

**MUMP AND SMOOT**

**SOMETHING ELSE  
REVIEWS**

Mump & Smoot are masters  
of every aspect of comedy

# These clowns are uproarious

## REVIEW

ALBERTA THEATRE PROJECTS PRESENTS MUMP & SMOOT  
IN SOMETHING ELSE WITH ZUG AT THE ARTS CENTRE'S  
MARTHA COHEN THEATRE THROUGH MARCH 19.  
TICKETS/INFO: TICKETMASTER (299-8888)  
ATP BOX OFFICE, CALL 294-7402.  
RATING: ★★★ OUT OF FOUR

BOB CLARK  
CALGARY HERALD

**M**ump & Smoot are one helluva clown act. Their show, *Mump & Smoot in Something Else with Zug*, which runs at the Martha Cohen Theatre through March 19, amounts to a flawless demonstration of the comic art, a kind of surreal Abbott and Costello, but with nuance — and a lot funnier.

Michael Kennard and John Turner, aka Mump & Smoot, have built their show around a storyline which opens with the hapless duo arriving on stage and attempting to invoke the spirit of their god, Ummo — but to no avail.

When they settle instead for Zug, the Mephistophelean genie set free from the lamp that rewards their otherwise fruitless incantations of gibberish, they are granted the wishes that precipitate the good-humoured — and sometimes macabre — mayhem that follows.

The rest of the show is an aggregate of five brilliantly comic segments that fall somewhere between spoof and satire in their take on such human follies as the futility of war and army life in general, gourmet cooking, and space travel.

As clowns, Kennard and Turner are masters, and reveal at every turn the multi-faceted artistry that attaches to the theatre clown. The ability to pantomime, for instance, is so highly-developed that even without their expert use of gibberish the audience would have no trouble in understanding the action.

The occasional use of English words, too, in the welter of nonsense syllables was extraordinary in its timing, casting the words in the role of punch-lines. Inevitably, whenever they occurred, they earned a laugh.

Turner's Smoot was a superbly drawn comic turn. Everything about this character endeared him to the audience, and no wonder. His whole deportment as he waddled about in his baggy shorts was that of a lovable buffoon with just enough sense to know when he'd had his fill of Mump's twaddle.

The interaction between Turner's Smoot and Kennard's Mump was tightly conceived throughout the show's two hours. There were no loose ends; everything was mapped out to the smallest detail. Yet there was no sacrifice of spontaneity, and this is what made the duo's antics so delightfully — often uproariously — nutty.

Christian Laurin's Zug was impressively sinister, presiding over the Mump & Smoot Show with the spooky mien of a medieval Prince of Darkness. And it was here, in the character of Zug — and in the quirkily offbeat music devised and performed to great effect by Greg Morrison — that one felt the tug into deeper territory hinted at in the production's publicity.

It seems a heartless cavil in view of the many exquisite moments of high comedy contained in the show, but the concept for this particular production still needs tightening. A stronger unifying element would make the evening seem less like a sequence of disconnected — though inspired — skits, and more like a single, integrated piece of theatre.



# THE GLOBE AND MAIL

CANADA'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER • FOUNDED 1844 • TUESDAY, JANUARY 26, 1999

KATE TAYLOR  
*Theatre Critic*

**M**ump and Smoot are looking for God, but haven't found him yet. This pair of ever questing, often macabre and always funny clowns, first created a decade ago by Toronto performers Michael Kennard and John Turner, are back in a new show called *Something Else*, presented by Canadian Stage at its Berkeley Street theatre.

These adult clowns begin with a favourite theme: religion. The bumbling and mischievous sidekick Smoot (that's Turner) stumbles on stage, trying to keep up with the bossy Mump (that's Kennard) while carrying a cone-shaped icon and repeating a sacred chant in the inimitable gibberish in which this pair specializes. Here's another attempt to summon Ummo, the god whom Mump and Smoot worship, but once again he's a no-show. Instead, the sinister Zug (Rick Kunst) puts in a silent appearance.

From this scene of frustrated spiritualism, *Something Else* moves on to lighter fare, offering a magic show in which Mump puts Smoot in a box and hacks off all his limbs, and a grotesque cooking show in which some resilient audience member has to sit patiently at a dining table while the clowns kill dinner — and each other. After the intermission, it's war and space travel that are skewered in a show that repeatedly spoofs spectacle, from the mass to the military.

Fans will note Mump and Smoot are often more satisfying in shorter

## THEATRE REVIEW

### SOMETHING ELSE

Written and performed by  
Michael Kennard and John Turner  
Directed by Karen Hines  
Rating: ★★★

shows featuring a single, extended plot, but these scenes are linked by the clowns' struggle to control the forces they conjure. Their search for God, love or power leaves plenty of room for both lightly comic failure and darkly grotesque desperation.

They are joined on stage not only by Kunst's Zug, but also by Fingers (their composer Greg Morrison), who provides sonorous accompaniment at the keyboard while the robed figure of Scurry (production assistant Scott Macdonald) hurries about changing props. Kennard and Turner have worked with Kunst on previous shows, but the stage is now getting a bit crowded. Director Karen Hines, the clowns' long-time collaborator, sews it all together smoothly, but the larger cast and the multiple scenes do create an offering that is not as sharply focused as some previous efforts.

That's a minor problem, however: The crucial relationship that the manipulative Mump and the victimized Smoot always establish with their audience remains intact. In their ever yearning and sometimes violent characters we see ourselves.

*Until Feb. 14 at 26 Berkeley St., Toronto*

76 PAGES

TUESDAY, JANUARY 19, 1999

**DEMENTED**  
Mump & Smoot get manic at the Canadian Stage's Berkeley Street Theatre.



# Evil clowns appeal to bratty kid in us

They charm us with their childlike innocence.

But they delight us with the childlike evil that, when you strip off the rose-coloured glasses, goes hand-in-hand with that innocence.

For Toronto's Mump and Smoot it's been a fail-safe formula for success, and while they continue to refine it, they certainly aren't meddling with it in a major way in *"Something Else" With Zug*.

This latest show from the brilliantly demented minds of Michael Kennard and John Turner opened Sunday night at the Berkeley Street Theatre in association with Canadian Stage.

This time, the demented duo from the planet Umno forsake their worship of their native god in favour of an evil magician named Zug (played by perennial villain Rick Kunst).

With an assist from Zug — a cross between Aladdin's genie and the devil himself — Mump (Kennard) and Smoot (Turner) are able to live out their egocentric dreams.

But whatever it is they turn their hands to, there's a pitfall, it seems, from Mump's go at magic, Smoot's turn as a celebrity chef and Mump's fantasy of world conquest. Things just never quite seem to work out.

Babbling on in Umnoian — a language that occasionally intersects with a plain-spoken English bordering on bluntness, the two become what is perhaps the ultimate child in all of us: Innocent to be sure, but also selfish, self-centred and completely unaware of anything remotely resembling consequence.

In a world where clowning is too often synonymous with sloppiness, it

is perhaps as much the staging as a unique style of clowning that separates Mump and Smoot from a herd of also-rans.

Under the direction of Karen Hines, *Something Else With Zug* is exquisitely if occasionally primitively staged, building from a strong first act into a second that is pure theatrical bliss — madness and magic of the laugh-out-loud variety.

Working on a remarkably adaptable, inventive and evocative set created by Campbell Manning and lit by Michel Charbonneau, Kennard, Turner and company create a complete world in which they cocoon their audience in a show that turns the entire theatre into a stage.

*Something Else* is a show for the child in each of us — the one we rarely let out of the cage.



**John COULBOURN**  
THEATRE

**SUN rating** (OUT OF 5)



**MUMP & SMOOT**

Berkeley Street Theatre

THE SUN  
TORONTO

SHOWBIZ

# Clowns with an M-rating

By LISA WILTON  
Calgary Sun

If you've never been a fan of clowning, you've never seen Mump & Smoot.

John Turner and Michael Kennard's delinquent creations are a delightful, hilarious treat for those in need of a good laugh.

The duo's latest production, *Mump & Smoot in Something Else with Zug*, follows the hapless twosome through five manic, uproarious skits — each one depicting what happens when their deepest dreams come true.

Making their way through the venue while chanting like freakish Gregorian monks, Mump (Kennard) and his impish, childlike sidekick Smoot seem to be in the midst of some sort of ancient religious ritual.

When the well-meaning clowns fail to summon their great native god Ummo, they become exasperated and desperate.

Although Ummo is a no-show, Mump and Smoot unwittingly unleash a menacing genie from his magic lamp prison.

Frightened at first, Smoot and Mump soon realize the genie will grant them whatever their hearts desire, leading to some darkly comic and side-splitting situations.

The clowns are mischievous and self-centered (they are horrified and offended when an audience member dares to cough during the show), but they also have an innocent sincerity the audience easily sympathizes with.

For example, Mump — whose first wish is to be a magician — becomes distraught when one of his new-found magic tricks goes awry and he is unable to bring back Smoot, whom he has just chopped up into little bits and stuffed in a bag.

It's macabre stuff, but Kennard and Turner's incredible comic timing keeps the audience in stitches.

As the fearful genie Zug, Christian Laurin nearly stole every scene he was in with his tall, intimidating presence and ghoulish voice. Still, it was impossible to match Kennard and Turner's inspired performances.

*Something Else* has a limited run at ATP so get your tickets soon, because this is one adult clown show you can't miss.

Besides, Mump and Smoot would be horribly offended if you did.



SUN RATING out of 5  
●●●●● 1/2

*Mump & Smoot in Something Else with Zug*

At the Martha Cohen Theatre in the Arts Centre until March 19

**UPROARIOUS**  
... Mump & Smoot are not your average clowns.

MONDAY, MARCH 13, 2000

ATP

ONLINE: <http://www.canoe.ca>

THE CALGARY SUN 20th Anniversary

## Be careful what you wish for

LIZ NICHOLLS  
Journal Theatre Writer  
EDMONTON

The premise is seductive. What would Mump and Smoot wish for if they stumbled on a genie?

Clown wish fulfillment isn't normally something that should turn your crank, if you have any self-respect. It's a redundancy for one thing. What else does the red-nose, big-foot brigade do except run around exercising their inner exhibitionist on wishes? All that "spontaneous" wishing on a star — a little kid's smile, a red rubber ball, etc. — can really get on your nerves. Inhibition can be a good thing.

The prospect of Mump and Smoot negotiating with a genie, however, is instantly mesmerizing. How would the macabre clown duo from the planet Ummonia want to change their lives? What kind of dreams do "clowns of horror" have anyway? Instant gratification for this post-apocalyptic Abbott and Costello is a particularly intriguing idea to juggle since the relationship between the graver, more formal, more manipulative Mump (Michael Kennard) and guileless, more excitable, more malleable Smoot (John Turner) is so fraught with

### THEATRE REVIEW

Mump and Smoot In  
Something Else with Zug  
★★★★

Theatre: Theatre Network at the Roxy

Director: Karen Hines

Starring: Michael Kennard, John Turner, Christian Laurin

friction and aggro anyhow.

You remember what happened when Mump and Smoot undertook a sort of wilderness quest in the Ummonian outback (*Mump And Smoot In Tense*)? Well, you know what camping's like, all that gore and panic. And as they say you never really know your friends until you travel together. *Mump And Smoot In Fer-* no starts with the proposition that travelling is hell and continues through a disastrous air voyage that will take our clownly pair in to the Great Beyond, a landscape that includes death, dismemberment, cannibalism and loss of faith. Samuel Beckett's clowns had it easy; they got to wait around for Godot.

Intermittently desperate devotees of the god Ummo — between existential crises of faith — Mump and Smoot take themselves at the outset on a sort of re-

Talk about letting the genie out of the bottle: Zug provides instant gratification

for Mump and Smoot, that post-apocalyptic Abbott and Costello

The show unrolls as a series of "wish" vignettes linked by Zug and by a brilliant, improvising musician. Greg Morrison as Finners sits at the keyboard like the Phantom of the Opera. And the score he creates and plays for the production (directed like its predecessors by Karen Hines, of *Pochty* fame), is amazingly expressive and allusive, with stand-alone interludes and nods to vaudeville, Mussorgsky, rock opera ...

Wishes turn into escalating disasters. Mump's wish to be a magician turns into a riot of tawdry showbiz gone wrong. Very wrong, witness the gory amputations, the bleeding stumps, Mump's moment of horror when he's left with the bloody cleaver. Even the old standby, the rabbit from the hat, turns gross-me-out. Meanwhile, Smoot, cast as the lovely assistant, continues to

smile his nervous show-must-go-on smile and create a free-form dance diversion.

With the inspired Chef Smoot routine, the pair venture into the audience and pluck a willing victim to dine onstage. The creation *d'jour* doesn't give up the ghost easily. The solution: staple it to the plate.

Mump's authority always becomes oppressive, *literally* in a military sequence, perhaps a bit overlong and to my mind the least inspired (which is to say still darned funny). It sees the half-

**lit Roxy erupt in war, cannonballs** and blood, plus an affecting death tableau. We get to join in. But, then, the audience is always a part of a Mump and Smoot show. Their taste for the morbid, and the way their schemes tap into exasperation, malice, revenge and short-lived regret, are part of us.

## Sunday Review

# Mump and Smoot are something else

By COLIN MACLEAN  
Staff Writer

Once again, Mump and Smoot take us on a quest.

Like Sir Lancelot or Faust, these two cheerfully gruesome clowns dare the powers of an infinite being (in this case the Great God Ummo) and so must experience a voyage of self-discovery before they are allowed to find peace.

It is this epic element that lifts their journey from a collection of (very funny) skits to the status of classic theatre. They may fill the stage with blood, viscera and spatter but their full-length clown performance is anchored in the stuff of myth.

Mump (Michael Kennard) is the long one with the slow burn and single unicorn horn. Smoot (John Turner) is his stunted sidekick with the goat's horns and short fuse. They create a world that runs by strict rules but within those rules, there is barely controlled anarchy.

*Something Else* begins in the

dark. We first hear the sound of Ummonian, the pair's own peculiar band of gibberish, in the distance. Don't worry

about the language, in about 10 minutes you will, strangely enough, begin to understand everything they are saying.

The boys are in search of Ummo. When the Great God doesn't answer their prayer immediately, they unleash the evil genie Zug (Christian Laurin), a frightening apparition. He grants them access to their innermost desires which they hilariously pursue, only to learn, as all heroes do, that all your excesses and sins become part of your life and return to haunt you.

So, the two transport us into a series of outrageously funny but often unsettling adventures.

Mump becomes a magician but, although some of his illusions are impressive, he can't get it quite right. When he summons the rabbit out of the hat, one of the hapless bunny's legs is torn off. Smoot is a chef and prepares a particularly odious dish called Patooie, which features a small green lizard-like creature the two cook up for some poor schmuck from the audience. When the lizard won't die, they chop the arm off the puppeteer below the stage. The two

become soldiers and, at one point, Mump declares war on the audience and we end up throwing balls at each other. In a particularly effective bit of theatre, the two blast off into space where they float in slow motion amongst the stars.

M and S get a lot of help, first from the audience, which they play like Clapton plays the guitar.

Zug is a fearsome creation and Greg Morrison, looking like some alien whose body hasn't quite been assembled correctly, provides a splendidly infernal score and soundscape.

Mump and Smoot are unique. There is no other experience in this country that can compare to their ability to create and inhabit a brilliantly conceived world - a twisted circle of hell that will often leave you helpless with laughter.

*Mump and Smoot in Something Else* is produced by Theatre Network at the Roxy. The performance runs until Feb. 20.

**MUMP AND SMOOT IN SOMETHING ELSE - 4 SUNS (out of 5)**

(Colin Maclean is an arts reporter for the CBC Edmonton News.)



File photo  
Mump and Smoot are at the Roxy until Feb. 20.

## NOW

EVERY THURSDAY  
**free**January 11-20, 1999  
Vol 18 • Number 20

Audited Circulation

# Demonic duo get wish list

**MUMP & SMOOT IN SOMETHING ELSE WITH ZUG**, written by Michael Kennard and John Turner, directed by Karen Hines, with Kennard, Rick Kunst, Scott Macdonald, Greg Morrison and Turner. Presented by Canadian Stage in association with Mump and Smoot at Canadian Stage Downstairs (26 Berkeley). Runs to February 14, Wednesday-Saturday at 8 pm, Sunday 7 pm. \$28-\$35. 368-3110, 872-1111. Rating: **NNNN**

It's hard to think of a more entertaining and funny recent show than **Mump & Smoot In Something Else With Zug**, the triumphant new work from the masters of the scary laugh.

At the show's start, Mump (**Michael Kennard**) and Smoot (**John Turner**) try summoning up their god Ummo. Instead, they find a lamp, which when rubbed produces Zug (**Rick Kunst**), a menacing green-faced genie who grants them anything they want.

These wishes take up the rest of the show, giving us hilarious access to the demonic duo's — and our own — hidden desires for power, love and magic.

Director **Karen Hines** successfully shapes individual scenes while giving the work lots of momentum, although one scenario in the second act goes on a bit too long.

**Greg Morrison**, meanwhile, plays the show's thunderous electronic music with frightening ease — appropriate since he's put onstage and costumed himself as a character named Fingers.

But it's Turner and Kennard who hijack our sympathies as they search for meaning and get sidetracked, sometimes violently, by their foibles and vanities.

In this pre-millennial year, when we're all a little insecure about what the future holds, Mump and Smoot's comic quests seem all the more poignant — and necessary.

— GS ●



## Clown duo's ready for whatever's spat at them

### Something Else

308-3310

By Michael Kennard and John Turner. Directed by Karen Hines. Set by Campbell Manning. Lighting by Michel Charbonneau. Music and sound by Greg Morrison. To Feb. 14 at Canadian Stage Theatre (Downstairs), 20 Berkeley St. ★ ★ ★

### BY VIT WAGNER THEATRECRITIC

It takes some doing to one-up Mump and Smoot, the popular Toronto clown duo with a penchant for uncouth behaviour.

But that's precisely what one intimidated audience member managed to do at last night's opening of the tandem's new show, *Something Else*, at Canadian Stage Theatre.

Invited on stage as a dinner guest in a sketch that had Mump (Michael Kennard) and Smoot (John Turner) spoofing as chefs, the woman was offered a glass of bituish, fluorescent-looking wine. She sniffed the screw-top, swirled some of the liquid around in her glass, took a sip, swished it around in her mouth and ostentatiously spat it out.

If the woman was a plant, her visibly

aghast hosts gave a credible account of appearing shocked.

In any case, her contribution was entirely in keeping with the spirit of the show. It was not the first or last time in the two-hour performance that fluids squirted, sprayed or oozed. On most occasions, of course, it was blood.

*Something Else* is more of the same from the gibberish-talking duo, who have been up to their round red noses in macabre mayhem for more than a dozen years. And, as before, it's the timid, deferential Smoot who bears the brunt of Mump's arrogant bullying.

In one of the show's grizzlier scenarios, Mump, assuming the guise of master magician, dismembers Smoot and tosses his arms, legs, head and torso into a sack. At least Mump seems genuinely remorseful when he realizes that Smoot cannot be reassembled with a simple tap of his wand. Never mind. Smoot gets even in a military bit by arming the audience with bombs to hurl at Mump, who has been striding around in a Napoleonic get-up.

The flimsy pretext for these scene changes is the appearance of a malevolent, wish-granting genie, Zug (Rick

Kunst). But the storyline isn't much more than a convenient way of creating opportunities for Mump and Smoot to change costumes and do their thing in different situations. It feels like a series of spinoffs: *Mump And Smoot In The Army*, *Mump And Smoot In The Kitchen*, *Mump And Smoot In The Space Program*.

Kennard and Turner have always been fast on their feet, quick to work with whatever the folks in the seats might throw at them — figuratively and literally.

Equally attuned to the proceedings is musician Greg Morrison, who tracks the performers' moves and gestures with the attentiveness of a silent movie accompanist, while tossing in a slew of creepy sound effects along the way.

The material isn't always as inspired as it might be. And Kennard and Turner regularly exercise that special prerogative of clowning and physical theatre: if you've got a gag that works, milk it.

*Something Else* is calculated to please Mump and Smoot's legion of fans. And the variety of situations encountered by the two makes the show an inviting primer for the uninitiated as well.



**MACABRE MAYHEM:** Smoot reacts to Mump as he pulls a rabbit from a hat in the duo's grizzly magic scene from *Something Else*.