

MICHAEL KENNARD

PERFORMANCE  
REVIEWS  
and  
ARTICLES





ED KAISER, THE JOURNAL FILE

Michael Kennard, left, as Mump  
and John Turner as Smoot in a 1990  
Fringe play, Mump and Smoot in  
Caged With Wog, co-starring Debbie  
Tidy, top, as Wog

# Mump makes the grade





# EDMONTON JOURNAL



**Avalanche  
bury  
Oilers 3-0**  
SPORTS / C1



**Class clown  
has been  
to hell  
and back**  
A&E / D1



**Liane Faulder**



**tarts it up on her recent roadtrip BISTRO / E1**

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## 'Clown of horror' trades hell for halls of academe at U of A

LIZ NICHOLLS  
Journal Theatre Writer  
EDMONTON

Mump and Smoot have been on religious pilgrimages together. They've hunted for treasure in a nightmare netherworld. They've even gone camping together, a test of a relationship if there ever was one.

Canada's post-apocalyptic "clowns of horror" have been to hell and back, with periodic layovers in purgatory. And on these excursions into the unknown, they've unleashed an unprecedented melee of chaos and gore, dismemberment, cannibalism, betrayal, torture, death. They've been around.

But the halls of academe? The faculty club? The politically correct planet of the morning class and the grade-point average? *Professor Mump*?

Yes, Michael Kennard, who for 20 years has played the graver, cooler, bossier Mump to John Turner's more malleable, guileless Smoot, finds himself half a continent away from his stage partner for eight months of the year — on the faculty of the University of Alberta drama department as an assistant professor.

Kennard is popular, both with the profs and the students. The latter clamour and queue for his quickly-filled classes in clowning, movement, and performer-created theatre. There are tears when some inevitably get turned away.

Kennard himself, lanky, casual, affable, has a certain bemused shrug about him. "Who would ever have thought?" he grins modestly,



PHOTO:  
CURTIS COMEAU

At left, Kennard today, working with U of A drama students in a movement class

two years into his new gig. After all, his route to theatre school (University of Guelph) included high-school dropout hiatus.

"And at Guelph, I think they were glad to see me go," he says cheerfully of the period that had, as its grand finale, his own clown production, *Pot Over The Rainbow* (three clowns up in the clouds, smoking a joint, waiting instructions to intervene in suicide cases below). "Then when Mump and Smoot hit it big, boy were they eager to have me, us, back."

Actually, Mump and Smoot, and their sunnier alter-egos, have frequently dipped into university drama departments, for brief outbursts of clown workshops and shows. Bishops College in Lennoxville, Que., has been a destination for a decade. The clownly pair has taught in Tel Aviv, La Jolla, and at Yale. At York University in Kennard's hometown, Toronto, he did an *Alice Through The Looking Glass*; "I made everybody a clown; Alice was straight."

Kennard was one of those kids who dug per-

forming. His parents couldn't help noticing the dance versions, pyjama-clad, of *Mr. Bojangles*. He was an actor by 12, then a dancer. "At 16, I dropped all that, and discovered improv," he says of workshops at Second City. "I guess I wasn't that great," he grins, "since I didn't get hired. But I did go back to direct three of their mainstage shows, two in Toronto, one in Chicago."

Meanwhile, he gravitated away from the actor's life toward clowning. Why is that? Kennard ponders. "There's a freedom to it, I guess. In my body. ... I had trouble with Shakespeare. Or my teachers teaching Shakespeare. What I loved was that you could do anything with clowning, Shakespeare, anything. It's a template for any theatrical style."

Kennard supported himself at university as a birthday party clown, supplemented by corporate clown gigs.

See MUMP / D2



## Everyone has 'clown potential,' Kennard says

### MUMP

*Continued from D1*

For the latter, his incarnation was "mime robot." With kids, he was hip to the widespread fear of clowns.

"I'd arrive at the party in my costume, but without makeup," says the future horror clown. "They'd see me as human, then help me design my makeup. So no one was ever scared of me."

Then Kennard moved into his darker "hobo clown" phase. He's still shaken by the bizarre tragedy of his clown roommate at the time, a part-time steeplejack who fell to his death while working on the CBC tower. Then Kennard met Turner at a Second City workshop, and a friendship cum artistic partnership was born that would change the Canadian theatre profile here and abroad.

From the start, Kennard's clown was in charge, the higher-status so-called "Joey" of the pair. Turner, who'd showed up "in a black leather jacket, full of macho swagger, thinking he looked very cool and tough," became the resentful, subservient one. Kennard laughs. "And I got stuck in tights for 20 years."

On a Friday the 13th in 1988, Mump and Smoot were born, in much the same makeup they wear now, in a macabre 20-minute piece called *Jump The Gun*, in which

Mump emerged from a fridge-sized box and Smoot was coaxed from a bag, to discover they were the sole survivors of an apocalypse. The stage, Kennard has said, "was a skating rink of gore." Audiences loved it.

At the return engagement, the flashpots went off by accident. "There was a huge explosion. Screaming, fire trucks, all the news stations." Two stage assistants were in hospital, with severe burns, for a month. And "we didn't perform for nine months; we were too rattled."

When Edmonton Fringe audiences caught sight of them in 1989, as they gibbered away in Ummonian in *Mump and Smoot In Something* — and Mump would try to strangle himself to death with his own severed arm — it was their real debut, says Kennard. Edmonton showed them that macabre was a big draw; Edmonton made them stars. And that's not a word in common usage in Canadian clown circles: "Name a well-known Canadian clown!"

So, even if "Professor Mump" is an intriguingly creative appointment, Kennard living in Edmonton has a certain artistic coherence. After all, Mump and Smoot premiered their last new show, *Mump and Smoot In Flux*, here (at Theatre Network) in 2002.

They've been back since, between interludes enforced by injuries and their own projects. Now, there's a

new Mump and Smoot in the works. Kennard and Turner worked on it during the summer, at Turner's Manitoulin Island farm and Kennard's cabin near Parry Sound, Ont. Still unnamed, the show, "about transformation," already has June dates at the Magnetic North Festival in Ontario and the Vancouver East Cultural Centre.

Meanwhile, Kennard loves Edmonton, and the Edmonton theatre community. He loves his cute house in Ritchie. He loves his students. He's worked on movement and physicalizing character with the cast of Studio Theatre's *Black Comedy*, opening Thursday on the Timms Centre stage. He is, by all reports, an inspiring teacher. He thinks of his job as "taking whatever the students have, and teaching them *how* to create, not *what*."

Everyone, Kennard thinks, has "clown potential." But whether that translates into "creating a viable clown for a viable show is another thing. You can't gauge that in a classroom situation."

So it's best to err on the side of generosity. "John was a horrible clown at the start, as he'll admit," Kennard says. "And look what happened. You can be surprised; that's the beauty of it."

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For more on the local theatre scene,  
read "Liz Nicholls on Theatre" at  
*edmontonjournal.com/entertainment*



## The Coyotes



Peter Anderson (as Slobberjaw) and Michael Kennard (as Muzzleguts)



**At Caravan Farm Theatre, Armstrong, BC until August 11, 2019**

**Tickets from \$15.75 (youth) to \$36.75 (adult) at [www.caravanfarmtheatre.com](http://www.caravanfarmtheatre.com)**

***Posted August 8, 2019***

Whether you consider them cute and furry or nasty and wily, the coyotes in Caravan Farm Theatre's show, *The Coyotes*, are a lot of fun. Peter Anderson, who wrote the piece forty-one years ago, and Michael Kennard (*Mump of Mump and Smoot fame*) are a pair of goofy, mangy canines in grubby tan-coloured longjohns, coyote masks (by Melody Anderson), fur-covered paws and puffy tails.

Caravan, celebrating its 40<sup>th</sup> season, began as a travelling company in a brightly coloured, horse drawn caravan that took *The Coyotes* around the Interior, including Salmon Arm where Peter met Melody. They've been together ever since and Caravan Farm Theatre, now in a permanent location on a working farm outside Armstrong, is still going strong, too.



Credit: Andrea Ledingham

Peter says the piece – using a shortage of water as a metaphor – was originally a commentary on what was then perceived as a looming oil shortage. Years later, it's a story about a looming water shortage.

The plot is deliciously silly and politically left-leaning: greedy Wanda (James Fagan Tait) and her partner in crime Bigelow (Tom Jones) make farmer Agnes (Natascha Girgis) an offer on her farm she cannot resist. Her daughter Vida (Christine Quintana) is eager to be rid of the place but Vida's sister Leoty (Kaitlyn Yott) wants Mom to hang on to the place that has been in the family for years. Leoty gets tangled up with White Shadow (Aaron M. Wells), the coyote pack's handsome alpha male. Leoty's father Maroni (Kenthen H. Thomas) was a First Nations man. I don't know if he's dead or a ghost but it really doesn't matter. He doesn't like the look of the future and he's determined to prevent it.



Credit: Andrea Ledingham

Music composed by John Millard is provided by Marguerite Witvoet, Ajineen Sagal and Matti Pulkki.

The show takes place in a roofed, rustic gazebo-type structure while the audience sits on bleachers under the stars. And are there ever stars! Far from ambient light, the heavens offer a light show like no other.

Like Theatre Under the Stars, Caravan Farm Theatre is a total experience with an audience that's made up of casual, family-oriented, beer and wine-drinking, popcorn-eating folks. Before the show, people take out folding chairs and eat picnic dinners in the grassy parking lot. There are horses in the field. Wildflowers. It smells farmy. And then there's that great big sky.



Credit: Andrea Ledingham

Because last year the smoke from wildfires was so bad, Caravan shortened its run this year. The show closes on Sunday, August 11 even though the air is clear. There are a few seats left for Friday, Saturday and Sunday but if you can't make it this summer, there's also a different show at Christmas (this year based on The Nutcracker) as well as sleighrides.

The farm is on Salmon River Road about 15 minutes from Armstrong, BC. Farmstrong Cidery, in an 1896 restored barn, is a terrific place to visit and, of course, Armstrong Cheese is, no kidding, in Armstrong. Sprouted up in the last few years are several restaurants that look interesting; and there's always the Armstrong Hotel to stay in. Nothing fancy, but comfortable.





While they say you can't teach a dog new tricks, director Estelle Shook proves you can teach a forty-one year old play – nominally about coyotes – a thing or two. Terrific entertainment for the whole family and well worth the drive.

# STAGE SCENES

By JON KAPLAN and GLENN SUMI

## Crazy clowns

Hate to admit it, but we don't find the comedy of Shakespeare's clowns very funny. Because the language often doesn't work today and the references are obscure, the result is a series of meaningless puns.

Cue a group from the **U of T** and **McMaster** that's exploring the performance practices of the Queen's Men, a troupe favoured by Queen Elizabeth I and an influence on the young Shakespeare. Next October they'll stage a trio of works by the Queen's Men, and in preparation they organized workshop performances last week to see what made Elizabethan comedy funny.

Director **Peter Cockett** had an excellent idea to explore pre-Shakespearean shtick: invite two skilled clowns to play it. **Mike Kennard** (Mump and Smoot) and **Andy Massingham** (Geoffrey and Jeffrey) joined six other actors to try out the laughs in scenes from plays staged by the Queen's Men, and their physical work brought the material to life in hilarious fashion.

Kennard usually played the tricky, shape-changing Vice figure, while Massingham took on the role of the simple clown, gulled by the Vice. Sometimes, since the original English text was difficult to understand, Kennard relied on his Mump-like gibberish and clarified all the obscurities with his physicality and expressive face.

The laughs were a great payoff, but it was just as fascinating to watch the audience's reaction to the female roles. All played by men, as was the tradition, they were usually comical; **Jason Gray**'s whorish Meretrix was a standout. But in a variation on the King Lear story, Cordelia (here, Cordella, played by **David Tompa**) became a moving figure whose wooing by the king of France (Gray) proved that powerful emotion lends reality to any casting, even if it's not so politically correct today.



# Drama stepping into musical

The decision to present a Stephen Sondheim musical at the Inner Stage in November represents another bold step by the Department of Drama in the direction of dramatic relevance. Sondheim, according to director Rex Buckle, is one of the most sophisticated modern playwrights and *Company* ranks with the most demanding of his works.

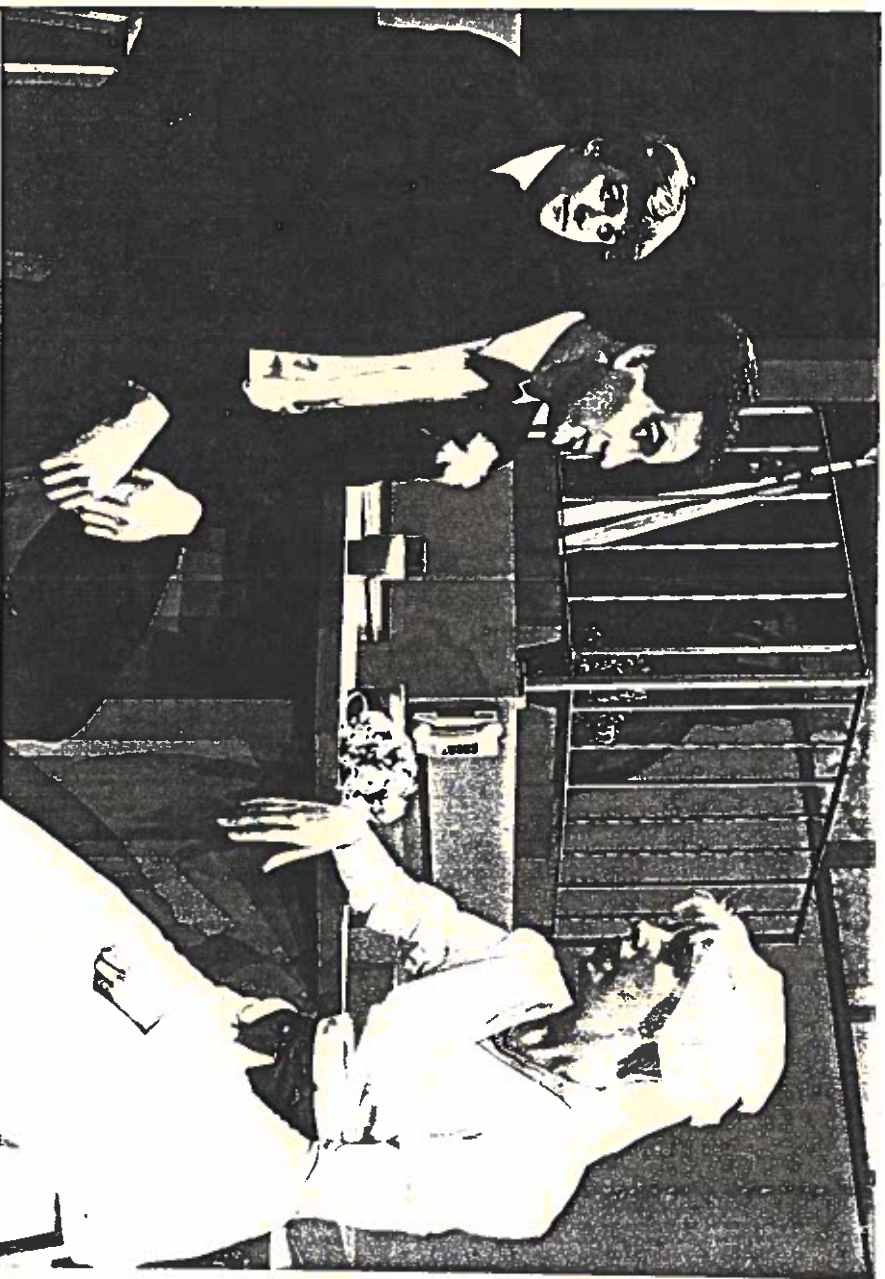
Department of Drama professor Buckle describes *Company* as a 'concept' musical, one built around a single theme rather than using a linear story line. The theme is relationships, in and out of marriage, seen through the eyes of an unmarried character whose friends' unromantic adventures contribute to his own personal growth. The play, he says, has 'bite' and illustrates the intellectual demands Sondheim habitually makes on his audiences.

A cast of eight female and six male players selected for a combination of musical, dancing and acting talent, are rehearsing for 10 weeks, rather than the five or six weeks normally given to a non musical play. Department of Music professor Charles Wilson, the musical director, has formed a five-piece orchestra of professional musicians for this production and is developing the singing talents of the cast whose members are also emerging as accomplished dancers under the direction of choreographer Caroline Smith.

Prof. Buckle who teaches "Level II Acting" is well-known to Guelph audiences as the founder/artistic director of Guelph's

Road Show Theatre which, from 1974 to 1980, presented a wealth of contemporary plays with a company initially composed of Department of Drama graduates. "I have been hoping for an opportunity to direct Sondheim's *Company* ever since I first heard it," he says. "The technical complexities are immense and it makes tremendous demands on the cast."

Musicals are expensive to mount, according to Department of Drama chairman Leonard Conolly. "Our resources are limited and it is only occasionally that we can offer a show like *Company*. The project is, however, more than justified by the special nature of the challenge it presents to drama students."



# Schemes, plots and comic mayhem

by Ulrike Rodrigues

The drama department's first offering of the fall season is in the tradition of the famous Whitehall farces of the 1920's. *Tons of Money*, by Will Evans and "Valentine", reveal in the adventures of a young flamboyant couple, up to their eyeballs in debt, who inherit a fortune and then attempt to conceal their windfall from their hungry creditors. The situation gives rise to a series of schemes, plots and comic mayhem.

*Tons of Money* features a cast of mostly third year drama students under the direction of Jim Warren, a Toronto actor and director who has been teaching with the Department of Drama for two years. This is Warren's first major production for the department and he chose the farce style of *Tons of Money* for special reasons.

## fast-paced slapstick

Farce, explains Warren demands a discipline, control, and stamina that challenges the student actor. In comparing farce to satire (a more specific parody of social mores and situations), farce thrusts believable characters into ridiculous situations with unbelievable logic. It is fast-paced, visual slapstick that requires an almost choreographed precision.

The actor is given the premise of the farce in the

script, but the life of the performance depends on his or her comic timing and consistency when adapting it for an audience.

*Tons of Money* does not concentrate as heavily on sexual innuendo or role typing, as do other farces of its time. The cast has a greater male/female balance and the females' roles are more varied and interesting. The focus is on mistaken identities of stock character types.

In choosing a twenties farce over a more contemporary comedy, Warren explains that *Tons of Money* emerges as an example of formula farce that remains relatively unchanged through the years. The twenties were a popular period for farce, often poking fun at the reservation of the fading Victorian era, and they produced a legion of rollicking respites.

Scott Maudsley and Karen McGregor play the winsome, indebted couple. Maudsley's role transitions from carefree husband to bandelier Mexican to beard-stroking preacher are well done and express the different characters without losing the continuity of the disguising husband underneath. He showed a talent for versatility and is excellently suited for comedy.

McGregor's performance is both honed and flamboyant in the spirit of the thoroughly modern Twenties wife. She, like her stunning outfits (by Alan Watts and Jill Gill) gives both high camp and polished

Most of the other performances are calculated to create a whirlwind atmosphere of quickfire lines and physical antics around the central characters.

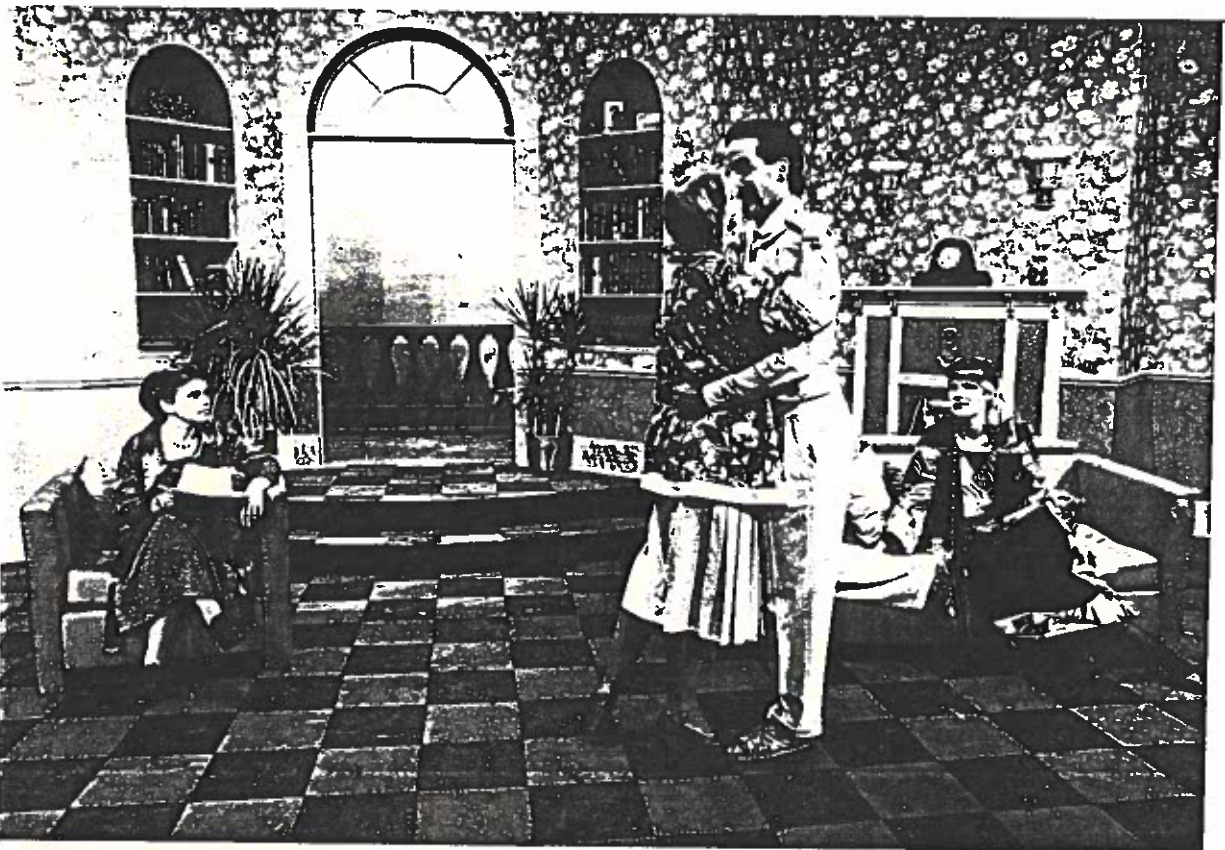
## eyes-to-heaven comedy

Nick Johnne as Sprules the butler is an eyes-to-heaven comedic springboard for the more downplayed characters of Simpson the maid (Noreen Shah-Presser). In turn, this balance of characters continues in the absurdness of Giles the gardener (Alain Baillargeon) contrasted with the straightforwardness of Miss Mullet the spinster aunt (Anna Brunmeyer). Watch for the cucumber scene.

Cathy Bose, Mike Kenard and David Withers' characters add to the comic confusion as forgotten or unknown people from the couples' past. They play off each other very well and give the last half of the play a stream of hilariously yearning kisses and knowing winks and eyebrow raises.

Technically, the play's sets (designed by Alan Watts) are, with the remarkable costumes, the highlight of the play. They are lush and painstakingly finished for authenticity.

*Tons of Money* plays at the Inner Stage from October 21 to October 26. Tickets are available at the University Centre box office or the Bookshelf.



The *Amingtons* review their financial situation



## TONS OF MONEY

# Frantic-paced farce

By GARY MANNING  
Managing Editor

If you mix Steve Martin and Martin Short you get something of an idea of the off-the-wall energy Scott Maudsley brings to the wildly-exaggerated role of Aubrey Henry Maitland Allington in the University of Guelph drama department's production of *Tons of Money*.

As the central character, around whom the plot revolves, Maudsley is never lacking the wacky dialogue or actions to keep this farce rolling at a frantic pace.

Director Jim Warren might reign in Maudsley just a bit at the start of the play until the audience gets used to him. A few of the earlier good lines didn't get time to settle before Maudsley was rushing on to the next with machine gun rapidity.

The play by Will Evans and Valentine is in the style of *One for the Pot*, which many might have seen at this summer's Shaw Festival. There's a fortune to be inherited and no lack of long-lost claimants rushing in and out to the confusion of nearly everyone.

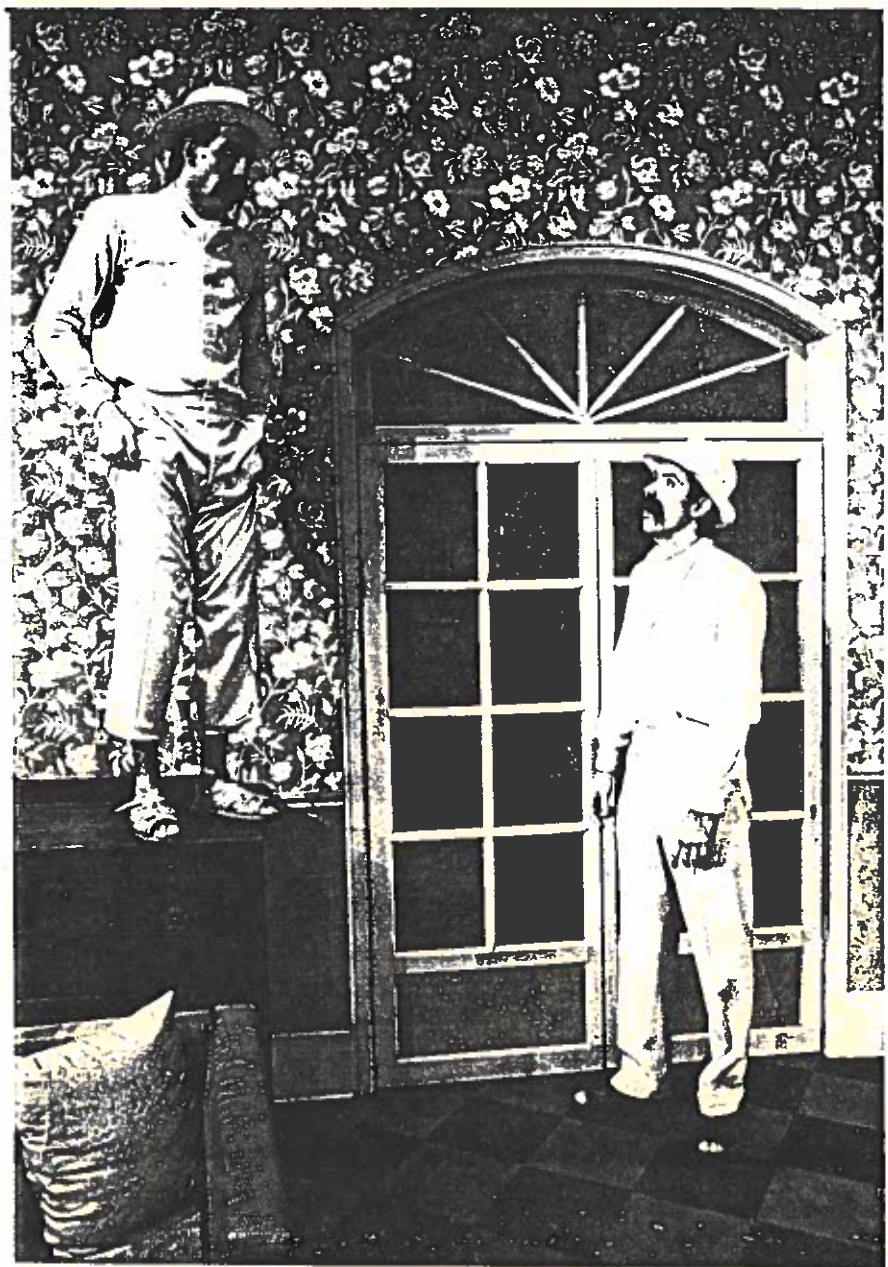
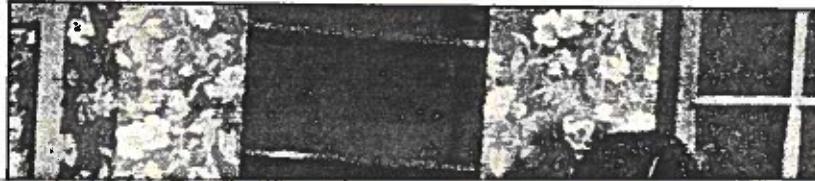
Despite Maudsley's pivotal role in the play, it is the combined work of every cast member that makes *Tons of Money*, tons of fun. Karen McGregor and Kathy Boese are solid as the female protagonists Louise Allington and Jean Everard. Anna Brunemeyer gives a gem of a performance having all the mannerism — physical, vocal, and facial — of a believable elderly spinster Benita Mullett.

Michael Kennard and Dave Withers don't enter until the later stages of the play but their contributions to the hilarity are as effective in their subtlety and understatement as Maudsley's is in the other direction.

The roles of Sprules the butler and Simpson the parlormaid are essentially minor ones, but Nick Johnne and Nooreen Shah-Preusser with good comic sense and timing lifted them above their station.

Top marks have to go to Allan Watts for set and costumes. Absolutely first class in looks and so well used by the cast. A special citation goes to whomever devised the arrangements for what seemed like a ton of debris that fell outside the patio doors when Aubrey's workroom exploded. The effects, costumes and set all added a degree of polish that enhanced the sophistication of the entire production.

*Tons of Money* runs to the end of the week at the Inner Stage on campus. Curtain is 8 p.m.





## Asylum mush-headed but has a heart of gold

By Vit Wagner/Toronto Star

As you pass the box office on your way into *Asylum* at the Annex Theatre, you are given not a ticket but a boarding pass. Accept this as your first indication that *Asylum*, a new creation by Theatre Resource Centre, isn't to be a very conventional evening at the theatre.

You present your boarding pass to a stewardess, who informs you that the scheduled flight to Honolulu (the one you had no idea you were taking until just now) has been diverted to the planet Arcturus because of turbulence. Uh-huh.

After a brief instruction in the hula, audience members are given an explanation of disbarment on Earth before passing through the "purification chamber" that leads to Arcturus.

*Asylum*. It quickly becomes apparent, is not so much a play as it is a trip, both in the conventional sense of travelling from one place to another, but also in the sense that "trip" was used in the '60s — albeit this time without aid of mind-altering substances. The production's psychedelic look and holistic sensibility give you the distinct impression of travelling not only through space but also through time — backwards.

*Asylum* a 75-minute piece of slow theatre conceived, de-

Asylum

Conceived, designed and directed by Ian Wallace. Lighting designed by Campbell Manning. Soundscapes by Marisa C. Gray. Rully Ste. Marie and Liz Shaw. A Theatre Resource Centre production running to May 20 at The Annex Theatre, 730 Balfour St. 537-4193.

signed and directed by Ian Wallace, offers a diverting, at times even magical examination of the way humans, specifically we upright Torontonians, go about our affairs.

The six pre-tossed performers (Nick John, Mike Kennard, Sue Morrison, Denise Norman, Debbie Tids and John Turner) are students of Earth Simulation Academy of Earth Simulation where they are training to take up residence on Earth. In addition to experiencing love and lust, they also learn about hostility and rejection.

There is much that is mush-headed about this show's over-precious platitudes on feeling good about yourself. But its complete lack of pretension, the extremely accomplished and enlightening performances and the cleverness of the set give it an irresistible charm.

Indeed, the magical quality of Wallace's design for the show actually has the effect of transporting the audience to an alien, exotic environment. That alone is a significant achievement, considering the venue.



**TORONTO REPERTORY THEATRE PRESENTS:**

# **The Blood on the Throat of the Cat**

By Rainer Werner Fassbinder

Translated by E.M. Baxter

St. Michael's Theatre

Tuesday, October 21 to Saturday, October 25, 8 p.m.

Sunday, October 26, 2:30 p.m.

Director: *Yvonne Adalian*

Cast in order of appearance:

Phoebe Zeitgeist .....	<i>Masha Buell</i>
Policeman .....	<i>Warren Coates</i>
Butcher .....	<i>Daniel Varga</i>
Gigolo .....	<i>Michael Kennard</i>
Soldier .....	<i>Martin Julien</i>
Teacher .....	<i>Brooke Lovell</i>
Dead Soldier's Wife .....	<i>Lucy Filipone</i>
Girl .....	<i>Wanda Buchanan</i>
Model .....	<i>Jennifer Capraru</i>
Mistress .....	<i>Cathy Smith</i>

A surreal satire on love, lust, and lack of communication, **The Blood on the Throat of the Cat** focuses on an uncomprehending Phoebe Zeitgeist who is sent to earth to observe human activity.

A series of 37 humorous and frightening vignettes shows the confusion of the urban experience and the disparity between language and action.

Founded in 1982, Toronto Repertory Theatre has concentrated on producing innovative international and Canadian plays. **The Blood on the Throat of the Cat** marks TRT's exploration of filmmaker Rainer Werner Fassbinder's iconoclastic playwriting and reveals his concept of anarchy in art. Written in 1971 for Fassbinder's own company, Antitheater, the play examines stereotypes of contemporary civilization.

Margaret Penman's review, CJRT's On the Arts, Fri. Oct. 17  
(reconstructed from her notes)

Last night I took a chance and saw something unusual and different....a weird little show called The Blood on the Throat of the Cat by the filmmaker R.W. Fassbinder, playing at St. Michael's Theatre as part of the International Brecht Festival that goes into high gear next week. It proved to be a good evening's entertainment--a short play(about 90 minutes), brutal, sexy, and funny.

I was not familiar with the company, Toronto Repertory Theatre, which was founded in 1982 and is currently run by two women, Catherine Vaneri and Carol Kusnierek. Fassbinder wrote the play for performance by his own company in 1971, and in it expresses many of the themes familiar to his film fans; despair over the possibility of meaningful long-term relationships, anger at contemporary society for depriving people of feeling, concern over exploitation both sexual and economic.

The action revolves around the central figure of alien Phoebe Zeitgeist(looking wonderful in a brilliant white jumpsuit). Pheobe has studied human language but cannot really understand what's going on around her. In a series of brief vignettes, using dance and mime as well as speech, the very talented cast of ten, representing types from Fassbinder's(and Brecht's) world act out scenes from their lives. Set in an urban wasteland of decaying doors with a terrific backdrop of white cityscape on a black ground, with such graffiti as "Kant Can't", "Sid Lives," and peace signs, some of these scenes are sharp and ironic, some poignant, many funny. Most of the humour comes in the climactic party sequence, when Phoebe feeds back what she has learned, parrot fashion, with surprising and scary consequences.

The play stresses the discrepancy between what people say and what they do, and highlights the consequences of turning language into action. Not, perhaps, to everyone's taste, but a very intriguing and well-presented show and, in the end, a very touching one.

