYC. Theatre Passe Muraille. 16 students 04-8988. skills that tive employ.

CONTINUING

Kuitenbr **Y AMERICA** Canadian Stage Co. presents the tuition cha award-winning epic. Part One: Millennium Sun 1:30pm; Part Two: Perestroika Tue-Fri a university or pm. To June 29. $28-$45. Canadian Stage leading without ley. 368-3110.

9:30pm). Toronto Truck Theatre, 94 Belmont. 922-0084.

PHANTOM OF THE OPERA Indefinite run. Tue-Sat 8pm, Wed & Sat 2pm, Sun 3pm. $57-$91. Pantages Theatre, 244 Victoria. 872-2222.

RAGTIME The Livent, Broadway-bound musical, based on the novel by E.L. Doctorow. Tue-Sat, 8pm; also Wed, Sat & Sun, 2pm. $30-$75. Ford Centre For The Performing Arts, 5040 Yonge. 872-2222.

RSVP BROADWAY A high style musical comedy pays homage to New York in the 1930s. To Apr. 13. Thu-Sat 7:30pm; also Sat & Sun, 2:30pm. $19.50-$59.50. The Winter Garden Theatre, 189 Yonge. 872-5555.

SIXTY BELOW See review page 28. Cultural identity, spirituality, relationships and grieving are explored through the story of Henry, a young ex-con in the Yukon haunted by the spirit of his cousin. To Apr. 20. Tue-Sat, 8pm, $18-$20; Sun, 2:30pm, PWYC. Native Canadian Centre, 16 Spadina Rd. 531-1402.

THE SOLDIER DREAMS A play about love, an examination of the effect of death on the living, and homage to those we love who have left us. By Daniel MacIvor. Directed by Daniel Brooks. To Apr. 12. 8:30pm. $14. Sun, PWYC. 26 Berkeley (upstairs). 368-3110.

STOP THE WORLD I WANT TO GET OFF Musical comedy. To Apr. 12, 8pm; Apr. 13, 2:30pm. Ford Centre For The Performing Arts, 5040 Yonge. 872-2222.

UNCLE VANYA Anton Chekhov's tragi-comedy. To Apr. 13. Thu-Sat, 8pm; Sun, 2pm. $10-$15. The Annex Theatre, 730 Bathurst. 690-9846.

UNSETTLING ACCOUNTS See review page 28. Yvan Bienvenue's dense and raw discourse against intolerance and hate, by a back-alley poet. Performed by Michael Healey. Directed by Jim Millan. To Apr. 13. Thu-Sat, 8:30 pm. $12-$16. Sun 2pm, PWYC. Poor Alex Theatre, 296 Brunswick. 927-1881.

DINNER THEATRE

FANTASY Cultural experience in the world of the Arabian



GREGORY NIXON

and demonstrate equestrian manoeuvres. Indefinite run. Wed-Sat 7pm, Sun 3:30pm. $25-$40. Exhibition Place, Dufferin Gate. 260-1234 or 1-800-563-1190.

A CLUE? IN THE CASTLE! Based on the characters from the famous board game. Every Thu, Fri & Sat 6:30pm dinner, 7:30pm show; Wed 11:30 lunch, 1pm show. $30-$65. Royal York Hotel, 100 Front. 1-800-NOT-DEAD.

ROCK 'N' ROLL HEAVEN Concert comedy show with live music performed by impressionists. Dinner 6pm, show 8:30pm. $22-$45. La Cage Dinner Theatre, 279 Yonge. 364-5200.

SHOW TROPICUBA A Las Vegas style Cuban cabaret show. $35-$55. Limelight Dinner Theatre, 2026 Yonge. 482-5200.

THEATRE-RELATED

Competing student performances: from McMaster: War, Lovers: The Root Of All Squares and U of T Theatre Laboratory: Anyone. Apr. 11, 7:30pm. $7-10. Hart House Theatre. 978-8668.

THE PARANORMAL SHOW Live seance, acid test, telepathy, spontaneous combustion and other astonishing and bizarre feats. Every Sat at midnight; Sun 9pm. $8. Poor Alex Lava Lounge. 296 Brunswick. 927-1881.

THEATRESPORTS Improv show where performers create scenes based on audience suggestions. Two teams of performers compete . Hosted by Albert & Andrew of the Devil's Advocates. Tue, 8pm, $5. Poor Alex Lava Lounge. 296 Brunswick. 927-1881.

DANCE

Jackie Latendresse, and Sonya Stefan. Apr. 11-1 min. Debbie Wilson Studios. 345 Adelaide W. 97

COMEDY

DODGER Laugh-A-Dale Sundays. 8 fl. 928-1142

N WICKS PUB Alternative Comedy Parliament. 696-2426.

ON ST. CAFE Sun: **Frenchie McF -City Comedians**. Dinner and Show w only 9pm, $7. 4924 Yonge. 223-5

WOOD Apr. 10: **Seth Bochwald** me. Tue: Anything Goes Comedy; Wed: host **Adam Pal**; Tue-Sun 8:30pm; Fri-S :30pm; Tue $2. Wed & Sun $5; Thu $ 800 Steeles W. 905-761-0543.

B Wed.: Underground standup comedy ver 11pm. 255 Davenport. 967-0195.

SORT Apr. 10-12: **Mard Coyote R n Danylo**. Apr. 16: **Ladies On Lo** Tue-Wed 8:30, $5; Thu 8:30, $7; Fri 8:30 & 10:45, Sat 8:30 & 10:45, $15. Dinner Mon-Thu 6:30; Fri & S 6:30 & 8:45, $22.95-$32.95. 24 Lombard. 364-523

OASIS Apr. 11: **Lee Smart, Gina Sorell, Kevin Sepoul** 8pm, $5. Apr. 16: **Lame & Shoester, Wes Zarahuk, David Ackerman, Rochelle Wilson, Th Loose Cannons** 8:30pm, $5. 294 College.

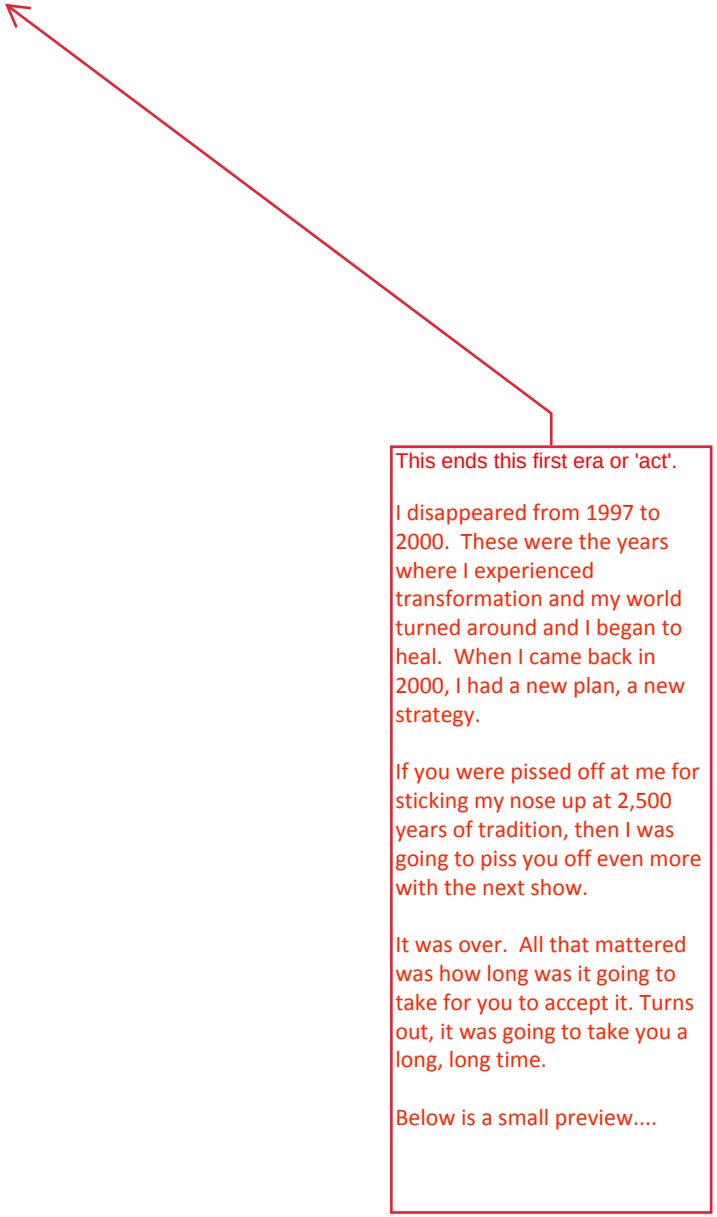
RIVOLI Apr. 13: Night after Night w/**Dave Martin Matt Watts** 9pm, $5. Apr. 14: **Marcia Johnson, A Growe, Noam Rosen, Kathryn Haggis, Roman Danylo, Tim Rykett** w/host **Theresa Pavlinek** 8:30pm, PWYC. 334 Queen W. 236-6992.

SECOND CITY Apr. 11: **Kevin Sepoul, Lee Smart Gina Sorell** and **The Stand-Ins**. Mon-Sat: Tragically Sat: Improv, 12:45am; Fri: Midnight Howl 12:30am, free Mon-Thu 8pm, $13.50; Fri-Sat 8pm & 10:30, $16.50/$20.50; Sun 8pm, $10. 110 Lombard. 863-1111.

THE UNICORN UPSTAIRS Two Frustrated Guys pres "Humpdaze" Wed. 8pm. Free. 173 Eglington E. 486-3133.

YUK YUK'S SUPERCLUB Apr. 10-13: **Alan Park** Apr. 15-16: **Paul Wildbaum**. Mondays: Sink or Swim Rou

Hints at what is to come. I came back to Toronto just to work on this show. First workshop (which has some possibly interesting super 8 footage - when I get the time, I will look for it). But we still weren't happy with our approach to text. After this workshop, all it took were two simple, but great, ideas that were applied to the story, text and set and we had managed to do 'story' in a totally new way.


This ends this first era or 'act'.
I disappeared from 1997 to 2000. These were the years where I experienced transformation and my world turned around and I began to heal. When I came back in 2000, I had a new plan, a new strategy.
If you were pissed off at me for sticking my nose up at 2,500 years of tradition, then I was going to piss you off even more with the next show.
It was over. All that mattered was how long was it going to take for you to accept it. Turns out, it was going to take you a long, long time.
Below is a small preview....

Not really naturalism. It was the next phase of the plan. I sometimes have to phrase things in certain ways to lure who I want 'in' to see the show. Of course I'm going to present something challenging - that's never going to change. After being told to follow our 2,500 year tradition, well, ok... sure, why not? So I gave out the signs that I was 'trying to be good' and wouldn't be so challenging this time around with the next show.

ourfully filmed Lionel Bart musical — and give the story back its Twist.

"When you tell someone you're

Garnet Harding, who plays Oliver's criminal mentor, the Artful Dodger. "But the musical is like Coles Notes for Dickens — it eliminates a lot of

"When I read the book, I was amazed by how bitter and ironic Dickens is, and how human the characters are. Even Bill Sikes, the

"A

Naturalism nabs Nadia Ross

By JON KAPLAN

After sharing the creation of a series of sharp-edged, angry pieces, Nadia Ross shifts gears into a softer, gentler mode with Recent Experiences.

Devised with Death Waits and the production's actors and designers, Recent Experiences looks at four generations and spans a century of time. Birth, parenthood and death are the key themes here — a cycle that looks to regeneration and the possibility of finding meaning in life's questions.

It's a far different work than pieces such as The Emo Journals and The Alistair Trilogy, whose clashes between antagonists produced striking and sometimes horrifying visual imagery and cast a gloomy shadow on human interaction and the relationship between the human and the spiritual.

Personal look

"We wanted to look at something across a long period of time, a family over generations, as well as the larger history-of-ideas themes that we have looked at in the past and are baffled by," offer Ross. "But there's no bold imagery as in Emo — rather, an attempt to create something more subtle.

"The piece attempts to move into a more personal look at people and they inherit from earlier gen- s, including the suffering rough. Is there a point in l ultimately, is there hing we do?

►theatre

when • where

RECENT EXPERIENCES, created by Nadia Ross and Death Waits, with Andrea Davis, Kirsten Johnson, Allyson McMackon, Andrew Moodie, Ross and Waits. Presented by STO Union at 469 King West. Opens Monday (April 14) and runs to April 20, daily at 8 pm. Pwyc. 614-4609.

"We're taking a risk by saying there's a strong sense of life, a presence, that denies the randomness in our actions. In our culture, that's a dangerous thing to say without sounding flaky or superficial."

The production on view this week is the second stage of a workshop process that began more than three years ago when Ross began collaborating with another local artist. At this stage of the process, it's Waits who has become her co-creator.

"STO Union is about collaboration — about how people work together and how that affects the others who enter the process. It's about the two of us facing each other every day and how that affects the process. Theatre is the only art where this kind of creation through association can happen."

But there's a new ingredient here, for Ross and her associates are playing with the idea of naturalism — unspoken anathema in previous STO Union works.

"Text, movement and set all draw on naturalism in some form. I'm still finding that sort of relationship between people onstage difficult. I've always gone against it, and every day I struggle with it.

"Because the aesthetic is new for me, I'm left in an open field, not knowing which way to go. What's coming out is a different kind of relationship between characters — small moments emerge and suggest what it is to be human.

"Even the design seems strange to me, with its everyday couch, table and glasses," says Ross, who's performed in The Lorca Play, Jump and The Earth Is A Witch. "Normally, I'd ask for a projection and a big square of water in the middle of the stage. That kind of imagistic coldness — what I think of as its metallic quality — has been subdued and melted down.

Visceral manner

"The naturalistic aspect has limited us, made us smaller in terms of the images we can use. We're forced to find moments between people that communicate on a deep level — not through the brain but in a visceral manner."

At its base, Recent Experiences is a piece about the possibility of transcendence and where such flight leads. Though no angels soar through the work, faith is one of its points of exploration.

"I want some warmth and hope, especially at this moment in a city that has been beaten down. This isn't a time to complain, but rather a time to look for something to keep us going."



Recent Experiences, a play about the lives of four generations of one family, from 1900 to now, was the project that launched ACT TWO of STO Union's story (as told by its founder using the materials discovered in the archives as inspiration).

Recent Experiences: all the stars aligned for this show.

And we were all up for the challenge of it.