



T H E
S O U R C E

SPRING 2004

**REPORTS FROM THE
INDIE THEATRE TRADE FORUM**

CRITICAL MASS
THEATRE CRITICISM IN THE HOT SEAT

TRADING STAGES
TAKING THE SHOW ON THE ROAD

BEYOND WALLS
EXPLORING THE SITE SPECIFIC STAGE

RISKING THE REMOUNT
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THE SOURCE. In November 2003 Franco Boni approached me with the same ever-present passion and vision that he has brought to the Rhubarb! Festival, SummerWorks, and now the Theatre Centre. With his belief in the theatre community and the need for its artists to be able to talk about creation, process, challenge and change, Franco spoke of a newsletter of sorts; a new forum, accessible and reflective of the artists doing the creating. Without hesitation, I jumped on board, with a love for this community and an excitement to see this publication realized.

In the months since, the support for The Source from actors, directors, writers, academics, designers producers has been inspiring. I am excited to be presenting our inaugural issue: 12 pages of theatre artists talking about what they're doing and what's going on.

Contributors Kilby Smith-McGregor, Rachel Bokhout, Elizabeth Helmers and a number of guest artists have delved into the ideas presented at the Independent Theatre Trade Forum, produced as part of the Retro Rhubarb! Festival on February 15th at Buddies in Bad Times Theatre; Keira Loughran has tackled our stages' diversity; and CBC Radio's Dave Carley shares a fresh perspective on new play development in Radio Drama.

We hope that The Source remains a voice for creators and producers. If you have something to say, please write us. Articles, ideas, random thoughts, creative ramblings, notes scrawled on napkins, and letters to the editor are all being gratefully accepted for our next quarterly issue, to be distributed in summer 2004.

THIS IS YOUR PLACE TO SPEAK UP.

Cheers and happy reading,

Natasha Mytnowych,
Editor, The Source
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Natasha Mytnowych * Editor and Graphic Designer
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THE INDEPENDENT
THEATRE TRADE FORUM
FEBRUARY 15TH 2004

Hosted by the
Toronto Theatre Alliance
and Buddies in Bad Times Theatre

The ITTF was the return of
Toronto's exciting half-day forum
for community discussion
and artistic exchange:

Independent Theatre Agreement
Guest: Ken Burns
Moderated by Vinetta Strombergs

Non-Traditional Spaces
Guests: Chris Clifford, Newton Moraes,
stephen o'connell, Sarah Phillips,
Thom Solokoski
Moderated by Chuck McEwen

Show Transfers
Guests: Hrant Alianak, Derrick Chua,
Sue Miner
Moderated by Yvette Nolan

Touring
Guests: Lynda Hill, Glen Hodgins
Moderated by Sue Edworthy

Theatre Criticism
Guests: Jon Kaplan, Sally Szuster,
Robert Wallace
Moderated by: Leonard McHardy

ITTF Planning Committee: Franco Boni,
Andrea Donaldson, Sue Edworthy,
Rose Jacobson, Jacoba Knaapan,
Keira Loughran, Bridget MacIntosh,
Ruth Madoc-Jones, Natasha Mytnowych,
Andrew Soren, Vinetta Strombergs,
Kristen Van Alphen

CRITICAL MASS

REDISTRIBUTING THE POWER OF THEATRE CRITICISM BY ROBERT WALLACE

Everyone's a critic, right? Well, perhaps not these days when many in Toronto's theatre community regularly regard reviews published by the daily press as uninformed and ugly. When reviews turn sour, artists disassociate themselves from the concept of "criticism," fearing that their personal opinions of each other's work might be regarded as traitorous to the cause of creativity.

But, ultimately, everyone IS a critic—which doesn't mean a reviewer. Few of us are asked by a daily newspaper to pass judgement on the work we see in the theatre; nevertheless, all of us form opinions about it. Often we share our reactions with friends and co-workers, especially when they're positive; even when they're not, we still bring them up, usually after a beer or two. But when we do, we like to think that we're offering "constructive" criticism—a form of friendly feed-back that enables rather than enervates the creative endeavour of our peers.

As people who work in the theatre, it's important that we acknowledge and develop our capacity to review each other's work. Ultimately, we are the best equipped to understand and evaluate the goals and achievements of our colleagues. For this reason, public and private funders routinely rely on "peer evaluation" in the jury procedures they use to award arts grants. Funders recognize that artists accrue critical acumen in the process of making art—that, in fact, criticism and creativity are integrally related. Whenever we execute creative choice, we exercise critical insight. While, as artists, we generally consider this principal as fundamental to our work, we frequently forget its pertinence to criticism. Too often, we misconstrue criticism as the purview of newspaper reviewers alone. Only when we accept that everyone is a critic can we fully appreciate the full potential of criticism. While we may be our best (and worst) critics, many others review our work in addition to newspaper writers. We all know of shows that thrive despite "bad reviews;" we do ourselves a disservice if we attribute their success merely to advertising budgets that circumvent negative press. Something else works in their favour—that nebulous criticism

called "word-of-mouth."

Word-of-mouth is nothing more or less than criticism that audiences circulate about our work. "So what did you think?" a spectator asks her friend after a show. The response she receives is a review that generates discussion, debate or dismissal. During the last 40 years, the ability of Toronto audiences to articulate their opinions about theatre has increased remarkably. In part, this increase attends the growth of theatre itself. But it also results from the proliferation of courses devoted to theatre criticism in our high schools, colleges and universities. These courses have helped to create an audience whose critical skills far surpass those of previous generations. More importantly, their "reviews" frequently are superior to those published in the daily press.

"WORD OF MOUTH IS NOTHING MORE OR LESS THAN CRITICISM THAT AUDIENCES CIRCULATE ABOUT OUR WORK."

To reach the audience for our productions, we need not rely on newspaper reviewers, nor tailor our work to meet their expectations. More efficacious are strategies by which we contact and cultivate the reviewers most likely to appreciate our work.

These strategies begin with self-education—communicating with our peers about the nature of our creative practice. They expand to include teachers of the GTA's many theatre courses, whom we must inform about our shows and activities. Ultimately, they must reach and affect the student populations whose interest in our work is our most important resource. These young people are more than tomorrow's audience: they also are today's reviewers. **S**

Robert Wallace is a Professor of English at York University where he co-ordinates the Drama Studies Programme at Glendon College. He is an author, and editor of multiple books about Canadian Theatre and has written and produced 10 documentaries for CBC Radio about 20th century performance and edited more than 20 volumes of Canadian plays.

THE INSIDER: REVIEWING THEATRE BY JON KAPLAN, SENIOR EDITOR, NOW

I see my job as theatre reviewer to be one side of a triangle that includes, at the other two points, the artist and the potential audience. It's my job to present to the audience what the artist is doing, either in direct conversation (previews) or by interpreting what I see onstage (reviews). The former, I think, is as important, maybe more so, than the latter. My reason: The preview is a piece about what's going on in the creative mind; it allows the reader/audience to see into the whys and hows of a production. The review, of necessity, is a subjective piece, though I hope presented from an educated, experienced point of view.

There's no such thing, by the way, as a totally objective piece of criticism, and NEVER think that a reviewer is coming down from Mount Theatre with the eleventh commandment in hand. If you talk to a dozen people who've seen a show, each will have her or his own point of view, and each is valid.

I don't call myself a critic, largely because the word's connotation today is a negative one, too often defined as a thumbs up or down. If I had to define what I do, I'd use the term "facilitator" or "nurturer", someone who's in dialogue with both creator and audience. I learned

long ago that it's not a matter of liking everything I see on the stage, but rather caring about each production I see, and those who've worked on it. No one sets out to do a bad show, and the hard work that goes into a production deserves respect. There's a way of pointing out, in a supportive fashion, what I might see as a production's problems. A review isn't a way of showing how clever I can be at the expense of the production or the artists involved.

Maybe that's why I feel a part of the theatre community rather than an outside commentator or consumer advocate. And if it's not clear yet, let me add one more thing: going to the theatre's much more than a job for me. It's a passion. **S**

"A REVIEW ISN'T A WAY OF SHOWING HOW CLEVER I CAN BE."

Favourite Review: Bruce Raymond, Theatre Reviewer, Tandem: "Pretentious and a crashing bore..STEM is an exercise in self-indulgence"..totally baffled at seeing "four very real people using their own first names"... didn't understand why a "shower of Smarties fell from the sky". Smarties?! Hello?! What play did he see? ...he did admit that he was "not qualified to comment upon the psychological underpinnings of the play". If only some of his fellow theatre reviewers would be so honest. - Erika Hennebury, STEM

ARE WE THERE YET?

TOURING YOUR SHOW ACROSS THE COUNTRY BY KILBY SMITH-MCGREGOR

IF your vision of touring springs from rock stars, roadies, and thousands of screaming fans book your Canadian Idol audition right now and get far far away from the indie theatre scene. This kind of touring is closer to a road trip in the old family station wagon: people who know too much about each other, trapped in close quarters on a highway somewhere between Wawa and Wasaga. Welcome to "Intro to Touring" at the ITTF. "No one at the OAC thinks there's anything wrong with international touring,"

"THERE'S NO POINT TRYING TO BUILD A TOUR IF THE WORK IS AN EMPTY SHELL OF WHAT YOU ORIGINALLY DID"

OAC Officer and panelist, Glen Hodgins, impresses upon us, "it's a question of limited resources." In fact, the Ontario touring program itself was only reinstated in 2000, after falling under the knife in the mid-90s cultural funding crunch. And when he says "In my own personal opinion - I never thought I'd see it in my entire life," Glen doesn't mean the cuts, he's talking about getting the touring program back at all. We're looking at small miracles here. But maybe that's exactly what lies at the heart of touring. Beyond the cash-strapped factor, there are still significant obstacles. First of all you have to figure out if your show is really tourable, and if you want it to be tourable. "You have to step back and objectify your work in a different way," states panelist Lynda Hill, AD of Theatre Direct. Will you have to compromise the show? Lynda insists, "There's no point trying to build [a tour] if the work is an empty shell of what you originally did." You also have to find people who will host your show. "The only way you really tour anything is to do the research," says Autumn Leaf AD, Thom Sokoloski. Panel moderator Sue Edworthy praises the power of the 'Google'. (See our sidebar for more of Sue's tips). When you do identify a potential presenting party, the bottom line may be: is it going to sell in Brantford? Lynda describes the process of showcasing Theatre Direct's Alphonse at CAPACOA as "kind of traumatic." She gives us her take on the national convention of theatre presenters: "Imagine the worst the highest pressure audition," she mimes a stern, monolithic CAPACOA presenter taking notes, "Hmm... language... oh yeah, some good lighting... got any ethnic dancing?" Not to say that she doesn't understand or appreciate the chance to showcase for such a large national network: "Don't get me wrong... they have a business to

do." Touring is about forming relationships, finding the right place, the right people, the right fit for the specificities of your show. It's hard to avoid what Lynda calls the "Trying-to-sell-my-show-Tango." You can't please all of the people all of the time, but you have to consider the needs of a geographically diverse audience. Once you do get on the road it's a bit of a psych test, according to Ann-Marie Kerr, who produced a national tour of *Splice*, a show she created with her company of Lecoq-trained collaborators. A touring company enters a physical and psychological landscape where there are no contacts except for each other: "The group dynamic is tested and can break if it has problems already. This is a big challenge when touring, it tests the work but also the personal and artistic relationships of the company." So if it's not the luxury or glamour that holds the itinerant theatre family together on the road, what's the engine that drives the touring experience? Just like that archetypal family trip of our collective unconscious, touring is a test. It's *The Odyssey*; On the Road - touring is the pilgrimage of theatre experiences. ITTF co-organizer Andrea Donaldson, whose modes of transportation for a recent New Zealand tour included hitch-hiking, was among many to praise the potential payoffs of taking the risk: "artistic exchange is the only reason it's worth it." Part of that artistic exchange is with new audiences. For Ann-Marie, the goal is "to make the show stronger, meet people other than the

"IMAGINE THE WORST, THE HIGHEST PRESSURE AUDITION."

LYNDA HILL MIMES A STERN MONOLITHIC CAPACOA PRESENTER TAKING NOTES.

"HMM...LANGUAGE..."

OH YEAH, SOME GOOD LIGHTING, GOT ANY ETHNIC DANCING?"

typical Toronto theatre community and urban audiences, share the story of the show, experience an artistic world outside of our own and often these things are met by the very fact that we are elsewhere." She is adamant: "Anytime I have toured, the work on stage has become more nuanced and richer because it is being tested in front of so many different types of audiences. The writing often changes ⇨

THE TOP TEN TOURING TIPS BY SUE EDWORTHY

1. Be realistic. It can take anywhere from six months to two years for your show to be booked for a tour.
2. Search engines are your friend. They can help you find venues, presenters, festivals, conferences and other places to show and showcase your work.
3. The first question is, "how much does my show cost to take out?" Until you have budgeted your production and set all your costs, you cannot begin to negotiate fees or look for additional funding sources. Attempting to negotiate a presentation fee without knowledge of your costs is the easiest way to lose money on a tour.
4. Be prepared. Have a technical rider ready, have access to marketing materials to send (photos, bios, show descriptions, etc). This knowledge of your own product will help you determine where you should be looking to try to secure potential engagements.
5. See and be seen. Go to industry events - other performances, openings and parties - you never know who you will meet, which might lead to a potential booking.
6. Your promotional kit is your calling card for prospective presenters. What do you want it to say about you? Always include a personal letter - not "Dear Presenter", or "to whom it may concern" - find out who they are!
7. Follow up, follow up, follow up! Presenters can receive nearly 500 promo kits and videos a year! Check to see that they received your materials. In the meantime, keep them posted on what you are doing - invite them to shows and workshops you are featured in, email them review quotes - keep yourself fresh in their minds.
8. Again, "be realistic" and "follow up"!
9. Talk to other people in your field - performers, producers, agents, presenters - creating a good network of peers is invaluable.
10. See our sidebar for some additional touring organizations. **S**

↳ on the road and the show is nearly always stronger when we get home." Artistic exchange is also the key to artistic collaborations within communities another type of artistic foray that falls under the broader touring umbrella (the OAC has even renamed its program Touring and Collaborations). Recently Ann-Marie co-facilitated a Soulpepper/De-ba-jeh-mu-jig workshop on Manitoulin Island. She cites it as a remarkable experience, deeper, slower than what she's used to and very situated in its community context on the island: "It was profoundly real, for lack of a better way of describing it. There was no pretending, no forcing, just two groups of artists coming together to see what we shared and what we could learn from each other." It may be true, the financial bottom line on touring isn't getting anymore enticing. The bottom line, artistically, may be the simple chance to clear the cobwebs from our eyes and breathe a little fresh air. "It is important that work be taken out of its element, its birthplace, into the unknown. It is the only way to truly see what you have," says Anne-Marie, "It is always worth it, no matter what." And hell, you can't even begin to quantify the value of adventure. **S**

Kilby Smith-McGregor is a playwright, etc, currently working on a new adaptation of the work of visual artist Charlotte Salomon.

SCENES FROM THE ITTF



Glen Hodgins, Lynda Hill and Sue Edworthy



Stephen O'Connell and Newton Moraes



Robert Wallace and Leonard McHardy



Chris Clifford and Sarah Phillips



Sally Szuster, Jon Kaplan and Robert Wallace



Derrick Chua, Sue Miner and Grant Alianak

NEXT STEPS: TOURING RESOURCES

ONTARIO: CCI

Community Cultural Impresarios is Ontario's community arts presenter network.

Ontario Conference: October 20-23, 2004

Downloadable applications to showcase work available
www.ccio.on.ca

CANADA: CAPACOA

The Canadian Arts Presenting Association/L'Association canadienne des organismes artistiques (CAPACOA) is a federally incorporated non-profit association serving the live touring industry in Canada.

National Conference: Nov. 4-8, 2004

Downloadable applications to showcase work available
www.capacoa.ca

INTERNATIONAL: CINARS

CINARS (The International Exchange for the Performing Arts) is a non-profit organization with the guiding principle of promoting and marketing Quebec and Canada's performing arts in foreign countries.

CINARS Forum: November 16-20, 2004

www.cinars.org

INTERESTED IN PRESENTING YOUR WORK IN AN INTER/NATIONAL FESTIVAL? CHECK OUT:

THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF FRINGE FESTIVALS (CAFF)

Tour your fringe show inter/nationally through various fringes
www.fringetoronto.com/links.shtml

FREE FALL (The Theatre Centre, Toronto)

A festival of experimental performance theatre
www.theatrecentre.org

MAGNETIC NORTH THEATRE FESTIVAL

A national arts festival that showcases some of the best contemporary Canadian theatre in English
www.magneticnorthfestival.ca

HIGH PERFORMANCE RODEO (One Yellow Rabbit, Calgary)

An exciting and important performing arts festival featuring world-renowned and emerging artists
www.ojr.org/rodeo_04.html

PuSh INTERNATIONAL PERFORMANCE SERIES

(RumbleProductions and Touchtone Productions, Vancouver)
Showcases Canadian artists and their work in three weeks of innovation, ideas and inspiration
www.rumble.org/push/

ON THE WATERFRONT

10-day festival of new and innovative works presented by artists from Atlantic Canada and beyond
www.easternfront.ns.ca

ONE vital question lay at the heart of the non-traditional spaces panel at the Indie Theatre Trade Forum: why do it? After all, as Chuck McEwen, producer of the Toronto Fringe and panel moderator, pointed out, it's significantly more complicated to present theatre in a non-theatrical space than on a rented stage.

Sarah Phillips, panel member and Artistic Director of Red Red Rose, was quick to point out that the decision to use a non-traditional space isn't usually separate from the development of the production. "The fact that the shows [the panel has done] were in alternative spaces came from the shows themselves. The reason and the shows were integrated. We obviously have different reasons, but performing in non-traditional spaces gives the audience something they don't usually get in theatre. We [Red Red Rose] found it really valuable," said Phillips.

"I like to integrate the audience with my work," said Newton Moraes, panel member and dance choreographer, discussing a recent piece created for a festival in Germany. "At home, watching TV, you just receive information."

"I find it exciting," said Stephen O'Connell, co-Artistic Director of Bluemouth Inc. Chris Clifford, co-founder of Video Cabaret, agreed, "It's an ephemeral and totally changing environment."

Excitement of course, doesn't entirely surmount the

challenges. "In my very limited experience, having done one show in a non-traditional space, it's not cheaper to do it outside," said Phillips. "Compared to [renting] a small theatre space, that is. You end up having to build the theatre around your space."

Chris Clifford, a collaborator of the avant-garde composer Murray Schafer, cites a string of variables. "There are all sorts of challenges to doing [non-traditional outside theatre], from negotiations with the parks - getting the services & facilities that you need, getting established in the space, setting up your infrastructure, dealing with security, dealing with lighting, dealing

OUTSIDE THE BOX

THE INS AND OUTS OF SITE SPECIFIC SPACES BY RACHEL BOKHOUT

with pyrotechnics in the park.

There are a thousand parameters." Clifford also described the challenges of finding suitable non-theatrical spaces. It took eight months to track down the site for one collaboration with Schafer, which required lake-side audience space for 500, and minimal non-natural noise.

O'Connell discussed the issue of responsibility when engaging the public. He described a production that took place under a bridge where, as they moved in for the performance, a homeless man was sleeping. "We said that

we would respect him and his space, and asked him to stay and respect us. He did stay, and he heckled us through the whole performance," said O'Connell, smiling. O'Connell has also worked on performances that took place in warehouses, hotel rooms, sewers and porno theatres.

Other panel members talked about the need to find suitable audience insurance for non-traditional spaces, and the problems of managing space. "It wasn't that difficult," said Phillips, to the question of insurance, mentioning the insurance company Act One, in Toronto. Managing the space for Red Red Rose's outdoor production of *Joan* was much more difficult. "Stuff would go missing on a regular basis," Phillips said. "Going into the dynamic of daily life," said Thom Sokoloski, panel member and founder of Autumn Leaf

Performance, "you need to secure your location really well." "Film location managers," Sokoloski advised, "are the best at that."

Despite the thousand variables associated with non-traditional spaces, all panel members asserted that the rewards and audience pay-off were unique.

"Theatre is the most alive art," said Phillips, "and when you go outside, or into a space that isn't a theatre, it's somehow even more alive." **S**

Rachel Bokhout is a freelance writer and playwright, former editor of The Independent Weekly (now the newspaper) and is finally about to graduate from the University of Toronto, with a English/Drama specialist.

TORONTO VS. VANCOUVER: THE SITE SPECIFICS BY JENNY YOUNG

The story of an unhappy couple whose travels on a train jigger take us through the Western Don Lands.

Five wild west characters and a meta-whore weave a tale as big as the horse they rode in on and camp out at the loading docks of Toronto's favorite five and dime store: Honest Ed's.

Sound familiar? It's *Aerwacol* and *Billy Nothin'* both written by Sean Dixon and produced by Victoria based Theatre SKAM. Now, I am a Vancouver theatre artist recently turned Toronto resident, and to tell you the truth I've been feeling a bit nostalgic for some good ol' down home romps. Oh, I've been seeing loads of theatre here in the Big Smoke, good and bad, but my pining has been insistent. This is all 'til I reckon I figured out the source of my heartache: a lack of site specific adventure. Sure I got a good lick of it at Tarragon's finely curated Spring Arts Fair and Volcano's *Variete*. But my pining lead me to realize that an enormous amount of theatre in Vancouver is just that: site specific.

Vancouver audiences have been taken by companies like The Electric Co. who have staged their sold out hits everywhere from the tennis courts, boardwalks and factories of Granville Island, to the waters of community centre hot tubs and pools, to the working cranes and floors of a "FINNING" Warehouse. While boca del lupo fell from trees in *The Stand*, Radix theatre was staging pieces in the IKEA show room with audience members and shoppers intermingling. I know, I know, site specific theatre isn't anything new and it's created in Toronto as well, but something that does seem to set the Vancouver trend apart from Toronto is the promenade ⇨

FROM THE TRENCHES

TORONTO'S BLUEMOUTH INC ADVENTURES ON

Bluemouth inc is four artists trained in various disciplines, brought together by a common vision. As a performance collective, bluemouth inc. continues to explore formal issues related to site-specific work. The *Something About a River Trilogy* was a performance installation in three parts, with each section taking place in a different season and at a different location along the buried Garrison Creek. The underground river was used as a metaphor for all that lays dormant in an overly civilized society. This fall, all three parts ran together in an epic 5-hour long experience that traveled along the creek, with the audience bused between locations. *Part One: The Fire Sermon*, took place near the upper part of the creek in the Metro XXX Theatre on Bloor Street West, followed by *Part 2: Death By Water*, performed at the Bates & Dodds Funeral Home and Trinity Bellwoods Park, and *Part Three: What the Thunder Said*, which was performed in a warehouse. co-artistic director stephen o'connell shares the company's top ten challenges:

1. One night someone from the audience discovered the casket in the funeral parlor actually contained a corpse from the service that day and convinced several other people to have a look to determine whether or not it was a prop. It was not.
2. On the first night between the second and third cycle we were running behind schedule by 45 minutes so ciara boarded the bus to buy us some time by singing a song. michelle rumbell was in the audience and raised a hand to see if anyone would like to hear a song she wrote about the garrison creek and it was beautiful.
3. General panic included sabrina's car being towed an hour before the show with all our costumes and the video projector in it or robert locking his keys in his car and richard locking the keys in the van as the bus was pulling up at the metro theatre.

4. One of the more inspiring moments had to do with a monologue written by lucy which we had all been struggling with, so ciara decided to turn it into a song. The song inspired mathew to start playing the mandolin, inspired by the music i stood up and began to dance down the length of the warehouse then lucy stood up and joined me and that section of the show magically came together

5. Radix Theatre in Vancouver has this thing called the Bath Tub Clause. When someone has an idea that no one else can envision but is essential to that person's vision, like putting a bath tub in the middle of the piece, they can exercise the clause. Thus was my strategy for convincing the group that the softball game could work. Each person is allowed to implement the clause only once per project.

6. Trusting the vision. After the first two shows, when only ten people came to the second performance, we had to decide if we were going to add a third week. lucy was the only one of the core group who knew that once our sheer exhaustion had passed we would regret not doing an additional week. She was right and thankfully we listened to her.

7. Showing up at the porno theatre and having a hard time kicking out a patron who apparently hadn't finished his business.

8. A member of the audience creaming the ball when it came his turn to come up to bat during the softball game led us to the realization that we should never let the audience come up to bat.

9. During the workshopping of *What the Thunder Said* the shower of water on kevin's head was so strong and cold that it caused him to go into an immediate brain freeze. It was then decided to use a snow machine if we were going to do the show again in the winter.

10. The first time we rode the rickshaw down the hill with people in it chris decided to make it more exciting by peddling quickly down the hill, careening out of control and over a snow bank, barely missing a tree. **S**

←style (different locations for different scenes). Plus there is the simple fact that there is so much more of it emerging there.

Why is this? Do we have a shorter attention span? Do we need to feel as if we are gaining more than just a night at the theatre by also adding in some exercise and a stretch in the outdoors? I mean lets face it, the theatre artists in Vancouver have to do something to compete with the good weather, ocean and mountains that are accessible all year round.

Or are we all just a bunch of hippies with the need to create in the great out of doors? There is a constant physical adventure within the landscape - one that is living beyond our expectations, one that has grown to thrive in the theatre world of B.C. The uncertainty of the elements force an agreement upon the audience and the actors that is completely unique to site specific theatre, one that us granola types can understand. The agreement to trust each other to carry out our roles, "you lead the game, I'll follow". In a city where people live to play this type of theatre must be more accessible for them...right?

Could be that I'm just a nostalgic hick with romantic rememberings of outdoor shows gone by.

From the head offices of *Donikers Daily* in Toronto, this is Jenny Young signing off with a warm outdoorsy romantic west coast type, flakey as all get out - "Goodbye for now". **S**

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LAST fall NOW Magazine featured articles on the lack of diversity at the Stratford and Shaw Festivals. Last winter a rash of articles about racism and diversity in theatre appeared in newspapers after Carmen Aguire pulled her play, "The Refugee Hotel", from Factory Theatre's season. In January, I was asked to be part of a panel discussion hosted by INCLUDE and the Toronto Theatre Alliance to talk about cultural representation in theatre. It is clear that the issue of cultural diversity and representation in theatre has once again come to a head.

The grievances are not new: not enough cultural plays being produced, minority actors not being given access to leading roles, the perceived risk of programming multicultural theatre. These arguments have been rehashed since the early 80's. What is perhaps accounting for the revival of this particular issue, is a rising number of trained ethnic theatre artists who are looking to create room for themselves in Toronto's theatre community.

When I graduated from theatre school in 1996 there were a handful of culturally diverse actors who were dedicated theatre artists. Colour-blind casting was the order of the day which gave me the opportunity to cut my teeth on solid work or larger roles. Today the push seems to be for culturally diverse stories. This should provide ethnic actors with more work opportunities, however these plays often need more support in development that less experienced ethnic actors are unable to provide. Also, with so much focus on script development, the actors may be left to fend for themselves. If these shows are not well received, they then become precedents that impede new ethnic plays from being produced.

What seems evident is the need to build on all sides in order to achieve a true reflection of our society on our stages. We need both colour-blind and race-specific casting to occur on a regular basis if we want to acknowledge the plurality of our cultural communities. We also need to build and support the creative artists behind the work.

Fortunately, festivals like Rhubarb!, Groundswell, Weesageechak, Hysteria and Cross-Currents are joining the Fringe and SummerWorks Festivals to provide ample opportunity for creation and experimentation. Where 15 years ago most ethnic theatre artists were actors, we now have playwrights, directors, designers and dramaturges

who can support the development of this new work.

Actors of colour are some of the most active, multi-talented and driven theatre artists that I know. We have to be in order to push those barriers that can stop us from gaining valuable work experience. We almost expect it and prepare for the challenge by diversifying our skills and developing unique ways of working.

What remains problematic is the opportunity to integrate these abilities into mainstream theatre culture. Play development remains largely script-based despite successful

**THINGS MAY HAVE
CHANGED
BUT
THE ARGUMENTS
REMAIN
THE SAME**

plays like Adventures of a Black Girl or The Yoko Ono Project which succeed in integrating a rich cultural legacy into contemporary, Canadian stories. While money is available to multicultural work given the climate of political correctness and opportunity, playwrights and directors are too often forced to be producers of their own work. I have been truly fortunate in my career. I didn't play an Asian character for my first five years in the business. Through that exposure to new play development I became interested in taking on more creative roles and sought out opportunities to develop my skills in

directing and dramaturgy. As I found more confidence in myself as an artist and person, I began to write. When my project was ready to go, I found I was capable, and quite enjoyed the control, of self-producing. Not everyone is so lucky.

Ironically my play, Little Dragon, opened up more acting opportunities than any other play I'd been in. I believe that by truly sharing myself through the ideas and artistic impulses in that show, I found the community I'd been looking for. This community was made of all different races, ages, shapes and genders. It was a community of like-minded artists who were each as unique and individual as I am.

Toronto theatre is verging on a new generation. Independent theatre is taking over the pioneering spirit of theatres like

Factory and Tarragon and those theatres are now the institutions that Stratford and Shaw were to them. As these new independent artists gain more artistic ground, it is crucial that artists from the cultural community are among them.



KEIRA LOUGHRAN LOOKS AT DIVERSITY

**“FORTUNATELY, FESTIVALS LIKE RHUBARB!,
 GROUNDSWELL, WEESAGEECHAK,
 HYSTERIA AND CROSS-CURRENTS
 ARE JOINING THE FRINGE AND
 SUMMERWORKS FESTIVALS TO PROVIDE
 AMPLE OPPORTUNITY FOR CREATION AND
 EXPERIMENTATION.”**

← In her article, *Globe and Mail's* Kate Taylor wrote that festivals like Stratford had a responsibility to train ethnic artists in the classics so they will be prepared to handle contemporary work. Well, I will be working at the Stratford Festival this summer and I would like to say that I wouldn't have been hired if I hadn't done my contemporary, independent work. This hierarchy that exists within Canadian theatre must be reevaluated and a mutual respect must be fostered among the different communities. Fellow INCLUDE panelist Andrew Moodie summed up the feelings of many artists in the room when he said, “We aren't trying to take work away from people, we just want to share the stage.” In that remark, he addressed the perceived threat of opening the doors of mainstream theatre to culturally diverse work and talent, and opened the possibility for growth in Toronto theatre through the exchange of work and ideas.

Yet it was clear at the meeting that many ethnic artists are still not feeling heard. We are at a critical point where dialogue must continue on a regular basis, but we must get beyond the need to hear our own voice. We must lead by example. We must know that the struggles we and those that came before us have faced have given us gifts which we must celebrate. By continuing to insist on self-definition, we can simultaneously build both our own work and the work of our community, taking another step forward in the fight for equality and diversity. **S**



Keira Loughran appears as Ma-Ma and Servant Ming, two Chinese characters in Nightwood Theatre's recent production of *China Doll* by Marjorie Chan. Photos by John Lauener

INCLUDE AND UNDERSTAND DIVERSITY IN THE ARTS: BY BOBBY DEL RIO

“I never wanted to be an 'activist'. I still don't. It's boring. You're angry all the time. Some people hate you based on reputation alone. INCLUDE is an attempt to make things fair. It builds on the work of past activists like Sandi Ross, Jean Yoon, Tonya Lee Williams, Cynthia Reyes, Paul de Silva, etc. It is my hope that one day INCLUDE will disband, as there will be no reason for its existence.”

-Bobby Del Rio, Founder, INCLUDE

INCLUDE stands for Integrating Networks of Cultures, Learning and Understanding Diversity in Entertainment. It was founded by Bobby Del Rio.

INCLUDE is an opportunity to strengthen/build the networks between all of our markedly different, and equally important cultures. We organize panels, social events, debates, parties, lobby the government, practice education/awareness, and anything else we can think of to find ways to create a more inclusive entertainment industry.

Some prominent panel members from past INCLUDE panels are: Karen King (Executive Director of the New Voices Fund for Toronto One), Mark Persaud (Chair of the Standing Committee on Multiculturalism for the Liberal Party of Canada), Ken Gass (artistic director of the Factory Theatre), Raoul Bhaneja (series lead on “Train 48”), Sandi Ross (one of the foremost diversity advocates in Canada's entertainment history) and Andrew Moodie (writer of Chalmers-winning play “Riot”).

INCLUDE members are major activists, artists and politicians from organizations like: CBC, The Liberal Party of Canada, Innoversity, Reel World Film Festival, ACTRA Toronto, North American Association of Asian Professionals, NOW Magazine, University of Toronto, International Diversity Council for Film and Television, Canadian Race Relations Foundation, as well as some of the top theatre/film/television artists in Canada.

It is completely FREE to join us, and we have an extensive listserve with LOTS of race-based job opportunities, arts opportunities, academic essays, political rallies and networking events.

For more information, please contact Bobby Del Rio. contact@bobbydelrio.com

THE NEW RADIO PLAY

R & D REMIXED WITH CBC RADIO'S DAVE CARLEY

CBC Radio produces hundreds of hours of original radio drama each year in their network studios in Toronto and regional centres across the country. Many new plays debut on *Sunday Showcase* and *Monday Night Playhouse*, hosted by Executive Producer Damiano Pietropalo. The opportunities here for theatre artists are astounding: almost half of this year's *Sunday Showcase* commissions are written by new writers to the CBC; more than half are by women; more than half are by writers of colour, not to mention CBC's continued commitment to colour-blind casting; CBC radio produces more new plays per year than all the theatres in Canada combined; the dramas play to a quarter-million listeners across the nation; and 48 hours after their debut, all the reproduction rights remain in the hands of the writers.

The Source's Editor Natasha Mytnowych caught up with CBC Radio's Script Editor Dave Carley, to find out more about new radio play development, and how more artists can make their way to the airwaves:

Where do new radio plays come from?

The plays we use mostly come now as a result of proposal calls, where we require only a couple of pages of story outline and character breakdown. It's very hands-on; if we're producing your play, we're committed to developing you one-on-one as a radio writer. I think there can be a danger in over-workshopping and micro-developing things; far better to learn simply by doing. It's why I love festivals like the Fringe and Summerworks — they are practical, efficient laboratories for writers to get new works out and on their feet, and it's not surprising that a huge amount of the energy in our theatre scene comes out of those festivals. We try and do the same on radio.

How can radio be liberating for theatre playwrights and directors?

There are countless advantages for the playwright, both practical and creative and I'll list just a few here. Creatively, playwrights are freed from the many constraints of the stage. Settings and locales can change at the drop of a sound cue. Radio can do the internal thoughts of a character convincingly and narration also works brilliantly when its speaker to listener — it's very intimate. Because of our need for story — at least in the longer formats — radio drama really forces a playwright to consider what he or she is saying, and the way it needs to be said. There aren't the distractions of the stage.

And the process is relatively quick, which is really gratifying for anyone who has tried to bring a stageplay or screenplay to fruition. We follow a collective agreement with the Writers Guild, which specifies that we can require two drafts and a polish, all within a set period of time. Our commission-to-broadcast time line is usually quite fast. Right now (March) we are at first draft stage for about 10 plays in our upcoming Immigration series, which were commissioned a couple of months ago. They will all be produced and broadcast by late autumn. The other thing positive I hear a lot is that the process is completely writer-focused, as well.

And there's another huge plus to radio drama — the size of our audience. Depending on the show, your drama can reach up to a quarter million listeners. Our audience share for radio drama is at historic highs right now and it truly is a national audience. I should also mention that our production is nationally-based, as well. Over half the dramas are produced outside of Toronto, mostly in Vancouver, Calgary, Regina, Winnipeg and Halifax. There are drama producers in those cities whose doors are always open to writers.

Is there a downside?

Yes, there are disadvantages. The biggest one, in my view, is that unless you're listening to your radio drama somehow in public, you never get that immediate bond with your audience that live theatre brings. That terrifying energy doesn't exist because the performance is already frozen. Another drawback is purely practical — we get hundreds of scripts and proposals every year and this means that we have to pass on a huge number of really good projects. Whenever we can, we try and steer people to other shows/theatres, but it is very frustrating sometimes to not be able to snap up everyone we'd like.

Are more theatre companies venturing into radio dramas?

We are forging links with a number of companies, including Calgary's One Yellow Rabbit. This summer, the Blyth Festival is recording a live presentation of Shena Wilson's new play *The Train*. We also have an annual series with both the Shaw and Stratford Festivals, and this year we began working with Toronto's Obsidian Theatre as part of our programming for Black History Month. We are developing other partnerships as well, with the philosophy that this will help us bring new writers on board, and also bring some of the uniqueness of

various theatre companies to the airwaves as well.

What are some of the most exciting projects going on right now?

We have made a conscious move to commissioning in series by issuing proposal calls, and this has really resulted in a huge new influx of writers. We got deluged and instead of commissioning the four we had planned, we commissioned nine, with two also coming from our French Language counterpart. Some of the new writers (to us) we're working with are John Ng, Marie-Beath Badian, Ehab Lotayef, Frederick Vaughn, as well as some writers who've already written for radio: Marcia Johnson, Donna Caruso plus a couple of talented Chans: Marty and Marjorie.

What advice do you have for new radio-playwrights?

First and foremost, listen to radio dramas. Then, consider what stories you may have to tell that would be uniquely suited to the medium. We are issuing proposal calls periodically and maintain an e mail list for anyone who is interested in getting the calls.

I always encourage playwrights to keep us informed as to when you have shows coming up — I personally see about 50 plays a year and, if I can't go, I try and ensure someone else from the department goes, so we can become aware of your work.

And my door is always open. Well, I don't actually have a door, but my workstation is accessible to all. ☺

Sunday Showcase accepts unsolicited scripts and proposals. Sunday Showcase radio plays are 52 minutes in length with a strong emphasis on story. Occasionally novel dramatizations and adaptations of stage plays are featured, but the majority of offerings are original works, written expressly for radio. Sunday Showcase works with a wide range of writers and at least half of the 25 dramas aired annually are by writers "new" to radio or Sunday Showcase. An ideal proposal should consist of a three to four page outline of the story and characters, an indication as to why this story is important to you, and a sample scene or two. If you are bringing a work from another medium - e.g. a novel or stage play - you will also have to convince us of its adaptability for radio.

Interested in Script and Project Submissions?

Contact : Dave Carley
Script Editor Sunday Showcase,
CBC Box 500,
Station A,
Toronto, ON, M5W 1E6,
(416) 205-6015
sunshowcase@cbc.ca

"Stage playwrights and theatre directors can accomplish much more in the medium of radio because there are no restrictions to their creativity. Of course they will produce a different form of spectacle — aural versus visual — but the immediacy and intimacy of the experience in the listener's imagination may be a more powerful one." Damiano Pietropalo, Executive Director, CBC Radio

CLIMBING RE-MOUNT EVEREST

WHAT TO DO WITH A HIT SHOW BY ELIZABETH HELMERS

You've got a hit show on your hands. Critics are raving, audiences are lining up around the block, and every show sells out. On closing night the lights go down but somehow you feel the production isn't finished yet. What next?

Panelists Hrant Alianak (Alianak Productions), Derrick Chua (producer, *The Laramie Project*), and Sue Miner (Pea Green Theatre) along with Moderator Yvette Nolan (Native Earth Performing Arts) offer some advice about the unique challenges of transferring a show, discussing everything from the perfect all-expenses-paid transfer to critical let downs and box office busts. More and more frequently, successful productions are growing from humble beginnings to find second and third incarnations, including *Laramie*, *One Good Marriage*, *Top Gun the Musical*, *Fish/wife*, *Poochwater*, *Phae*, *richardthesecond* — and the list goes on and on.

So what's the appeal? Well, first of all, "to make money," Alianak answers simply. "You do it when you know you have an audience out there that still wants to see it." Miner has a similar answer from the actor and director's point of view: "To work," she says, "to make work for yourself." It's a way to have another few months of being paid to do what you love.

The other motivation is the show itself. Transferring is an opportunity to take a show that's worthwhile and do it again. And it can provide valuable opportunities to develop the piece and to affect more audiences, as Nolan learned from her recent experience transferring Native Earth's show *Tales of an Urban Indian* by playwright/actor Darrell Dennis to the Western Canada Theatre Company. The show opened in Toronto at Artword and got decent reviews, but played to small houses. Dennis and director Herbie Barnes were able to make some changes and tighten the show; and once there they found western audiences to be more responsive to the story, immensely popular everywhere it went. In this case the rewards for undertaking the transfer were financial, professional, and artistic.

In contrast, Alianak describes his experience transferring *Goodbye Tim Hardin* from its sold out, week-long impromptu run at Passe Muraille's Backspace to a full run at the Poor Alex. It didn't transfer well for a number of reasons. First of all, for the sake of the investors, they had to change spaces; It would have been impossible to make money with a house that small. But in the new space, "the atmosphere wasn't the same," Alianak recalls, it was, "less intimate." Even the actors' performances changed, as "they now had this pressure of 'I have to make this show work'."

Miner discusses the difficulties of going from a festival environment to another venue. "The Fringe is kind of like a great

garage sale," Miner points out. "Sometimes you find some treasures, and then you find a lot of trash. And the treasures always seem so wonderful, but sometimes when you take them out of that environment, they don't do as well." Audience member Chuck McEwan, producer of the Toronto Fringe, points out that, "at a Fringe festival, companies have the advantage of the festival advertising as well as its audience, who are already out to see shows." Miner adds that with a fifteen minute set-up time, high production values are not as crucial. Outside of the festival environment, shows don't have these factors working in their favour. It can be difficult to know which shows will transfer and which will lose something in the translation.

Derrick Chua talks about his reasons for transferring *The Laramie Project*. "*Laramie* started out as a co-op at Artword. They left with no money, but a hit show... There was good potential to get funding because of the educational value. And doing it in association with Buddies is helpful. There's an audience." The play is being produced under the ITA (Independent Theatre Agreement), guaranteeing more money for the artists involved because of the larger sized house.

Chua has been involved in the transfers of both Fringe and Summerworks shows as well as those produced during the regular season independently, and says that the latter tend to be more developed. Fringe veteran Miner advises, "[The show] needs to be more than just a 'rollicking romp.' It needs to have a strong reason to be," she says. Changes and further development may be necessary. Practical concerns include space, production elements and advertising. Companies need to consider size of venue and determine not only if the show will work in a space, but also whether or not they can fill it. "Sixty people in a sixty-seat house is wonderful. Sixty people in a 250 seat house is not," Miner chuckles.

Is there any way to determine whether a show has potential to survive and succeed as a transfer? "The people behind the show," Chua answers. "The will to go ahead and do it is as important as the quality of the production." Miner agrees, stressing the need for people involved in the project with resources and energy to see it through.

With many transfer success stories filling the pages of the theatre section these days, it seems like up-and-coming artists are using them as a means to grow and to find a way onto the country's larger, more popular and more profitable stages. It might not be the most obvious path, but for those with the determination and innovation to make it work, there's great potential for evolution. **S**

Elizabeth Helmers is an actor, playwright and director.

PLAYWRIGHT MATT MACFADZEAN ON RICHARDTHESECOND, AND THIRD, AND FOURTH...

Originally produced as part of the 2001 Toronto SummerWorks Festival, *richardthesecond* was awarded the Juried SummerWorks Prize as Best Production. In October of 2002 it was mounted at the Theatre Passe Muraille Backspace to critical and audience acclaim, and was nominated for 6 Dora Awards. In 2003, it moved to the Miles Nadel Jewish Community Centre, followed by the Harbourfront Studio, presented as the inaugural production in the Hatch Performance Series.

Writer and Performer Matt MacFadzean on the ups and downs of the numerous productions: the **5** best things about **R2**: 1) the piece got closer and closer to itself with each production - the ideas became more precise, the motivations clearer, the pictures more correct. 2) it opened doors - I got offered a teaching job at Etobicoke School for the Arts and am currently in talks regarding a residency at Harbourfront. 3) I had money in my pocket for a couple of weeks which is always nice. 4) I got to work (again) with great talented people on a project I completely believe in, heart and soul 5) I learned so much about my growth as an actor and writer over the two years that the show has existed in production. it is amazing how people change in just a short time: what I believe in, what art means to me what I want it to be, what I want to be doing. all these things have changed over the period of doing the same show. It becomes a touchstone. the **5** worst things about **R2**: 1) the piece became so slick and "cool" that it lost a rawness inherent in the original. - it felt stale - not being totally passionate about speaking your own words is one of the most terrible feelings that there is - doing "a bit" with your own writing 2) again, learning about my growth as an artist has also made me realize how young my writing was, even three years ago, and what emotional stuff i was dealing with at the time- So growth as an artist is a good and bad thing. 3) typecast as "that r2 guy" 4) nobody came. Once everyone in the theatre community has seen a show, there is no more audience. 5) there is no fifth worst thing. re-mounts are great. **S**



THE THEATRE CENTRE

ARTISTIC MISSION AND OBJECTIVES

Innovation, Communication, Collaboration

The Theatre Centre aims to develop, create and promote exciting, interdisciplinary, innovative, accessible, high quality theatre through creative collaboration between artists, staff and community. The Theatre provides opportunity for growth at the centre of all its activities.

Objectives

- Facilitate the research and development of new surprising, professional arts activity through a national residency program
- Produce the work developed through our R&D program at The Theatre Centre and to promote the work locally and nationally
- Attract and support artists in the early stages of their careers
- Provide a flexible, well-equipped and affordable venue for the performing arts.

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WHAT ARE YOU WORKING ON RIGHT NOW?

Grant proposals. Then a new German play - *The Arabian Night* by Roland Schimmelpfennig - for a staged reading at the Theatre Centre (Mar 15) then a workshop on *Hedda Gabler* - adapted by Judith Thompson, starring Yanna McIntosh.
 - Ross Manson, AD Volcano

Nightswimming is about to dive into two new creations: three weeks with choreographer Julia Sasso exploring betrayal with a company of actors and dancers; and an exploratory process with Judith Thompson using improvisation and masks to investigate new ways of creating theatrical text. At the Theatre Centre in May we conduct our second annual Pure Research workshops featuring Toronto director Guillaume Bernardi and Ottawa visual artist Heather Nicol. Plus we'll present a public reading of *Lake Nora Arms*, an a capella musical adaption of the book by Michael Redhill, at the Magnetic North Festival in Edmonton.
 - Brian Quirt, AD, Nightswimming

Well, it's been a long hard year. I feel very good about the work I have done, and very lucky to have worked with a diverse and extremely talented group of directors, writers, and actors over the past 18 months. Frustrating because financial worry can drain the body, mind, and spirit of energy I would rather place on the art. I am currently on the west coast, in my home town of Victoria, on a "spiritual sabbatical". I'm only away for three weeks, but I will return to Toronto rejuvenated and with a clearer perspective (not to mention a more positive attitude).
 - Tamara Kucheran, Designer

I'm currently writing a play called *Banished West*. It is part of an on going experiment with rhythm, rhyme, sound poetry and soundscape as dialogue. Evalyn Parry and I are trying (desperately) to come up with (good) ideas for our next play.
 - Anna Chatterton, Actor and Playwright

Touring with *The Danish Play* (Nightwood), writing a new play tentatively titled *Psychochondria* (CanStage Residency), going to Prague to assist with the czech translation of *Flag and Pile* (Rhubarb '03), dragging *Margaret Gross* (which I wrote for Tarragon but they hated) out of a drawer and re-writing it as a children's play, writing/directing/producing my second independent film this fall, and currently making plans to write (and probably perform) a one-act for rhubarb '05 and start research on the next big one: *Oil Man*, a play about oil and cars and money and men (affiliation and funding tba on that one).
 - Sonja Mills, Playwright

In the fall 2004 I am going to play with a Chicago based company, The Utopian Theatre Asylum (T.U.T.A), in a French play *Rules for Good Manners in the Modern World* by Jean Luc Lagarde for Chicago's First Festival of Contemporary Plays from France, and touring the same show to the Classika Theatre in Washington D.C. in February 2005, which is a result of an extremely successful tour to Washington D.C. of the one-woman show *The Vindication of Senyora Clito Mestres* which I originally played at the Theatre Centre. Directing *Not My Story* by Silvija Jestrovic, a comedy of "six characters in search of identity",
 - Dragana Varagic, Actor and Director

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