

# THE SOURCE

THE THEATRE CENTRE PUBLICATION

SUMMER 2004

**BEYOND THE BEER TENT  
A FESTIVAL ANALYSIS**

**ON ACCESS**  
SUMMERWORKS STARS BREAK IT DOWN

**ROAD TO STARDOM**  
MENNO PLUKKER FROM THE FIELD

**INSIDE THE CLASSICS**  
JENNIFER TARVER ON THE GREAT DIVIDE

**PLUS**  
**FESTIVAL FRENZY**  
MAKING THE SUBMISSION GRADE

**FESTIVAL CIRCUIT**  
CATALYST'S JONATHAN CHRISTENSON  
ON DEVELOPING THE SHOW ON THE ROAD



# THE FESTIVALS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

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MY first exposure to the “independent theatre community” was through the 2000 Toronto Fringe Festival. I had just finished 12th grade, and a former student from my high school, Nic Pearson, asked if I was interested in designing and creating the set for his clown show. I eagerly said yes, and after spending the next two weeks painting giant Lauren-Harris-esque icebergs across 30 cardboard boxes, and then carefully setting up and striking them in 2 minutes at our first show, I found myself completely overwhelmed by what seemed like a million exciting new shows and so many passionate theatre artists. Nic encouraged me to see as much as I could, and as a result, I probably saw over 40 shows, many of which left a lasting impression. I met some really amazing people (one of whom was Kelly Thornton, who, five years later, can't seem to get rid of me at Nightwood!). My parents would probably be much more at ease if that festival hadn't happened; as a result of the experience and a particularly encouraging card from Nic, I decided that Med School was now out, and I wanted to be part of “indie theatre”.

Since that first experience, I've been involved with a myriad of Fringes, SummerWorks, Rhubarbs! and Groundswells; I'm current reading submissions for the second Hysteria Festival, and gearing up for my first Paprika Festival as Artistic Producer. The beer tent/garden/bar/cooler seems to be approaching a monthly staple with our multitude of annual festivals, providing much needed discussion, discourse and debauchery among artists. With the support of Franco Boni, Kelly Thornton, Moynan King, David Diye, Naomi Campbell, Ruth Madoc-Jones, Yvette Nolan, Giovanni Sy, ahdri zhina mandiel, Mary Vingoe, David Duclos, Stephen o'connell, Anthony Furey, and the many more Festival Directors across the country who continue to take programming risks, I'm still just as excited to watch the community thrive. Moreover, the support artists offer one another by attending our festivals, seeing and discussing each other's new works, and sparking future collaborations continues to push us forward to a new level of development and creativity. I am excited to present the second issue of THE SOURCE, full of festival musings and the artists who are developing their exciting new works through a wide range of local, national and international festivals.

Sadly, the day before his 2002 Fringe Show opened, Nic Pearson passed away; another festival many will never forget. I still meet people who have been just as touched by Nic, and he continues to live on. Nic's opening night card sits by my computer, as a reminder of his generosity, creativity, and belief that theatre is essential.

Natasha Mytnowych,  
Editor, The Source  
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The Theatre Centre

THE THEATRE CENTRE

## 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.

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\*services of Ms. Tarver made possible through the generous support of the George Cedric Metcalf Charitable Foundation.  
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# MENNO ON THE ROAD

## FIVE DAYS IN THE LIFE OF INTERNATIONAL TOURING AGENT MENNO PLUKKER

**FRIDAY, June 11** - Sarah Rogers (my associate) and I run to the office to take care of last minute phone calls, e-mails and things to send before our departure to the Magnetic North theatre festival in Edmonton. After a smooth flight, it's off to the theatre, to see the 3rd performance of *The Danish Play* by Nightwood Theatre, directed by Kelly Thornton. This is one of the shows we represent and would like to see touring to Europe and other places in the world. Even though I just saw many performances of this production in Copenhagen last month, I am happy to see this great production again. One of the criteria we use in deciding whether to represent artists and their work is if we can watch their performances a hundred times and this one qualifies for sure - such wonderful performances by the actors and a superb text of timeless and universal importance by Sonja Mills. We run into Claes Karlsson from the Kulturhuset in Stockholm, Sweden - whom I've asked to participate on one of the panel discussions I will be moderating - and we finish the evening with a drink at the hotel bar.

**Saturday, June 12** - What was I thinking when I agreed to moderate not 1 but 4 "Industry Series" round-table discussions on 4 consecutive days? The first panel, about touring Canadian theatre to Europe and the UK (with Claes Karlsson representing all of 'continental Europe'), goes pretty well. After the first panel Sarah and I have lunch with Claes Karlsson, who will be presenting Marie Brassard and her Montreal-based company Infrarouge in September in Stockholm with her newest production "La Noirceur" ("The Darkness"), as part of a larger European tour. We discuss some ins and outs around the upcoming performances and Claes also expresses interest in a brand new theatre production called "Revolutions in Therapy", written and directed by Nadia Ross and Jacob Wren - which just premiered a few weeks ago in Montreal as part of "Théâtres du Monde". At 3:00 p.m. it's back at the theatre for another performance of "The Danish Play". I am a bit nervous because some people I hold in very high regard, such as Festival de Théâtre des Amériques director Marie-Hélène Falcon and renowned theatre critic from Germany Renate Klett, are in attendance. Happily enough, the reactions are positive. Later we crash the birthday party of Ron Jenkins of Workshop West. He

presented Marie Brassard and her first show "Jimmy" in 2003 and we are now speaking about a possible presentation of the legendary theatre production "The Dragons' Trilogy" by Robert Lepage and his Quebec City based theatre company Ex Machina in 2005.

**Sunday, June 13** - This morning the panel is about touring to countries in the Asia-Pacific region, and there are participants from Tokyo in Japan and from both Auckland and Christchurch in New Zealand. Sarah and I meet with Hiroshi Takahagi from the Setagaya Public Theatre, situated in a suburb of Tokyo, to discuss some future projects. I have worked with Mr. Takahagi in the past, when we were able to present the work by Robert Lepage for the first time in Japan - with his solo performance "Needles and Opium".

**Monday, June 14** - I am truly delighted about today's panel - about touring and supporting creation-based theatre in North America. Apart from Marie-Hélène Falcon and David Sefton, theatre producer Sherrie Johnson from Toronto (da da kamera) and Calgary's Michael Green (High Performance Rodeo and One Yellow Rabbit), Susan Feldman from a great new venue in Brooklyn, New York called "Arts at St. Ann's" has been able to make it to Edmonton as well, and all panelists make truly inspiring introductions.

**Tuesday, June 15** - The last panel day. I meet with Heather Redfern from Edmonton-based theatre company Catalyst Theatre, and then with Ron Jenkins of Workshop West - who takes Sarah and me to the site where he would like to present "The Dragons' Trilogy" by Robert Lepage in August or September next year. Back at the hotel I am meeting with Guy Boyce of the Christchurch International Arts Festival in New Zealand. He is interested for next year's edition (August 2005) in Marie Brassard and The Holy Body Tattoo with the dance-music production "Circa". After a little power nap I see the newest creation by the Electric Company Theatre from Vancouver, called "Brilliant!". I love the show and this makes producer Cynthia Reid very happy. This concludes my trip to the Magnetic North theatre festival in Edmonton. **S**

*Menno Plukker is the touring agent for over 20 theatre and dance companies, and he works to take them to theatres and festivals all over the world.*

SURVEY SAYS... BEST NEW WORK FESTIVAL

Groundswell, because of the tremendous support, respect and inspiration given to the emerging playwrights (who happen to come from all genres and cultural backgrounds). What a great writing experience it has been for me.

- Marilo Nunez, Actor and Playwright

Rhubarb!....who can resist the pies???...seriously, ANY New Work Festival is to be celebrated (too bad the reviewers can't appreciate non-linear exploration)

- Ellen Ray Snow, Artistic Director, DareDen Theatre

rock.paper.sistahz - bcurent's ahdrizhina mandielia is a woman with vision. The festival focuses on the "mutability and permutation of language" within the black diaspora, with a trend towards linking established with emerging artists. The plays I've seen in the three years of this festival are phenomenal, far better than most mainstage productions. Some of the city's best writers, directors, and actors (many of them embarrassingly underused) participate.

- Sandra Alland, Writer, Performer, Publicist

I really can't pick one. Of course in some ways my heart will always be with Rhubarb! because that's where I started. But the Fringe is important because it instills a spirit of cultural entrepreneurship. The curated Festivals are important as well because they put things in a creative context. And the shoestring Festivals are necessary because they prove that nothing is indeed enough. I love them all.

- Daniel MacIvor, Artistic Director, da da kamera

Magnetic North is a very exciting new work festival. It has an atmosphere of original Canadian work with a sense of reaching beyond.

- Ann-Marie Kerr, Actor and Director

There is no "best new work festival". All new work is vital and exciting to me. It's what keeps our community alive. Stoke the fire, baby!

- Clinton Walker, Actor

I really love Nightwood's Groundswell Festival because it's chicks making theatre and that is always cool. And Rhubarb! is possibly the most fun. But I think SummerWorks is one of the most exciting festivals in the country.

- Ruth Madoc-Jones, Actor and Director

# PRACTICAL MUSIC

KILBY SMITH-MCGREGOR IN CONVERSATION WITH GABRIELLE ALEXIS AARONS AND D'BI.YOUNG

**INDEPENDENT** Theatre Festivals bring people together, literally - audiences and artists are thrown together in a brief, passionate affair. For me, it's a chance to hear a diversity of voices. There is a practical music to the festival environment: individual voices emerge in unexpected chorus or throw each other into sharp relief. It's a space where you encounter a great number of creator/performers; artists developing their own material for their own instrument, exploring an intimate personal relationship with their audience and their art.

I went to meet with dub poet/storyteller d'bi.young and opera singer/performance artist Gabrielle Alexis Aarons to find out how they've come to cultivate their respective voices in this context. Approaching theatre from different

**"THEATRE FESTIVALS ARE INCREDIBLY IMPORTANT - THEY'RE INVALUABLE BECAUSE OF THE ACCESS THEY PROVIDE"**

disciplines, different identifying experiences, both these women are intent on honouring the visceral magic of the performance space. The performative voice comes fully into being only in relationship, in connection with an audience.

d'bi.young is adamant about the power of small theatre festivals: "theatre festivals are incredibly important - they're invaluable because of the access they provide."

In her own ongoing formation as an artist she cites an integrated combination of Jamaican and Canadian social conditioning. "theatre in Toronto is very different than the theatre i grew up with in Jamaica... [which was] accessible because of the integral relationship between theatre and community." Growing up with her mother, an actor and storyteller, she was a part of Theatre of the Oppressed

culture in a post-colonial world that still retained its edifices of British "Theatrical" but popularly embraced a storytelling culture empowering people towards change. "there was a social responsibility as far as storytelling is concerned."

Moving to Canada eleven years ago illuminated both differences and similarities across cultural systems: "there's also a hierarchy here and it's about access... you can see how the overlapping and interconnected system of oppression works to make things inaccessible... a theatre festival is one of those spaces that theoretically is accessible - i say theoretically because, nothing exists in a vacuum - but it's been accessible to me, and that's really important to me because i want a platform to be able to do this kind of work."

Though Gabrielle finds that clubs and bars are often the most accessible venues for her to pursue her work, she gains a particular value from theatre festivals: "I love going to see pieces, I love festivals, I always learn a lot... and I love festivals that support their artists - at whatever stage of development - the goal of a festival should not be to have hits, the goal of a festival should not be to have fool-proof guaranteed "likable art." Like d'bi, she expresses concern that theatre here in Canada is practiced and viewed in a way that can often seem divorced from life. "I think it's a weakness here that people don't just go to theatre, like breathing, like a way of life. Maybe festivals can help people stay open."

The polarity of a popular anti-theatre sentiment on the one hand and a wounded theatre elite on the other, doesn't leave much room for meaningful connection between performer and audience. "We don't know anymore what we're dealing with in an audience," says Gabrielle, "some of them are only exposed to television... the listening is not constant, it's different than even fifty or sixty years ago. Also, theatre has lost its social function to bring people together to build a culture... often it seems to be presented more as an act of intellectual righteousness." Her ideal performance scenario would be devoid of theatrical trappings: "I think: who's the

best lighting designer? Well the sun is the best lighting designer, and people would be eating and drinking..."

Issues of access, attitude, and the wider social entanglements in which theatre finds itself implicated demand an intense vigilance on the part of a performer trying to connect. d'bi notes: "i'm constantly renegotiating how i'm storytelling... and whether that storytelling is serving a purpose for people... it will hopefully interrogate them enough to stir some change, or will hopefully, in the simplest way, just communicate a story that they can appreciate."

And with voice, the power to connect, comes responsibility. d'bi relates that in the Griot tradition, African Storytellers were raised by the elders with an ingrained understanding that the work of the word was important. "i was raised with this relationship to the word - to call yourself a poet or to call yourself a storyteller or to call yourself an actor, these things are just as urgent and crucial as to call yourself a doctor." ⇨ ⇐ She adds: "that first place of storytelling - the word - it's such a powerful space." And the power of her own voice comes from an integration of form and content, intuition and



d'bi.young



Gabrielle Alexis Aarons, photo by Jac Beo

analysis: "i'm learning - ultimately if i want to talk to people in the most impassioned way i really need to find the balance between the overtly political... and the music of writing, the poetry of writing, the life of writing."

For Gabrielle, just because a piece is non-linear doesn't mean it lacks meaning, "It's not a potpourri of endless associations that add up to nothing." In opera, "The sound has a substance that's almost palpable, it has a physical presence, it is a character on the stage. The ideal interrelation is where I reach inside of myself and go for something primordial...the logistics of the piece are immaterial...it doesn't need to have a throughline." For

her, the currency of voice is common humanity: "I think if we have a human being on one end and a human being on the other...the depth of the experience sometimes exists between the words and notes of the text."

Voice, for both these women, seems to stem from resonance...an experiential connection in which they invest a great deal of energy and hope. For d'bi: "this theatre thing - it's about the relationship...this life - it's about the relationship...that's what i'm interested in, i want to heal people with my art."

Gabrielle concludes: "Where we go with one another [in performance] is a sensory experience that's memorable and taps something personal and spiritual for someone watching. As part of everyone's psyche there's a domain that's totally unique, like a fingerprint, and I'm interested in having that be affected through the art...it happens, it can happen, it's happened to me."

So venture out. And listen. Because you never know what you'll hear. And you never know how you'll be affected. **S**

*d'bi.young will be presenting her dub performance blood (claat) as part of the Summerworks Theatre Festival. Gabrielle Alexis Aarons recently performed her solo opera Gulag Fairytale at the Toronto Fringe Festival, and will be in Imaginary Alphabet's production of Charlotte (unfinished) at SummerWorks.*

**"THE GOAL OF A FESTIVAL SHOULD NOT BE TO HAVE HITS. THE GOAL OF A FESTIVAL SHOULD NOT BE TO HAVE FOOL-PROOF GUARANTEED LIKABLE ART."**

## FAVOURITE BEER TENT

### MEMORY

Who can remember anything after a night at the beer tent????!!! except possibly, hickies, lost underpants and bank card and lovin' the WORLD...  
- Ellen Ray Snow, Artistic Director, DareDen Theatre

Clean Irene and Dirty Maxine performed outside in the courtyard during last year's blackout.  
- Ruth Madoc-Jones, Actor and Director

Well, it's more of a beer garden than a beer tent, but realizing at SummerWorks 2001 that theatre can be a narcotic. I saw five plays between 2 and 9pm, and my hallucinations while sitting outside the Factory were incomparable.  
- Sandra Alland, Writer, Performer, Publicist

Thoroughly enjoying the Karaoke performances of the cast of *Top Gun: The Musical*  
- Marie Beath Badian, Actor, Playwright, Director

"No, you are not allowed to spank complete strangers, no matter how tight their pants!"  
- Dian Marie Bridge, Writer and Performer

Shaving off the Billy Nothin' moustaches at the end of last year's Fringe in T.O.  
- Amiel Gladstone, Artistic Producer, Theatre SKAM

I remember no beer tent.  
- Matt MacFadzean, Actor and Playwright

The night Aviva Armour Ostroff "bought" a round for everyone in the Factory courtyard. Also tipping cups with Mary Magaret O'Hara and falling in love a little bit.  
- Clinton Walker, Actor

Spending the night drinking water so I could just sit back and watch the love.  
- Daniel MacIvor, Artistic Director, da da kamera

Watching a friend who was on Prozac drink 10 beers after a Fringe show. A hilarious and dark sight.  
- Ann-Marie Kerr, Actor and Director

# CLASSICAL CHANGE

## JENNIFER TARVER ON DRAMATURGY FOR THE SOULPEPPER STAGE

*IN the last few years, director and dramaturg Jennifer Tarver has made her mark on the Toronto Indie scene with a variety of experimental new works, including her acclaimed History Play at The Theatre Centre. With her noted interest in the contemporary classics, (she's directing a series of short Beckett plays for the Theatre Centre this coming season), it's no surprise Tarver has looked to one of Toronto's larger theatre companies to delve further into these works. With Soulpepper Theatre Company, Tarver is dramaturg and assistant director to Ben Barnes on Translations, and has spent the past few months in the world of big budgets and theatre stars. Like the large summer festivals at Stratford or Shaw, Soulpepper's summer repertory season presents a theatrical aesthetic and company system that seems contrary to Indie creative processes. Editor Natasha Mytnowych caught up with Tarver to ask her about her experiences, and her reflections on creation for the larger stage.*

*As an independent/experimental theatre artist, what was your biggest surprise when you started working for the more mainstream Soulpepper?*

The bigger the ship the more time it takes to turn around. Just the protocol and the infrastructure alone are daunting to wade through and can really affect the amount of flexibility in the process. I wouldn't say this is surprising, but it is certainly one of the biggest differences to the way I am used to working. I think it is most apparent in the working relationship with the design team. There is virtually no design presence in rehearsal until well into the run-throughs. I find this to be true of most companies of this size. (I've worked for several other "big ship companies" before such as the Canadian Opera Company and the Cleveland Playhouse).

The money decisions are too big to accommodate for any kind of organic or "hands-on" design process. Nothing really evolves in relation to space - there is no live-response collaboration. Everything is pre-designed. It is ironic that as an Indie producer one of the biggest challenges is money, and yet in certain contexts money

can actually be an obstacle. Weird.

*Has the experience been creatively satisfying? Has the director approached the work very collaboratively? Have there been any similarities to your own process?*

Not really. Working on this production has been fascinating, but I wouldn't say I am creatively involved in the process at all. I mean, I make the odd comment or suggestion to Ben, which he is certainly receptive to, but my position is not primarily an artistic one. I am more like a forensic researcher. My job is to search out and supply to the actors all the information necessary for them to convincingly inhabit the roles they are playing. *Translations* is set in a very specific time and place - 1830's County Donegal, Ireland. This is a naturalistic drama and requires a very high level of detail in order to re-create a precise historical and cultural milieu. It has been great because although this style of piece is not something I would personally be attracted to as a director, it has given me the opportunity to fine tune my research skills. I spent several weeks before rehearsals with my head in the books, and gave myself a crash course in Irish history. I'm sure I didn't come across as an expert! I was really starting from zero - having never even been to Ireland and knowing next to nothing about this time and place in history. I really enjoy digging into subjects in depth - so I guess in a way this is a similarity to my own work. Anyway, I think it has been my Canadian point of view that has been most useful in the end. I spent a session with the cast in the first week of rehearsal taking them through the research packages I had created for them. And now in rehearsal Ben uses me as a sounding board to keep an ear out for colloquialisms that Canadian audiences may not be familiar with. He is very concerned about the clarity and accessibility of the show to a Toronto audience.

*What was your most memorable moment?*

I haven't assisted a theatre director in over ten years. Professional directors just don't have that many opportunities to watch each other work. Although it is not an easy position to be in at times, I think it is a vital part



of an artistic career. Actors get to watch each other all the time, but directing can be an oddly isolating experience. Anyway, the most refreshing thing is to see another director get caught in one of those difficult directing moments that you thought were only confined to you! (i.e: recognizing moments of "where do I go from here?/How do I get out of this?"). For the record, Mr. Barnes navigates beautifully out of these situations. **S**

*Jennifer Tarver is the founder and Artistic Director of Theatre Extasis: a physically based company focused primarily on devised works and new adaptations of existing texts including the Dora nominated History Play and Not Faust. Directing credits include The Turn of the Screw by Benjamin Britten and Mozart's The Magic Flute (Royal Conservatory of Music), Angels in America (George Brown Theatre School), The Zoo Story (Summerworks '03), Martian Summer (Theatre Direct), Echoes (Queen of Puddings Music Theatre). Jennifer is currently developing a work combining five short plays by Samuel Beckett: co-produced by the Theatre Centre in 2005. She is the 2002 recipient of the John Hirsch Director's Award.*

- "These wings need some tabasco"  
- Ellen Ray Snow,  
Artistic Director, DareDen Theatre
- "Will needs a facelift"  
- Marilo Nunez,  
Actor and Playwright
- "Where many friends have worked"  
- Amiel Gladstone,  
Artistic Producer, Theatre SKAM
- "It is what it is"  
- Sandra Alland,  
Writer, Performer, Publicist
- "Too far and too expensive"  
- Dian Marie Bridge,  
Writer and Performer
- "Inspiration, Resource, Bugaboo,  
Rich Relation"  
- Daniel MacIvor,  
Artistic Director, da da kamera
- "My dress costs how much?!"  
alternating with  
"What do you mean we can't  
change the script?"  
- Keira Loughran,  
Actor, Playwright, Director
- "There is room for everyone"  
- Ann-Marie Kerr,  
Actor and Director
- "The long and winding road"  
- Clinton Walker,  
Actor and Director
- "Field Trip for Balzac's Coffee"  
- Marie Beath Badian,  
Actor, Playwright, Director
- "Where's Stratford?"  
- Ruth Madoc-Jones,  
Actor and Director

# ACCIDENTAL AUDIENCE

## KATE CAYLEY ON THE INAUGURAL COOKING FIRE THEATRE FESTIVAL

About a year and a half ago, Lea Ambros and I decided to organize a new, small theatre festival in Dufferin Grove Park. We called it the Cooking Fire Theatre Festival, because a cooking fire is not a decorative object, but a simple, necessary thing with an ordinary purpose - food. As part of the evening, the audience is offered a cheap, good meal, and cheap, good plays in the spirit of a shared meal. Five companies performed - three from Toronto, one from Halifax, and one from New York. The work mixed folktales, puppetry, clown, music, physical theatre and storytelling. As I watched the shows each night, I thought about the worth of bringing people together who work in similar traditions and explore similar themes, without falling into the tedium of too much sympathy, of always saying the same things in the same way. Each company was a small, more or less permanent ensemble group that was engaged in rediscovering sometimes centuries-old forms of work (puppetry, toy theatre, choral song) while bringing something to those forms that was new.

But often, I watched the audience as much as the shows. Families, local kids, passers-by who sat down to watch almost by accident. Perhaps the greatest gift to someone trying to make theatre is to reach the accidental audience member, a person who is often only possible in public space. Surprised and pleased by being told a story in their local hang-out, they watch with new eyes. Looking at the faces in the audience, I realized that perhaps theatre can effect a transformation of public space, but that ultimately and most beautifully, the transformation cuts both ways.

*Kate Cayley is Artistic Director of Stranger Theatre, and co-organizer of The Cooking Fire Theatre Festival, which was held in Dufferin Grove Park from June 24-27. Upcoming: The Counterfeit Marquise, a drag puppet show for SummerWorks. S*



Elizabeth Rucker in Number Eleven Theatre's *The Curious History* of Peter Schlemihl in the Cooking Fire Theatre Festival

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# JONATHAN CHRISTENSON ON CATALYST THEATRE'S UNIQUE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

**FOR** the past eight years, Catalyst Theatre has created original productions that have toured to festivals and theatres across the UK, Australia, and Canada. These have included the multi-award-winning and critically acclaimed *Elephant Wake*, *The House of Pootsie Plunket* and *The Blue Orphan*. These productions took shape in our imaginations over time, emerging as individual moments, combinations of sound, image, word and action. A full realization of the potential of each of these pieces necessitated a development process that enabled us to workshop each of these elements simultaneously.

As so often seems to be the case, the best moments often come from fortunate accidents. It was through such a fortunate accident that we stumbled upon an effective way of developing work of this kind. Touring has allowed us to live with a production for a number of years. This long-term relationship has enabled us to deepen and clarify our choices each time we re-visit a production in preparation for another tour.

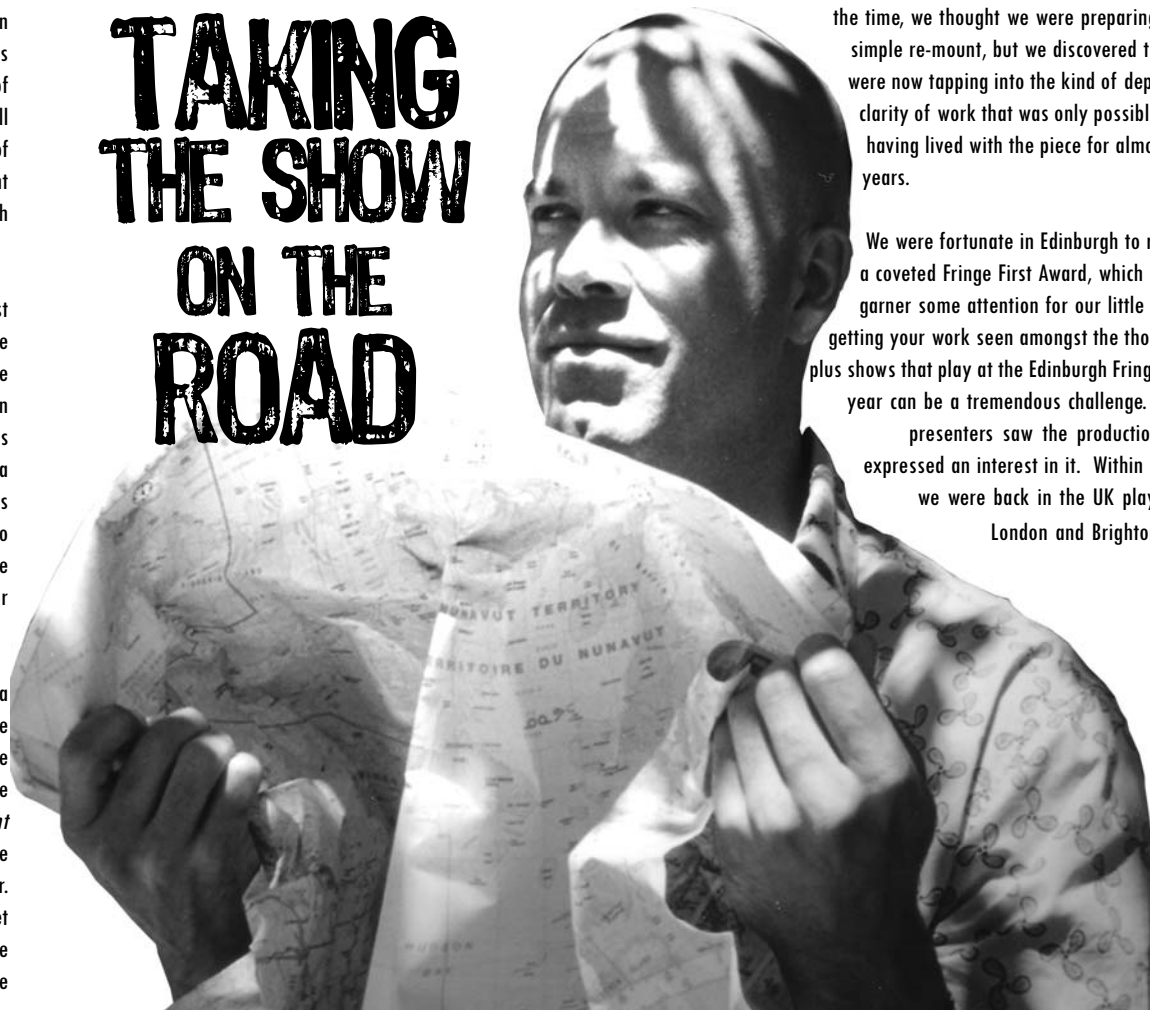
Of course, when we began we had no idea how touring would impact upon the development of our work. Our first taste of it came early in 1997 when the Globe Theatre in Regina presented *Elephant Wake*, a production we had created for the Edmonton Fringe Festival the previous year. After the Fringe we had discarded the set and props. We also knew there were changes we wanted to make to clarify the

story and deepen its thematic resonance. So we developed a new approach to the set, lights and props and went back into rehearsal in preparation for the run in Regina. The result was a more polished, clearer and more aesthetically consistent show.

## TAKING THE SHOW ON THE ROAD

Our next taste of touring came six months later when we took *Elephant Wake* to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe - our first time. Once again, to accommodate the radically different demands of the space where we were to play, we re-worked the design and went back into rehearsal. At the time, we thought we were preparing for a simple re-mount, but we discovered that we were now tapping into the kind of depth and clarity of work that was only possible after having lived with the piece for almost two years.

We were fortunate in Edinburgh to receive a coveted Fringe First Award, which helped garner some attention for our little show - getting your work seen amongst the thousand-plus shows that play at the Edinburgh Fringe each year can be a tremendous challenge. Some presenters saw the production, and expressed an interest in it. Within a year, we were back in the UK playing in London and Brighton. ⇨





Catalyst Theatre's Production of *The Blue Orphan*, photography by Ellis Brothers Photography



Catalyst Theatre's Production of *The House of Pootsie Plunket*, photography by Ellis Brothers Photography

**“AT THE TIME, WE THOUGHT WE WERE PREPARING FOR A SIMPLE REMOUNT, BUT WE DISCOVERED THAT WE WERE NOW TAPPING INTO THE KIND OF DEPTH AND CLARITY OF WORK THAT WAS ONLY POSSIBLE AFTER HAVING LIVED WITH THE PIECE FOR ALMOST TWO YEARS.”**

⇐ On that first trip to the Edinburgh Fringe we had little idea of the potential it held as a forum in which to have our work seen by theatre presenters and producers from around the world. By the time we decided to stop touring *Elephant Wake*, however, we realized that each interested presenter created another opportunity for us to re-visit the production, and each time we re-visited it we were able to further hone the work. We inadvertently discovered that touring was actually feeding the development of our work.

Our subsequent touring productions have followed a similar pattern. *The House of Pootsie Plunket* premiered in Edmonton in November of 1998. The production was deeply flawed and would not have been further developed had we not subsequently toured. During the summer of 1999, however, we returned to Edinburgh with a dramatically re-worked production. Again, we were honoured with a Fringe First Award and a Herald Angel

Award which once again helped us attract more presenters. By this point we had learned that the festival was an opportunity to actually target presenters who might be interested in the kind of work we were doing and as a result we had worked to get several of them to see the show before we ever arrived in the UK. But the awards helped - as did our previous success at the festival. The result was an invitation to the Carrefour International de Theatre in Quebec City the following spring, followed by runs in three other Canadian cities, and, a year later, a tour of the UK. Once again, the opportunity to return to the production two more times enabled us to achieve our goal of seamlessly integrating design, sound, text and movement to achieve a highly polished and unified theatrical aesthetic. By the time we were playing in London - near the end of the touring life of *Pootsie* - the actors were finding a kind of depth and freedom within the highly detailed structure of the piece that surprised even them after having lived with their characters for so long.

Most recently, we have been touring *The Blue Orphan*. As with *Pootsie*, we premiered the piece in Edmonton in May of 2002 in a flawed but interesting production. We succeeded in persuading a handful of presenters to see that production. We were unsuccessful, however, in convincing any of them to program the piece at that time. Our subsequent tours to

Fringe Festivals in Edinburgh and Adelaide, however, enabled us to dramatically re-work the production. Two years later, after extensive development, two of these presenters saw the piece again. Both were excited by the re-worked production and have opened the doors to further touring of the piece in the coming year. In the case of *The Blue Orphan*, then, not only did touring feed the development of the piece, but the opportunity to develop it in turn opened the doors to further touring -- even from presenters who were, at first, unwilling to program it.

I have no doubt that the relationship between touring and the development of Catalyst's work will continue to evolve in surprising ways. Perhaps, we will even see the day when presenters are ready to invest in a piece in its earliest stages, thus feeding the development of our work more directly than ever. **S**

# BEYOND THE LOTTERY

## HOW TO GET YOUR SUBMISSION ON THE STAGE

**FESTIVAL** Directors are annually presented with an avalanche of submissions, often numbering into the hundreds, for each of the festivals that get produced throughout the year in Toronto. So how do proposals make it into one of the coveted spots, whether that be one of the forty in SummerWorks or Rhubarb! or one of five or six in Groundswell? Festival Directors Jovanni Sy (Cross Currents/Factory Theatre), Yvette Nolan (Weesageechak/Native Earth Performing Arts), Ruth Madoc-Jones (SummerWorks), ahdr! zhina mandiola (rock.paper.sistahz/bcurrent), Kelly Thornton (Groundswell, Hysteria/Nightwood Theatre) and Moynan King (Rhubarb!, Hysteria/Buddies in Bad Times Theatre) offer their perspectives and advice:

*What's the best thing about programming your festival?*

**Jovanni:** I strongly believe in the mandate of CrossCurrents. Today's stages simply don't reflect the diverse nature of our city and country. It's gratifying to hear so many strong and unique voices from all parts of Canada.

**Yvette:** When you come across a new voice, someone you never heard of before, who has a great idea, or a big vision, or a facility for dialogue, or sometimes all three, and it takes your breath away, or often in my case, makes me laugh out loud, with wonder, that's the best thing.

**Ruth:** I always find myself really anticipating the submissions. It is like Christmas morning. There are such a vast array of projects from so many different really cool theatre artists. It is exciting to read the work and begin to envision how the festival will look. The discussions with the jury are always lively too.

**ahdr!:** being able to collaborate with an array of artists with different levels of experience, different desires around participation & interaction with audiences, different creative visions & styles.

**Moynan:** One of the great things is getting to see such a variety of work, style and subject matter in the submissions. Another great thing is being able to support work that I like and believe in.

*What makes a great submission?*

**Jovanni:** A unique theatrical vision. Though most of the submissions were competently written, surprisingly few

were stories that demanded to be told in a theatrical setting. The ones that impressed me right away were the ones where the characters seemed to leap on the stage.

**Yvette:** When someone has taken the time to articulate their process, or their need, given me a little history, but not too much, and has some idea of their place in the theatre ecology, that's a great submission. When I can feel the faith in the work rolling off the page and over me as I read it, that's a great submission.

**Ruth:** Franco and I look for work that is inspired. That is both clearly exciting to the company and exciting to us and to the jury. Of course it helps if the submission is well thought out and clearly presented. We like to program a real mix of new and established companies and are committed to representing the uniquely diverse character of the city.

**ahdr!:** actually the best submission - aside from a well crafted script in any form or style - is a proposal which fervently & clearly puts forward the desire and need to develop the work - even if there is no script sample available, even if the product or process is totally exploratory and at a rudimentary stage; especially when this is coupled with a statement which says 'these artists/collaborators and or this festival venue providing these kinds of resources and audience engagement' will further my desires/vision in this way.

**Kelly:** Take into account the festival you are submitting to. A proposal of a play written by a man in a festival of women is a pretty tough sell.

**Moynan:** It doesn't matter who you are or where you are at as an artist, be it emerging or established, outline what you want to do, why you want to do it, and back up why you will be able to do it well. The more honest info you send in, the more we can trust that you will be able to follow through with your proposal. With Hysteria and Rhubarb!, we are willing to take risks but it's good to know what kind of risk.

*Any tips for making it past the first cut?*

**Jovanni:** Write the play you want to write. Take chances. Dare to have a bold vision. Don't send me a film script or a short story disguised as a play.

**Yvette:** Read the instructions. If the Artistic Director says she wants to know what you want to gain or learn from the

festival, she really wants to know. Tell her. If she wants to know the developmental history of your play, tell her. Decent quality edited video, if you are including that as support material. Don't be cute. Cute is not as cute as you think it is at the time. Resist the urge to sprinkle a teaspoon of sparkles into the envelope before you seal it. Resist the urge to glue coloured foil cut into star and moon shapes onto your submission. Those pipe cleaners you were going to affix to the front page? Resist.

**Ruth:** Be clear and as complete as possible. A cover letter stating why you want to do the project is great. If you have an artistic team on board let us know who they are. If not don't worry, but give us an idea of how you will put together the artists for the project or who you might be considering working with. Give us as much information as you can and keep us informed as new things come up. If you ever have questions don't hesitate to ask them.

**ahdr!:** being specific about your needs & making sure your excitement is clearly communicated.

**Kelly:** Clarity. Be as specific as you can. A vague cover letter with incorrect spelling of the names of the theatre company and the festival directors makes for a pretty fast "no".

**Moynan:** Know that your submission will most likely be read by a committee of readers, and that they might not have any idea who you are. Tell them!

*What are some of your most memorable submissions?*

**Yvette:** The play from Nunavut in which the animals still talk to the Inuit, but the English and the Inuit can't understand each other. The galleys of a book with ten plays in it. A seven line submission that ended with "The festival will also give us a chance to perform our in front of an audience something that will only help to improve our work." Uh huh.

**Kelly:** *China Doll* was submitted as a radio play to Groundswell; a week later I commissioned the full-length play for production.

**Ruth:** companytheatre's submission one year was practically a book complete with a collage of photos, illustrations and text, and Bell Tower Theatre painted a very convincing Picasso replica on the front of their envelope. I don't know. There are so many great submissions. It is hard to choose. **S**

### UPCOMING SUBMISSION DEADLINES:

- Groundswell: August 15th - [www.nightwoodtheatre.net](http://www.nightwoodtheatre.net)
- Rhubarb!: Mid-September - [www.buddiesinbadtimestheatre.com](http://www.buddiesinbadtimestheatre.com)
- rock.paper.sistahz: Late October - [www.bcurrent.ca](http://www.bcurrent.ca)
- Cross Currents: tba - [www.factorytheatre.ca](http://www.factorytheatre.ca)

### UPCOMING FESTIVALS

- Weesageechak: October 14-17th - [www.nativeearth.ca](http://www.nativeearth.ca)
- ArcFest: October 13-17th - [www.arcfest.org](http://www.arcfest.org)
- Hysteria: November 4-13th - [www.nightwoodtheatre.net](http://www.nightwoodtheatre.net)

# THE THEATRE CENTRE

## FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

**I am an optimist.**

Theatre is alive. . . it is a permissive, flexible and contemporary artform.

The Theatre Centre is in a period of great renewal. As I write this the walls in the theatre are coming down. In November of this year a larger renovated theatre space and a new rehearsal hall will emerge for The Theatre Centre in a century old building, The Great Hall, in the heart of the Toronto's hottest cultural neighbourhood. I am lucky to be here. I feel honoured to be surrounded by artists with vision and commitment who are not afraid to reinvent theatrical form for a new generation of audiences.

### **BANG is back!**

Artists who participated in BANG last year include, Ngozi Paul, Spirit Synott, Jani Lauzon, Michele St. John, Patrick Conner, Monique Mojica, Nah-ee-lah, Trevor Schwellnus, Paul Quarrington, Keira Loughran, Dean Gabourie, Sook-Yin Lee, Martin Julien, Veronica Verkley, James O'Reilly, Lisa Pijuan, Matt MacFadzean, Dian Bridge, Bob Wiseman, Marie Josee Lefebvre, Darren O'Donnell, Darren Copeland, Jennifer Dahl and Lenin I Shumov. Curators: Sandra Alland, Rebecca Hope Terry and Cathy Gordon. BANG in November, December, February, April, May & June next year. Email me to find out more.

The Theatre Centre announces its new Residency program. Each company is in residence for two years developing a new work.

The first five are:

**bluemouth inc.**, artistic collective includes Stephen O'Connell, Lucy Simic, Sabrina Reeves & Richard Windeyer

**hum**, Artistic Director Susannah Hood

**Mammalian Diving Reflex**, Artistic Director Darren O'Donnell

**Princess Productions**, Artistic Director Yvonne Ng

**Volcano**, Artistic Director Ross Manson

The Theatre Centre is co-producing two productions opening November 12, 2004

**Bebe** by Theatre Asylum, Artistic Director Jennifer H. Capararu and

**That Time**, Artistic Director, Jennifer Tarver

I would like to thank the Toronto Arts Council and the George Cedric Metcalf Foundation for their generous financial support.

I would especially like to thank Rick, Simon and Jim for taking a risk and having faith in this new vision for The Theatre Centre.

Franco Boni

Artistic Director, The Theatre Centre

franco@theatrecentre.org

*"The Theatre Centre is in a constant state of artistic self-rejuvenation"*

- H. Mietkiewicz, Toronto Star (April 19 1985)

## COMING IN NOVEMBER TO THE THEATRE CENTRE

# BEBE

In this modern day Lehrstück Keira Loughran, Ruth Madoc-Jones, Camille Stubel, Severn Thompson and Jen Capraru collaborate as writers and use Brecht's own Epic theatre techniques to unmask his feminine side in life, work, and love.

Through Cabaret, Song and Drag, the brilliant women behind some of the greatest hits of 20th century drama leap out of the shadows and into the spotlight.

Direction, Conception by **Jennifer H. Capraru**  
Composition, Musical Direction, Accompaniment by **Cathy Nosaty**  
Set and Costume Design by **Joanne Dente**  
Lighting Design by **Andrea Lundy**  
Song Lyrics by **Morwyn Brebner, Marjorie Chan, Claudia Dey, Sonja Mills, Celia McBride, Kilby Smith-McGregor**  
Script Dramaturg **Kilby Smith-McGregor**

*This play collaborated with, inspired by, blatantly stolen from, directly lifted from with no credit to Brecht and no royalties paid to his heirs nor his dog Rolf who was always in a good mood and never reproached him LONG LIVE THE REVOLUTION!*

with thanks to Erika Hennebury, Christine Brubaker & Natasha Mytnowych

## THAT TIME

Five short plays by Samuel Beckett

Directed by Jennifer Tarver (Theatre Extasis) these 5 rarely seen Beckett shorts create a playful and thought provoking dialogue in form and expression.

"What fascinates me about Beckett is the same as what drives the work of Theatre Extasis: the expansion of the possibilities of stage language"

Featuring the short plays: *Not I, Act Without Words II, That Time, Act Without Words I and Catastrophe*

From a purely physical interplay of actor and object to a haunting internal landscape of memory - these plays use the fundamental elements of the theatre itself to create captivating new worlds. Featuring **Barbara Gordon, Paul Fauteux and David Jansen** these miniature sketches reveal the seeds of Beckett's most radical theatrical ideas.

Set and Costumes by **Joanne Dente**

Lighting by **Andrea Lundy**

Sound composition by **Eric Woodley**

*What was it you were never the same after?*

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"GIVE WHAT YOU CAN"  
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**WHAT ARE YOU WORKING ON**

**RIGHT NOW?**

I'm in rewrites for my play *Three Fingered Jack & the Legend of Joaquin Murieta*, which is part of Nightwood Theatre's Groundswell Festival. - Marilo Nunez, Actor and Playwright

Getting the body make-up out from between my toes, ears and nostrils from *The Divine Heretic* at Artword (Fringe Festival, 2004) and covering up the bruises below the neck...

- Ellen Ray Snow, Artistic Director, DareDen Theatre

I'm at the Caravan Farm Theatre as Production Manager, and later in the Summer, I join up with the Theatre SKAM team to direct *Lt. Nun* by Elaine Avila, *Unity (1918)* by Kevin Kerr, and *The Canada Show* by Bruce Horak and Ryan Gladstone. All three will be taking place in the great outdoors in and around Victoria, BC.

- Amiel Gladstone, Artistic Producer, Theatre SKAM

I'm the publicist for the SummerWorks Theatre Festival. I'm also writing the text for a lighting installation/play co-conceived with Michelle Ramsay, and doing the final edits of my first book, *Proof of a Tongue* (McGilligan Books, Fall 2004).

- Sandra Alland, Writer, Performer, Publicist

*Comedy of Errors*, Festival of Classics - Matt MacFadzean, Actor and Playwright

*Shakespeare, Shakespeare and Shakespeare...who'd a thunk it?* - Keira Loughran, Actor, Playwright, Director

I'm working on a new play called *Beautiful View* to be performed by myself, Tracy Wright and Caroline Gillis. We go into a workshop with da da kamera at Buddies In Bad Times in September.

- Daniel MacIvor, Artistic Director, da da kamera

Directing Anthony Black's one man show *Invisible Atom* at Festival Antigonish in Nova Scotia. Co-creating and workshoping *The Long Valley* - Ballads by John Steinbeck with This is a Bird (my new theatre company with Liisa Repo-Martell and Colombe Demers) and Souleppper Theatre Company.

- Ann-Marie Kerr, Actor and Director

I am writing a multi-media performance show called *Appleway* as part of Nightwood Theatre's 2004 Groundswell Unit. I am also co-creating and producing *Tell Tale* with the Cric Crac Collective, of which I am a co-founder, for SummerWorks 2004. I will be working FOH for SummerWorks and I am planning a site specific movement piece titled *Skinned* for September 2004. I will be performing in the RED Caberet in August 2004. I

am writing a children's book on Carribanna and am looking for a full time job.

- Dian Marie Bridge, Writer and Performer

I am directing a script development workshop with Kilby Smith-McGregor, writing for *Bebe* with Theatre Asylum and co-producing The SummerWorks Theatre Festival. - Ruth Madoc-Jones, Actor and Director

I'm programming the Queen West Art Crawl for Artscape. A three day long celebration of the arts communities who live, work and play on Queen Street West. Happening September 17, 18 and 19 at various indoor and outdoor venues all along Queen St. West. Visual artists, actors, musicians, dancers, spoken word artists, performance artists, galleries, arts organizations and Queen West businesses come together to rock the city sweetly for three nights and two days. - Clinton Walker, Actor and Director

**CONTACT THE SOURCE:** c/o The Theatre Centre, 1087 Queen Street West Toronto, ON M6J1H3  
natasha@theatrecentre.org