



# JACK PATERSON

## SELECTED REVIEWS

[WWW.JACKPATERSONTHEATRE.COM](http://WWW.JACKPATERSONTHEATRE.COM)

*"This is the magic of theatre..."*

*Jerry Wasserman, The Province*

*"...one of Vancouver's  
premiere young directors..."*

Xtra West



*"...Paterson does a stellar  
job of directing..."*

The Courier

*"...one of the best shows  
in a strong season."*

The Georgia Straight





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# ROMEO AND JULIET

## CARDIFF OPEN AIR THEATRE FESTIVAL

Romeo and Juliet is one of Shakespeare's best known plays, and particularly for those of us who were teenagers in the 90s a certain film version is more than etched into our minds as well. Personally speaking as well this was, by pure accident rather than design, the third Romeo and Juliet I'd seen in a month.

Within minutes any fears of this being a 'by the numbers' version of the play were quickly dispelled. Co-directors Mark Modzelwski and Jack Paterson have created an innovative approach to the play. It's a dark, production that brings out the more disturbing streaks often glossed over for the easier romantic elements of the play. 'Easy' also isn't something you would use to describe the production-the audience is asked to work as well by challenging them to engage with an alternative look at the text.



The elements are all there, the warring families, the glamorous moments, the fights, and of course the lovers. But it's a world that might not be exactly what the audience expects. Quickly breaking down expectations and flipping them on their head with some seamless ensemble work in the introductory moments, it becomes clear that elements of the story may not be as we expect or as they seem.

Although the leading roles are uniformly excellent, it is this ensemble work which is the highlight of the production. From the choreographed gang rivalry of the opening moments which brought to mind a kind of post-modernist reference to West Side Story's adaptation of Romeo and Juliet, layered back into the original, to the constant presence and reactions of the ensemble which fleshed out the play and breathed new life into scenes that sometimes pass as filler.

It's clear the directors worked with the actors as a company, rather than focusing on just their leading parts, and everyone had a vital part to play in every scene. From the Nurse or Lord and Lady Capulet being unseen observers, to Balthasar becoming a mysterious sometimes seen, sometimes unseen figure in scenes all added to a sense of mystery and newness around this well-worn play.

The mixing up of characters-and gender roles- was also a welcome addition. So with Tybalt becoming a woman (and a hell of a feisty one at that played by the talented Asha Cecil) and Benvolio becoming two people (Ben and Volio, Stephanie Smith and Edward Kettle) and the previously mentioned Balthasar played by an eerily hypnotic Carys McQueen who really lent emotional weight to the all-seeing role. Across the play the ensemble adds to the narrative, engaging with the story, enhancing the storytelling and bringing a new energy to the play.



The principle roles really feed off this sense of a company and their performances are enhanced by it. Mikey Howe as a confident but likeable Romeo gives a contemporary feel and likeable air to Romeo. Often reduced to just his love-lorn laments Howe draws out the fun, young Romeo who seems like the kind of guys you'd want to be around, and yes quite probably fall in love with. Helen Randall is a gentle but engaging Juliet, again giving her young girl a real sense of personality- some lovely exchanges with the nurse and her parents bring out the other sides of her character. And together their chemistry is excellent, and gives a real sense of young love's energy.

The story may be well-worn and familiar but there is a frisson of new energy to this production. There is always a balance to be struck in staging Shakespeare, many audiences balk at the idea of innovation preferring the traditional route. And traditional often works, and certainly has its time and place, but there is something to be said for taking the leap into the unknown. In staging this different approach to the classics it feels like Everyman is respecting the intelligence of its audiences, challenging them to come along with the fantastic

company and try something new. This darker twist with its many additions and spins on the 'original' might not be what everyone is expecting, or to everyone's taste, but certainly nobody can fault the directors and the company for daring to give them something new.

And what about me? My three runs of Romeo and Juliet were bookended by two very innovative productions. The middle one was the current London production directed by Kenneth Brannagh. And as much fun as that was, I'd much rather see this (or anything else come to that) by Modzelewski and Paterson.

Romeo and Juliet runs until 30th July  
<http://everymanfestival.co.uk/>  
[@CDFOpenAirFest](https://twitter.com/CDFOpenAirFest)

### **EMILY GARSIDE**

Emily Garside is an academic and theatre writer. Following a PhD in depictions of HIV/AIDS in theatre, she decided to move on from academic writing to take her writing about theatre to a wider audience. By day a research advisor and by night theatre writer, playwright and lover of all things theatre. Emily blogs at [thenerdytheatre.blogspot.co.uk](http://thenerdytheatre.blogspot.co.uk) and tweets at [@EmiGarside](https://twitter.com/EmiGarside).

### **Source:**

<http://thenerdytheatre.blogspot.co.uk/2016/07/romeo-and-juliet-cardiff-open-air.html>  
<http://mytheatremates.com/romeo-juliet-cardiff>

# “HOLY COW! BUT I HAVE NO BEEF...”

## A REVIEW OF ROMEO AND JULIET — EVERYMAN OPEN AIR THEATRE FESTIVAL

I must confess that I find it rather difficult to get excited about productions of Shakespeare’s tragedy of love, Romeo and Juliet. The play is one of the bard’s biggest hits, and it tends to get put on very frequently, at the expense of some of Shakespeare’s other tragedies, like, say, his collaboration with George Peele, Titus Andronicus, or his Coriolanus. It also gets put on at the expense of many other great early modern tragedies, such as Thomas Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy*, (his contested) *Arden of Faversham*, and his original Elizabethan love-tragedy, *Soliman and Perseda*; or Christopher Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine* plays and *The Jew of Malta*; not to mention the tragic works of John Marston, John Webster, and sundry others. That said, I have no qualms about Everyman selecting this much-loved classic in order to show off the marvellous talent they have at their disposal. But if you’re going to select a sacred cow, you’d better bring it to pastures new...



And that’s exactly what the directors Mark Modzelewski and Jack Paterson have done. The play began with myriad voices, the prologue incantatory, with vivid tableaux. From the off, I could perceive that Everyman were going for something quite different with this production: they were going to deliver all the great moments in Shakespeare’s play that have been adored for centuries, but they were also going to keep it fresh, with visceral emotion and raw intensity between the warring houses. Many speeches were split between characters, giving more of an ensemble feel, and Benvolio, a role I once played myself, had suddenly become two characters, aptly named Ben (played by Edward Kettle) and Volio (Stephanie Smith). All this made for a *Romeo and Juliet* that delivered the classic moments and the adulated lines, but mixed things up with great success. If I have one criticism, it is that I felt the cast could have made more of the humour in the first half of the play. What I enjoy most about Shakespeare’s text is the dichotomy between the comedic first half and the despairing second half, engendered by Mercutio’s death. Whether the directors had decided to rein in the comedy for the sake of eliciting emotive responses from the audience, or whether the fact that this was the first night meant the cast were less likely to take risks, I’m not sure. That said, Cari Barley did an excellent job in the Senecan role of the Nurse (however, this part can also be found in Arthur Brooke’s poem, which served as a source for Shakespeare), in the scene when Juliet entreats her to offer information about Romeo’s marriage proposal.

What about the lovers themselves? Mikey Howe made for an eminently likeable Romeo, who demonstrably grew in confidence as the play progressed, and will hit his stride as the production continues, I’m sure. He really nailed the youthful naivety, amorousness, and despair of the protagonist. As for Juliet, I must concede that, in the vast majority of productions I’ve seen, the actress does a poor job. Juliet, if not played right, can come across as a whiney, obstreperous teenager, thus obliterating any invested emotion on the part of the audience. Helen Randall, however, made for a beautiful Juliet, both inside and out, a captivating bright angel whenever she was on stage, with pitch-perfect delivery of Shakespeare’s pentameter lines, perfect diction, wry humour, and understated despair. She was indubitably the finest Juliet I’ve seen on stage and had wonderful chemistry with her Romeo.



The cast did a great job overall, from the snarling Tybalt (played by Asha Cecil), to the loveable ghostly father, Friar Laurence (played by James Pritchard), and the excellent Jon Barnes as Mercutio. Barnes's Mercutio was the ideal blend of loveable cad and dangerous ally, and his death was very touching and ushered in the woeful downfall of Juliet and her Romeo. The creative ensemble were also superb, and were integral to the success of the play. The directors evidently allowed the cast to improvise in rehearsal, to experiment, and some moments, such as Romeo's encounter with the Apothecary, were visually and audibly stunning. Too often reviewers focus solely on the 'leading' actors, without acknowledging the hard work of the supporting cast, who provide the very foundations for performance and are crucial to the quality of a play. I must mention Tom Roderick in particular; he listened and responded intently and aptly to every line of the play, and his ability to react, and to invest himself in each unfolding moment, was commendable.

Nature is above art, a doctrine Shakespeare himself imparts in King Lear, and the outdoor surroundings really contributed to this production. The clock would strike on the most

portentous moments, such as Mercutio's demise, and sometimes it was hard to discern between artificial sirens and real police cars zipping through Cardiff. One particular highlight was the moment that Romeo prepared to kill himself. A flock of seagulls screamed in protest, like the figurative raven from the anonymous The Tragedy of Richard III that Shakespeare parodied in Hamlet, singing not, but screeching for revenge. Indeed, the cast's deep sighs added more clouds to the ominous lazy-pacing clouds that converged on the production.

Lastly, I must praise the fight scenes, which really had the audience on the edge of their seats. Some of the blows were incredibly realistic, as one might expect from a production with the super talented Simon Riordan as Assistant Director. All in all, this was a solid production, with a marvellous cast, perfectly directed (and well edited, might I add! It was a brisk piece of engrossing entertainment), that dispelled any gripes I had about the potentiality of this production being same-old.

Once again, I say bravo Everyman; this company never fails to delivery high-quality productions, and I am particularly excited to review the eyases performing Richard II on Sunday.

Romeo and Juliet runs from 21 July – 30 July at Sophia Gardens, Cardiff.  
Photography: Keith Stanbury

Created in 2010, this website – with its associated Cardiff Shakespeare Facebook and twitter account @CardiffShakes – provides news, events and research tools for students, researchers, and the wider public, informing those in the local and wider community about Shakespeare events and resources in Cardiff and further afield. It received over 10,000 hits in its first year and featured in the Cardiff University Humanities Brochure (2011).

**Source:** <https://cardiffshakespeare.wordpress.com/2016/07/22/holy-cow-but-i-have-no-beef-a-review-of-romeo-and-juliet-everyman-open-air-theatre-festival/>

# ONE-WOMAN PLAY AN HOUR OF POWER

## RICHMOND'S GATEWAY THEATRE'S LATEST OFFERING IS LACED WITH LONELINESS AND REGRET, BUT PACKS A PUNCH

MATT HOEKSTRA / RICHMOND NEWS

MARCH 16, 20

It might take a few episodes in TV or an hour in film to empathize with a lead character. Actor France Perras demands it immediately in Jennifer Tremblay's play *The List* by taking us into the soul of a woman punished by guilt.

On now at Gateway Theatre's Studio B, *The List* is a powerful one-woman play blanketed in loneliness and regret, and served as an ace.

The hour-long play begins once the audience — queued in the lobby — begins to enter the quiet studio. It's dark save for the light on the nameless woman played by Perras. She wastes no time to lay it on us: "Her death is my fault." This is a woman who keeps a tight list. It's detailed and she sticks to it. But one important entry — a favour to her friend and neighbour — she never managed to cross off. It became a "floating task," one that moved from list to list and ultimately became a broken promise that leads to tragedy.

We're given the woman's story of how she moved to the country with her husband and children, in part to rejuvenate a troubled marriage. Instead, the woman finds isolation in this new rural life and her lists become an obsession.

Perras delivers the story while sitting on a chair surrounded by hanging household objects. With only a few studio lights to complement the scene, the actor is left to paint us pictures of a windswept landscape and a windswept mind. She does it well. As the woman searches for answers in this bare kitchen, the hanging objects — although difficult to see on the dark stage — remind us we're travelling through her memories.

*The List* is an hour of power written in a unique form of fragmented storytelling. It begins and ends quietly, leaving us to ponder the moments in this woman's life that are uncomfortably familiar — and re-examine our own crowded lists.

*The List* runs at Gateway Theatre's Studio B until March 19. Tickets, \$20 to \$35, at [gatewaytheatre.com](http://gatewaytheatre.com) or 604-270-1812.

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- See more at: <http://www.richmond-news.com/arts-entertainment/one-woman-play-an-hour-of-power-1.2199429#sthash.sKJsCdSj.dpuf>





# APRÈS MOI AND THE LIST PROVIDE A GLIMPSE INTO QUEBEC'S VIBRANT THEATRE SCENE

BY KATHLEEN OLIVER

ON JANUARY 29TH, 2015 AT 4:07 PM

*By Christian Begin and Jennifer Tremblay. Directed by Diane Brown and John Jack Paterson. A Ruby Slippers Theatre production, in association with BoucheWHACKED! Theatre Collective. At Studio 16 on Wednesday, January 28. Continues until February 1*

Intimacy, loss, and the tenuous thread of our connection to others are the themes that infuse this ambitious and beautifully realized double bill of translated French-Canadian works.

...

The unnamed character in Jennifer Tremblay's *The List* is also isolated, a self-described "bitter fruit" in a rural village of "nosy bitches", who blames herself for the death of her only friend. Her story comes out in staccato fragments between items on the to-do lists she compulsively recites to cope with her guilt.

Tremblay's script, translated by Shelley Tepperman, poetically limns the anxieties of a lonely, overwhelmed housewife and mother. The Woman shares her feelings of being "inhaled" by the empty landscape around her; she explains that on the one day a week when her children go to daycare, "It's the one day I eat, thinking, 'I'm eating.'"

Under Jack Paterson's direction, France Perras is a marvel of containment, reciting household tasks with the hauteur and grace of a beneficent queen. When she finally allows her grief some release, it's heartbreaking.

Set and lighting designer John Webber has created two very different looks for these shows, both exceptionally effective. The three identical motel rooms of *Après Moi* span the stage, with scrims that light up to allow us to "see through" the bathroom mirrors, a wonderful trick of intimacy. For *The List*, Webber surrounds the Woman with delicately lit toys and household items suspended from the ceiling, making an ethereal tableau of her daily preoccupations.

Each of these pieces could stand alone. Together, they provide an enticing glimpse of Quebec's vibrant theatre scene.

**Source:**

<http://www.straight.com/arts/817331/apres-moi-and-list-provide-glimpse-quebecs-vibrant-theatre-scene>



# PITMEN PAINTERS CONSISTENTLY PLEASES

BY PAUL DURRAS, SPECIAL TO THE PROVINCE FEBRUARY 2, 2014

Walk on, walk on, with hope in your heart. And you'll never walk alone.

That's the Anglo way. Stiff upper lip. Never show you're hurt. Stick together.

Among the countless films and plays that have glorified British pluck are *My Left Foot*, *Calendar Girls* and *The Full Monty*.

Now Lee Hall, who wrote *Billy Elliot*, showcases the rightness of working class fortitude and British togetherness with *The Pitmen Painters*, at the Jericho Arts Centre until Feb 16.

In 1934, three "pitmen" from Newcastle's Ashington coal mine, on their one day off, attend an art appreciation lecture at their union hall. They are joined by a boyhood friend — now a Marxist dentist — who can't work in the mine because he was gassed in the First World War.

Puzzled by their likeable art history professor who expounds about cherubs and religious symbolism, the gruff foursome agree they ought to try their hand at painting to better understand what this thing called art could be.

We decipher their personalities from quips and complaints as they gather on a weekly basis, in their Sunday suits, and begin to paint about what they know — their neighbourhood and the mine.

They were sent underground at age 10. They don't know Titian. They barely know Leonardo. The word "rubbish!" is their favourite expression, not far removed from those Yorkshiremen in the Monty Python skit who repeatedly bark, "Luxury!"

When a pretty girl invades their male enclave, hired by the professor to pose naked as a model, the would-be Rembrandts are too prudish and shocked to allow her to undress.

Even more alarming is the rich heiress who wants to buy a painting. They protest. It's absolutely daft to fork over two whole pounds for a picture that is, well, rubbish. To sweeten the deal, she agrees to give them painting supplies. They grudgingly accept, but only if her payment is shared by the group.

It's the Depression. An alarmingly skinny, chronically unemployed youth also attends these sessions just to keep warm. He is a subject of ridicule. But five years later, when he enlists for the Second World War, the often derisive men are distraught and plead with him to stay.

As they become more sophisticated, visiting galleries, having their own exhibitions, celebrated by the press, the Sunday painters remain fearfully devoted to their precious jobs, simultaneously abhorring capitalism. Art is a way of lifting their spirits out of the danger and monotony of the mine.

A crisis finally ensues when the heiress offers to provide a stipend to one of them, allowing him to quit the Ashington mine. The Karl Marx-quoting dental mechanic pleads with Oliver, their most gifted painter, to leave his mates, to follow the road of individual advancement — words of heresy for a





man who values The Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists more than The Bible. But surely one of them should use art to flee the serfdom of the mine. The freedom to be the next Vincent Van Gogh . . . well, that's not rubbish. But Oliver knows that biting the apple of patronage will entail hobnobbing with the upper class. His liberation could be tantamount to a betrayal of self.

Paul Herbert quivers convincingly as the possibly virginal bachelor, Oliver, who is pursued by the chilly but well-meaning patroness, played by Alexis Quednau, who cannot respond beyond

the strictures of her upper class attitudes.

Keith Martin Gordey is comically adroit at the union organizer who fastidiously follows rules and regulations. Burly John Prowse is convincing as the grumbling dentist who would have preferred an introductory class on economics.

With a slightly dithering aplomb, Michael Wild endearingly portrays the erudite, seldom-patronizing professor who arrives, Mary Poppins-like, to transform their lives.

Smartly directed by Jack Paterson, this dignified production is one of the most consistently pleasing shows in recent memory. The accents are remarkably consistent; the thoughtful dialogue isn't rushed. The audience leans in; adding their own humanity to the sparse set: a union hall without electricity.

Based on a true story, this United Players' presentation of The Pitmen Painters can be welcomed as an amusing and thoughtful play about how art is a staple of life. The pitmen's ongoing discussions about the nature of art, and how it infuses all our lives with meaning, will be grist for anyone who feels our governments should be told there is more to life than money and hockey.

It's equally viable to claim the heart and soul of this play is British socialism, a subject that will have less resonance in Kitsilano than in Newcastle, where the play premiered in 2007.

The Ashington coal miners are credited with the first major art exhibit in Britain to be solely devoted to working class artists.

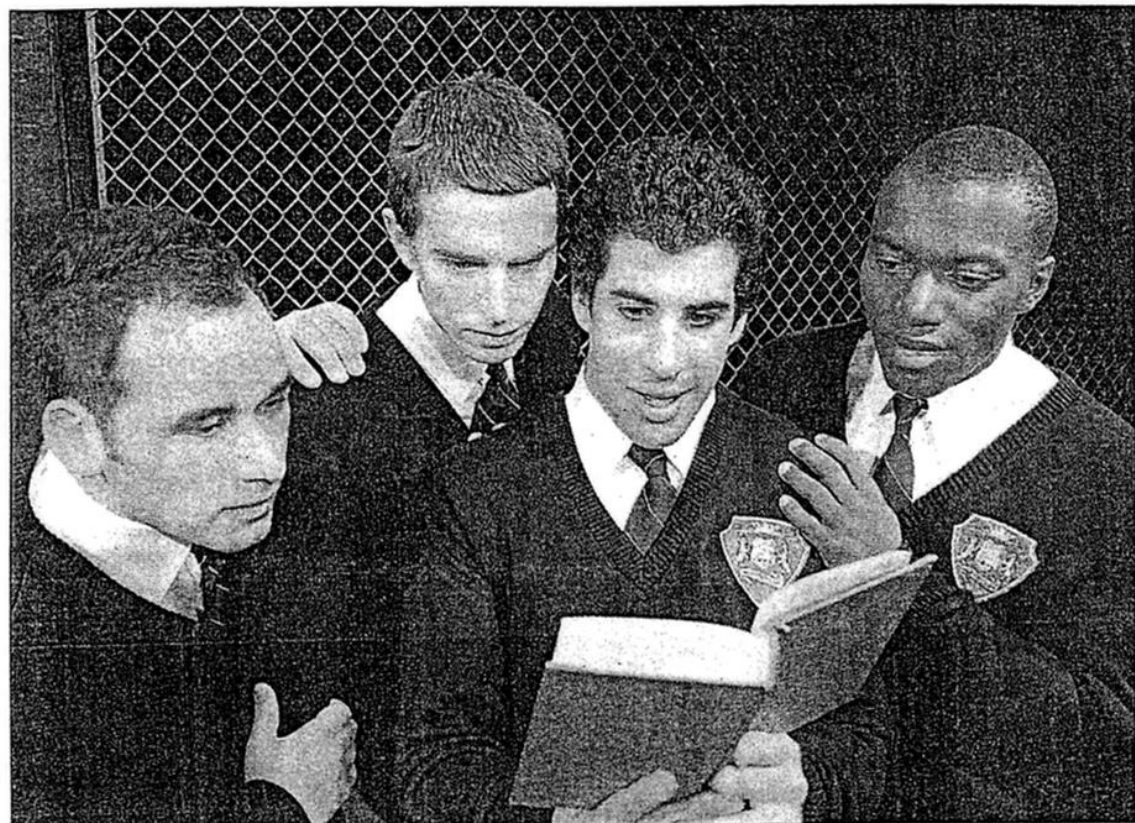
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**Source:**

<http://www.theprovince.com/entertainment/Pitmen+Painters+consistently+pleases/9455404/story.html>

Also published at Vancouverplays.com:

[http://www.vancouverplays.com/theatre/reviews/review\\_united\\_pitman\\_painters\\_14.shtml](http://www.vancouverplays.com/theatre/reviews/review_united_pitman_painters_14.shtml)



From left, Josh Drebit, Daryl King, Jason Emanuel and Omari Newton star in Shakespeare's R&J.

## R&J: No frills, all the thrills

**LESS-IS-MORE ACTING:** Performances all so beautifully transparent

### Theatre

#### Shakespeare's R&J

**Where:** Beaumont Studios, 316 W. 5th Ave., Vancouver

**When:** Tomorrow-Sat. night at 8

**Tickets:** \$20/\$18 at 604-341-9706

**Grade:** A-



**Jerry Wasserman**

THEATRE

*Romeo and Juliet* is probably Shakespeare's most familiar play. Even if you've never seen or read it, you likely know the story and the famous speeches. But I bet you've never imagined it like this.

In Joe Calarco's adaptation, four Catholic school boys perform the play for themselves in their dorm. Jack Paterson stages his Equity Co-op production in Beaumont Studios' tiny black-box theatre, a space so intimate it makes the Cultch feel like GM Place. We're right in there with the boys, and it's like knowing the play for the first time.

All the hype about this adaptation emphasizes the same-sex experience, the revelation of seeing Shakespeare queered. I didn't get that at all. For me it was about the power of theatre.

We meet the boys, clean-cut in white shirts, ties and sweaters with the school

logo, as they practise their rote Latin, conjugating the verb "to love" (amo, amas, amat) and reciting lessons about how men rule the world and women help keep them from temptation.

But they can't resist the temptation of letting go of their repressions through acting. At first they're tentative and mannered when it comes to reading a woman's part. But when Daryl King assumes the role of Juliet, there's a slight pause, a hush, and he plays it without a hint of effeminacy. From then on the boys commit to their roles with adolescent energy and enthusiasm that drives the play forward at a terrific pace.

They nervously hesitate and momen-

tarily revert to their regimented school roles the first time Juliet and Romeo (Jason Emanuel) kiss. But then they dive back into the play. And so do we.

What's amazing is how quickly and easily the audience accepts the conventions of the production. Four people play all the roles, boys play girls and women, no one changes out of his school uniform. There are no shifts of scenery to tell us where we are. In fact there's no scenery at all, just three wooden boxes on which the actors sometimes stand or bang their hands to provide percussive accompaniment.

The only prop is a red sheet, stretched between actors to represent a balcony or a sword, grasped to his gut by Mercutio (Omari Newton) as his bloody wound, wrapped about her head as a scarf by the Nurse (Josh Drebit). This is the magic of theatre, conspiring with our imaginations to conjure a complex world by the simplest means.

It helps that the performances are all so beautifully transparent: less-is-more acting at its most effective. Director Paterson could cut back on the shouting in that small space. Otherwise, he and his cast give us Shakespeare with no frills but all the thrills.

[jerry.wasserman@vancouverplays.com](mailto:jerry.wasserman@vancouverplays.com)

# Romeo and Juliet — through rainbow-coloured glasses

## SHAKESPEARE'S R&J

At the Beaumont Studios, 316 W. Fifth, to Nov. 18

Tickets \$40 to \$20, call 604-341-9706

## BY PETER BIRNIE

VANCOUVER SUN

As a publicity stunt, MD Theatre Co-op has invited Prime Minister Stephen Harper to see *Shakespeare's R&J*. That's rather unlikely, despite the fact this is a superb little piece of theatre, because Joe Calarco's illuminating interpretation of *Romeo and Juliet*

dares to explore the tragedy through a rainbow-coloured lens.

Gay theatre often shouts its intentions, but not this beauty. Calarco crafts a version of *R&J* set in a Catholic boys' school, and from word one it's a tight weaving of rich Elizabethan language and the fears of repressed young men. Lined up in school uniforms, they chant Latin text and spout vagaries about proper marital behaviour before secreting themselves with a battered copy of *Romeo and Juliet*.

Young actors Omari Newton, Jason Emanuel, Josh Drebit and

Daryl King then present an utterly compelling interpretation of what happens in fair Verona, acted with a maturity worthy of any Shakespearean stage. But they're also playing the boys themselves, excited at the intense drama of the fighting and feuding between Capulet and Montague and portraying the play's women with the awkward mincing of a teenager.

And there's something else going on, a budding chemistry between our Romeo (Emanuel) and Juliet (King). The celebrated balcony scene freaks out their friends, who

try to cut short any hint of homosexuality and prevent a kiss. Too late — Juliet has fallen for "the god of my idolatry."

The first act flies by, with the boys ending scenes abruptly and excitedly shouting out what's next: "Act 3! Scene 2! Capulet's orchard!"

Director Jack Paterson choreographs his cast carefully in a very small space, placing everyone exactly where they should be to milk a scene for maximum effect. He also finds endless ways for them to play with the piece's only prop, a red tablecloth used as a dagger or ring

or simply as a bloody link between lovers or haters.

Best of all, Paterson shapes the performances to fit together so well that while each actor could stand alone on any stage from Bard on the Beach to Stratford, this is also an amazing ensemble.

Kudos to King, a recent Studio 58 grad, for not only stepping in at the last minute when another actor cancelled but for doing so with flawless professionalism. *Shakespeare's R&J* truly soars with love's light wings.

Sun Theatre Critic  
pbirnie@png.canwest.com



## TITUS ANDRONICUS

Mad Duck Equity Co-op  
Jericho Arts Centre  
1675 Discovery St.  
February 28-March 18

### TITUS ANDRONICUS

by William Shakespeare

Mad Duck Equity Co-op

Jericho Arts Centre

1675 Discovery St.

February 28-March 18

\$12-\$20 at 604.224.8007 ext 3

[www.madduck.immediatetheatre.com](http://www.madduck.immediatetheatre.com)

One of Shakespeare's earliest plays, *Titus Andronicus* is probably also his bloodiest—and that's saying something given the number of corpses that litter his later tragedies. Though first performed sometime in the early 1590s, it has more in common with the late Jacobean revenge tragedies of twenty or thirty years later than with Shakespeare's own early work. The first of his Roman plays, *Titus* is an exercise in Senecan sensationalism: how many theatrical ways can you do atrocity? Shakespeare's answer was "many, indeed."

Jack Paterson's Mad Duck Equity Co-op production offers a powerful, gripping, and appropriately sensational modern-dress reading of the play that features terrific performances in a gorefest definitely not for the faint of heart.

Roman General Titus (Keith Martin Gordey), military hero and father of many sons, has defeated the Goths and brought home their Queen Tamora (Teryl Rothery) and her sons as prisoners. Despite Tamora's pleas for his life, Titus allows her eldest son to be hacked to death. This lapse in judgment, allowing military logic to trump humanity, sets off all the atrocities that follow. The theme is Aeschylean: violence only begets more violence. But it's the violence we come to see.

It helps that so many of the characters are studies in cold-blooded ruthlessness and unadulterated evil. The new Emperor, Saturninus (Craig Erickson), short-tempered and wild-eyed, takes the fabulously sexy, Sharon Stone-ish bad Tamora as his bride just before she vows "to massacre them all" to revenge her son's death. Her lover, Aaron the Moor (Jason Emanuel), has a soul, in the racist Renaissance formulation, as black as his face (though Emanuel himself is light-skinned and ethnically ambiguous). They fuck in one of the hottest scenes staged in Vancouver in many a moon. Psychopathic Aaron, in love with his own Satanic villainy, choreographs much of the ensuing carnage.

The play's horrifying centrepiece is the revenge-rape of Titus' daughter Lavinia (Anna Cumber) by Tamora's incestuous son and daughter, played chillingly by Josh Drebit and Laura Jaszcz. In Shakespeare they are two sons, but the gender-reversal makes it all the more ultra-creepy. Did I mention that they also chop off Lavinia's hands and cut out her tongue? Titus' eventual revenge on the kids and their mom is, let's just say, delicious.

Commer gives a stunning tongueless performance in the aftermath of Lavinia's rape and disfigurement, and along with Rothery's vengefully seductive Tamora, and Lesley Ewen as the powerful tribune Marca, Titus' sister (Marcus, his brother, in the original), they make up a triumvirate of fabulous females. Emanuel's Aaron and Erickson's Saturninus are the strongest of the men. Gordey is fine as Titus but makes him less interesting than the others. The rest of the large cast has no significant weaknesses.

Jeff Tymoschuk's sound and music effectively underscore the show's most dramatic moments. Kudos to director Paterson for making everything work so well. I was especially impressed by the way scenes of potentially ludicrous ultra-violence were staged and performed so that there were no inappropriate giggles from the audience. You might want to avert your eyes from time to time, but you shouldn't miss seeing this play.

Jerry Wasserman

**Source:**

[http://www.vancouverplays.com/theatre/reviews\\_theatre/review\\_titus\\_andronicus\\_2006.html](http://www.vancouverplays.com/theatre/reviews_theatre/review_titus_andronicus_2006.html)





# TITUS ANDRONICUS

BY COLIN THOMAS

ON MARCH 9TH, 2006 AT 9:00 AM

In the abstract, the violence in Shakespeare's first tragedy can sound ridiculous. As this mounting makes clear, however, it's realistic: human beings have always been-and still are-brutal.

Titus Andronicus, which is about war and revenge in the Roman Empire, has never received a full production in Vancouver before. Because of its goriness and supposedly wonky structure, many consider it a problem play. But this judiciously cut interpretation from Mad Duck Equity Co-op reveals it as a deeply satisfying work. It's one of the best shows in a strong season and more exciting than most of what you're likely to see at Bard on the Beach.

Director Jack Paterson makes the play's relevance inarguable. In their orange jump suits and plastic handcuffs, the prisoners who appear in the first scene look like they're from Guantanamo Bay. Later, when a sleekly dressed government official delivers body parts in plastic bags, it conjures thoughts of U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and her role in shipping remnants of soldiers home from Iraq. Lavinia, who is Titus's daughter, is raped and disfigured. It's hard to distance yourself from the horror of these acts when you realize that one of the actors in this production is from the former Yugoslavia. Next, you think of Rwanda.

Paterson has drawn consistently fine work from his large artistic team. In a racist construction, Aaron the Moor is responsible for many of the play's darkest crimes. With a light, sociopathic touch, Jason Emanuel makes the character insidiously charming. As the title character, Keith Martin Gordey delivers a clear portrait of a noble military commander who goes mad when the weight of evil overwhelms his stubbornly rigid morality. (This is a guy who kills one of his own sons when the youth defends his sister's right to marry the man she loves.) Lesley Ewen brings impressive gravitas and passion to Titus's sister Marca, a character who provides a balanced and intelligent counterpoint to her more reactive brother. Mike Wasko, one of Vancouver's best actors, is both credibly subdued and explosively emotional as Titus's warrior son, Lucius, and Josh Drebit is creepily clownlike as one of the rapists.

Anna Cummer's Lavinia is a mixed success. Before the assault, Cummer's characterization is deliberate; afterward, it's frighteningly vulnerable. In the evening's least subtle portrait, Craig Erickson makes the dastardly emperor, Saturninus, a cackling ghoul.

The uneasy rumbling of Jeff Tymoschuk's sound design contributes enormously to the story's sense of dread and sorrow. Costumer Moira Fentum provides detailed desert fatigues but gives Lavinia a dress that makes her look like a geek girl on prom night.

Most of Paterson's risks pay off. Brothers in the original, Lavinia's attackers become an incestuous brother-sister team, and it works. On the other hand, the director's decision to have Aaron dry-hump his mistress, Saturninus's wife, to the point of mutual orgasm, is sensationalistic and obvious.

Having spent much of its violence, the play becomes harder to sustain after the one intermission it gets here, but **this Titus Andronicus always makes horror worth watching-and brings it home.** Throughout the performance, an image of Michael Ignatieff haunted me like a ghost escaped from a TV screen. An intellectual and a recently elected member of Parliament, Ignatieff has defended the U.S.-led incursion in Iraq and supports coercive interrogation.

Source:

<http://www.straight.com/article/titus-andronicus>



*Ides of March no match for daring Shakespeare production*

# High praise for corporate Caesar

## Julius Caesar

At the Jericho Arts Centre until March 19

Tickets: 604-224-8007

Reviewed by Jo Ledingham

"BEWARE THE IDES OF MARCH" is a warning nearly a hundred people didn't worry about when they turned up March 15 at Jericho Arts Centre. While mid-March turned out badly for Julius Caesar a couple of thousand years ago, it was a good thing for those who went to see this Orson Welles/Neil Freeman adaptation of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*.

This Mad Duck Equity Co-op production, directed by Jack Paterson, deserves all the praise it has been getting. It's splendid in every respect.

Al Frisk's theatre-in-the-round set design is simple yet regal: a triple-tiered platform in centre stage with four red-curtained arches at the room's corners. Lighting designer Melissa C. Powell keeps our attention tightly contained in this central area, while the rest of the space remains mostly in shadow. The intimacy of the Jericho Arts Centre and the concentration of action focuses our attention exactly where Paterson directs it.

An equity co-op is self-produced (read "labour of love") and members take equal shares of net box office proceeds after expenses. The cast of this *Julius Caesar* is almost completely professional and several in-demand actors—including Lucia Frangione and Craig March—have been frantically juggling this show with other gigs. Paterson wisely has understudies ready to step in. Frangione, for example, could



Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* goes business class in this Mad Duck Equity Co-op production.

not be present for every show and the night I attended a very capable Karen Rae played Portia. (Frangione returns for the March 19 performance.) Craig March is fitting a filming commitment into his nightly live performance as Brutus. Some nights the cast has played "musical actors"; director Paterson has even stepped in a couple of times. While it sounds like a nightmare, this production nevertheless looks flawless.

Paterson brings the action forward in time: the players look very corporate in their suits, shirts and ties. When the going gets rough, the jackets and ties are gone, and the sleeves are rolled up. Scarlet scarves replace Roman daggers. Women, sometimes also in suits, play a few of the male roles. Peterson presents a realistic cross-section of a present-day corporate or political structure complete with its metaphorical backroom deals and backstabbing.

Central, of course, to the play is Caesar, here played by lean and hungry-looking Chris Britton. Arrogant and confident, Caesar waves to the

crowd while it's obvious his mind is in the senate where trouble is brewing and his power threatened.

In an inspired directorial decision, Paterson brings Britton back in the final battle scene. Battle-scarred insurgents fall as the ghost of Caesar simply strides by. Britton, still immaculate in his suit, walks a circle around the playing area and one-by-one, the soldiers drop.

Brutus, as played by March, is a decent but easily manipulated man led astray by the cunning persuasion of ambitious Cassius.

What March lacks in huge stage presence, he makes up for in engagement and clarity. Like a lover, March tenderly cradles Caesar's body as it falls. It's a lovely moment and sensitively handled.

Craig Erickson's Antony enters more like a gum-chewing, playboy sidekick of Caesar but quickly emerges as Caesar's passionate and cunning eulogist. He works the crowd like a carney and Erickson keeps us coming and going in his "Friends, Romans, countrymen" speech just as Antony did the Roman citizens. Later, when Antony is part of the ruling triumvirate, Erickson reveals his character's true nature with the punch and aggressiveness of a prizefighter.

Central to this production's success is Kevin Williamson as Cassius. Williamson exudes both charm and malice that keep us constantly guessing: is he ambitious or is he a true patriot? Williamson's performance suggests the answer is "yes" and "yes."

Anchored in the language of Shakespeare but firmly planted in the present, this is a *Julius Caesar* that we can ponder as our own politicians parade themselves before us.

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# Democratic selection yields updated classic

By Leanne Campbell

One of the oldest sayings in show business is attributed to American entertainer George Jessel: "You give 'em what they want and they'll fill the theatre."

## ON STAGE

Julius Caesar

To March 19 (Tues.-Sun.) at Jericho Arts Centre (1675 Discovery), 8 p.m. Tickets \$14-\$16 (half-price on Tuesday) from 604 224-8007.

To help determine exactly what might tickle our collective fancy, the Mad Duck Co-Op held an online poll last September, inviting the public to vote for one of three plays: *Not About Nightingales*, a recently re-discovered work by Tennessee Williams; *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid* by Michael Ondaatje; and William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. The results, described in a news release as being "as close as an American election," were 26.1 per cent for *Billy the Kid* and 35.9 per cent for *Nightingales*, but the Bard nosed them both out, garnering 38 per cent of the vote. A brief outline of each play was given, so potential audience members had some information on which to base their decision. One of the notable details was that this version of *Julius Caesar* was set in Washington, D.C. Pardon me? How could this work? As it turns out—brilliantly.

After dark-suited Secret Service agents have secured the perimeter of the in-the-round

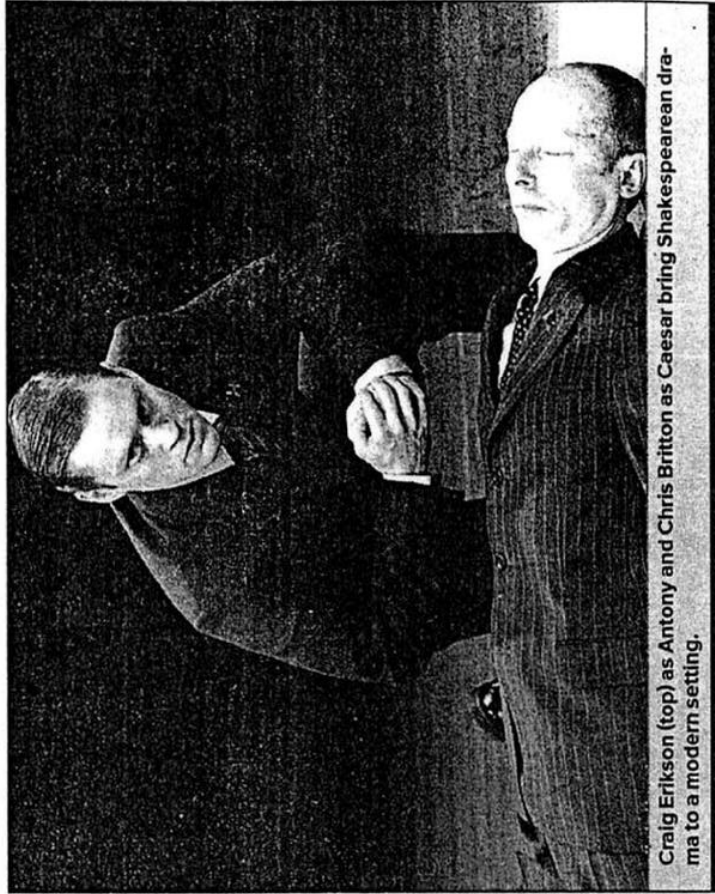
theatre, a press conference takes place where a "street" person warns Caesar about his fateful March date with doom. Chris Britton, clad in a tailored dark suit, has Calpurnia (Teryl Rothery) on his arm in a Chanel knock-off. As they pass through to the adoring crowd, Cassius begins planting the seeds of Caesar's demise in his brother.

It's almost scary how well the guts of the political machine transcend centuries, and, though the broad correlations are too easily cited (lynanny, conspiracy), director Jack Paterson has added fine details such as, when one character asks another if he will "dine with us tonight," he consults his hand-held personal organizer before answering.

The set is a simple, lozenge-shaped, three-tiered riser. There are no real props to speak of, and swords, wounds and even letters are represented by swaths of red cloth. It was particularly impressive in the scene where Antony (a very fine Craig Erickson) eulogizes Caesar: instead of pointing to each wound, he picked up each red rag and threw it down, naming its perpetrator.

While Britton is imperious and blindly trusting in the titular role, he gets snuffed out before the end of the first act. The play rests on the back of Brutus, and Craig March is more than up to the burden; he shows the character's profound confusion but, more importantly, fills the role with the passion it deserves. He's physically correct—reminiscent of a young John Belushi—and shows tenderness in his scene with Portia (Lucia Frangione, doing her usual good work).

As Cassius, Kevin Williamson also turns in a commendable performance, as does Ian



Craig Erickson (top) as Antony and Chris Britton as Caesar bring Shakespearean drama to a modern setting.

Farthing as Cinna. And, though Keith Martin Gordey got all of the laughs as a very fruity Caska, he needs to spend a bit more time with the script.

As it is played in the round, there are at least eight different entrances and exits, and cast members deliver some of the crowd-scene lines

from the last rows of the audience, unobtrusively incorporating us in the rabble. At about two hours (including intermission), this *Julius Caesar* is a pleasant discovery. It's chilling what outrageous and terrible acts can be justified by "love of country"—then and now.

# NEANDERTHAL ARTS FEST STAYS FRESH

JO LEDINGHAM / VANCOUVER COURIER

JULY 24, 2012 01:00 AM

Neanderthal Arts Festival  
At the Cultch until July 28  
Tickets: 604-251-1363  
thecultch.com

There's nothing musty or prehistoric about the Neanderthal Arts Festival. It's as fresh and tempting as the greens at a farmers market. There are eight shows from which to choose at venues as diverse as the Cultch's Historic Theatre to the actors kitchen in the Cultch basement. It's possible to catch three shows in one evening starting at 7 p.m. as I did on opening night.

...

Down the elevator, all 12 of us go with director John Jack Peterson to see *The List*, presented by Bouchewhacked! Theatre Collective. The downstairs hallway is narrow and draped with huge paper lists: butter, milk, cheese, diapers, etcetera. The actors kitchen is small, claustrophobic and the perfect setting for *Woman* (France Perras), seated on a wooden chair in front of the sink. We sit around the perimeter of the tiny room that is also plastered with huge paper lists. Things to buy; chores to do. Perras, in a little black dress and pearls, her hair done up in a prim chignon, tells us she has killed her friend Caroline. As writer Jennifer Tremblay's story unravels, it begins to feel like a two solitudes sort of tale not intentionally, director Paterson tells us later.



Woman makes up for her unfulfilled life by creating order all around her while her only friend, Caroline, leads a child-filled life of happy chaos. This is a mesmerizing performance by Perras who alternates between a sort of aching loneliness and something like glee when speaking of Caroline. Perhaps there is also a secret desire to see Caroline pay for all that happiness? Director Paterson is exploring smaller and smaller spaces and for *The List* that tightly focused space really works. If the Cultch has a broom closet, I'm betting hell be moving into that next.

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[joled@telus.net](mailto:joled@telus.net)

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**Source:**

<http://www.vancourier.com/entertainment/neanderthal-arts-fest-stays-fresh-1.376335#sthash.JAeeDJ10.dpuf>

# THE CENTRE OF EVERYTHING CIVILISED

JULY 2, 2010 MICHELLE BARKER

Poetry and prose blend seamlessly to tell the tale of a passionate summer affair.

The heat outside of Theatre Passe Muraille's Extra Space was pretty unbearable this afternoon, but it was completely worth enduring in order to enter the world that the company of The Centre of Everything Civilised created.

I entered the space to find the piece's two actors holding each other in a warm embrace under a blanket and the theatre's simple lighting. A broken

foot makes it difficult to sit anywhere but the front row, and I quickly realized that the afternoon's production was definitely going to be intimate. **The atmosphere for this stunning, sexy, heartbreaking, and incredibly intelligent play was set instantly.**



The play is the story of a love affair between two students, a man and a married woman. Through a mix of poetry and prose, they weave the tale of their summer together as they became wrapped up in a relationship with an expiration date.

The Centre of Everything Civilised features the beautiful Antonio Cayonne, an actor whose talent is difficult to ignore (and trust me, you won't want to), and the incomparable Kate Werneburg whose capacity to exist in every moment of this complex piece left me speechless. Werneburg also wrote the piece.

A very simple set made up of random props aided by a clever lighting design and soundscape made the multi-faceted plot easy to follow.

**Beautifully written, beautifully acted, and beautifully lit. See it with someone you love, see it with your best friend, see it by yourself... just see it.**

*– The Centre of Everything Civilised is playing at the Theatre Passe Muraille Extra Space (16 Ryerson Ave)*

– Performance times

Sun, July 4 9:45 PM

Mon, July 5 9:15 PM

Tue, July 6 10:15 PM

Thu, July 8 6:15 PM

Fri, July 9 5:15 PM

Sat, July 10 1:00 PM

**Source:**

<http://www.mooneyontheatre.com/2010/07/02/review-the-centre-of-everything-civilised-winterbird-arts-%E2%80%93-2010-toronto-fringe-review/>

# EXUBERANT BANANA BOYS BATTLING STEREOTYPES

BY KATHLEEN OLIVER

ON MARCH 7TH, 2007 AT 2:06 PM

*By Leon Aureus. Directed by Jack Paterson. A Firehall Arts Centre production. At the Firehall Arts Centre on Wednesday, February 28. Continues until March 17*

There's a bunch of ideas in *Banana Boys* and not all of them make sense. But what the play lacks in coherence, this production more than makes up for in sheer exuberance.

Based on the novel by Terry Woo, Leon Aureus's script focuses on a group of Chinese Canadian guys in their 20s. We meet them in a series of solo scenes: Rick is a hotshot business consultant, Mike is a medical student, Dave is an angry computer nerd, Luke is an aspiring DJ, and Sheldon is a hopeless romantic engaged in a desperate relationship with his cellphone.

The play's ostensible centre is Rick, the group's unofficial leader. We begin at his funeral, then flash back to see glimpses of his success-seeking, drug-fuelled lifestyle and his inexplicable ability to time-travel. None of this makes a whole lot of sense, and Rick's heartless arrogance doesn't make him a terribly sympathetic character to begin with.

But *Banana Boys* is not a conventional narrative; Aureus instead takes a cabaret like approach to the issues in the characters' lives. There's a battle sequence in which sexual stereotypes about Asian men explode like bombs around them; a game show in which Mike's mom appears as a sumo wrestler, beating him into choosing med school over his longed-for career as a writer; and an evangelical meeting addressing the racial slurs of the "pigmentally challenged". Director Jack Paterson and his superb ensemble dig into these multiple realities with virtuosic relish: the pacing is seamless and the energy infectious.

And although this stylistic variety means less depth in character development, all the performers turn in very solid work. Vincent Tong communicates volumes in Luke's furious, exhausted rave dance; Rick Tae finds both comedy and despair in Dave's relentless anger; and Parnelli Parnes is puppy-dog lovable as the hapless Sheldon. Along with Victor Mariano (Rick) and Simon Hayama (Mike), they effortlessly trade off numerous secondary roles.

**Banana Boys breaks new ground. It's rare to find theatre that focuses exclusively on the concerns of young Asian men, and rare for an identity play to be this much fun.**

**Source:**

<http://www.straight.com/article-73956/exuberant-banana-boys-battling-stereotypes>



# THE ODYSSEY

BY COLIN THOMAS

ON APRIL 18TH, 2007 AT 12:32 PM

*Adapted by John Murrell. Directed by Jack Paterson. A Carousel Theatre production. At the Waterfront Theatre until May 5*

This adaptation of *The Odyssey*, written by John Murrell and directed by Jack Paterson, is as wild as a video game and as goofy as a cartoon. Rather than treating Homer's epic poem reverently, these two take it for what it is: a roaring good story that contains big ideas.

The *Odyssey* is about the adventures of Odysseus, who left his kingdom of Ithaca to battle with Troy and didn't return for 20 years. Half of that time he was at war. Then he wandered lost in the Mediterranean as the sea god Poseidon tossed him from the jaws of one monster to the claws of the next.

Simplifying Homer's complex plot, Murrell focuses on Odysseus's fatal flaw: his pride. At the beginning of Murrell's telling, Odysseus complains to his protector, the goddess Athena, that she hasn't helped him much in his trials. She persuades him to recount his adversities in the hope that he will realize she aided him every step of the way. Theatrically, this framing device doesn't work terribly well. It's abstract and involves too much chat.

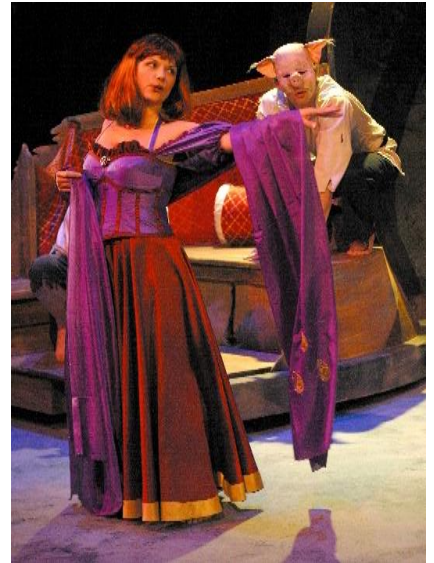
The adventures themselves are fantastic, however, largely because they are so imaginatively conceived. When Odysseus meets the fearsome Cyclops, one of his crew translates the monster's gibberish. The sailor explains that he knows the language because his mother's brother-in-law was a cyclops. In this production, when Odysseus encounters the winds of the four directions, they swoop about on fabulous little sparking roller wheels that costume designer Barbara Clayden has screwed onto the heels of their high-top sneakers. The show looks great, from Al Frisk's wrecked-ship set to Clayden's freewheeling costumes.

Director Jack Paterson has infused the evening with a tremendous sense of fun—largely by assembling a tremendous cast. Allan Zinyk is hilarious in a number of small roles, including a sailor and one of Penelope's suitors. The ensemble also features Anthony F. Ingram as a wonderfully sinister Aeolus; Joshua Reynolds as the scary and ridiculous Cyclops; Teryl Rothery as Circe, who turns men into pigs (how hard could that be?); and Tobias Slezak as the stalwart but easily duped hero.

Highest praise: my eight-year-old companion talked about this show all night and well into the next day.

Source:

<http://www.straight.com/article-86426/the-odyssey>



THE GEORGIA  
**straight**

# THE REAL INSPECTOR HOUND

BY COLIN THOMAS  
JANUARY 2002

## The Real Inspector Hound

By Tom Stoppard. Directed by John Paterson. Coproduced by Esdecy Arts and Presentation House Theatre.

At Presentation House until January 25

• **By COLIN THOMAS**

Nobody builds a theatrical puzzle the way Tom Stoppard does; like the artist M. C. Escher, the guy's a genius of playful form. And this broadly stylized, mostly amateur production romps up and down Stoppard's Escher-like staircases

with wild abandon. One could argue that the actors' abandon is a bit *too* wild, but I'm not about to.

As is his habit, Stoppard plays with the conventions of theatre in *The Real Inspector Hound*—which he wrote in the '60s—calling into question the notions of illusion and reality.

In *Hound*, two critics watch an Agatha Christie-style whodunit. Though married, Birdboot has been lusting after the production's ingenue, and when the leading lady appears, his libidinous attentions immediately turn to her. The other critic, a pseudo-intellectual second-stringer named Moon, fantasizes about replacing—and, if necessary, murdering—Higgs, the first-string critic for his paper. As they get sucked into the action of the play, their obsessions return to haunt them.

The script works on several delicious levels. Stoppard lampoons the critics. When a new character enters, Moon goes into theoretical overdrive, noting "the impact of the catalytic figure, the outsider". Stop-

pard also sends up Christie's creaky conventions, especially her methods of exposition. The first time the maid, Mrs. Drudge, answers the phone, she sets the entire scene and fills in the back story of the long-lost Lord Muldoon almost before she says "hello". The second time she picks up the receiver, she says, "The same, half an hour later."

The real theatrical thrills, though, come from Stoppard's mastery of form. After we've watched two scenes from the interior play, they repeat with the critics having been lured into playing major roles. The characters from the interior play repeat their lines, which match perfectly with the critics' desires and protestations.

To say that John Paterson directs with verve would be an understatement; his supercharged ensemble executes whiplash-inducing triple takes. I ran into some smart friends on opening night who wanted the interior play to be performed more in the elusive half-camp, half-naturalistic style in which Christie wrote. But I think Paterson's decision to go for a more energetic interpretation is perfectly justified. *The Real Inspector Hound* is a farce, after all; you don't have to look any further than the absurdity of the improvised card games the characters play to realize that.

David C. Jones, the only Equity performer in this production, is in his element as Moon; he could find more rhythmic variety in his character's early speeches, but later on, comic business flies off him like sparks from a Catherine wheel. Jesse Clark, Denise Jones, Eden Parker, and Jeffrey Leagh Fisher all throw themselves wholeheartedly and wittily into the stereotypical characters of the interior play. Peter Abrams is less successful; he sports an all-purpose British/Australian/South African accent as the investigator, Inspector Hound. And director Paterson and performer Leanne Koehn, who plays Mrs. Drudge, fail to fully capitalize on the laughs to be wrung out of Christie's elitist class stereotypes. In the early going on opening night, Tristan Ham, who takes the role of Birdboot, spent too much time on one apoplectic note—and I could swear he was juggling some lines—but he settled down nicely.

This production of *The Real Inspector Hound* is smart fun, admirable post-holiday entertainment. ■



# RECASTING ROMEO & JULIET

**A HOMOEROTIC TAKE ON SHAKESPEARE'S MOST CELEBRATED LOVE STORY  
BY CE GATCHALIANON TUE, NOV 21, 2006 7:00 PM.**

One of the more interesting re-imaginings of Shakespeare in recent years is Shakespeare's R & J, New York playwright Joe Calarco's re-conceptualizing of Romeo and Juliet, featuring a young, all-male cast acting out Western literature's most celebrated love story.

Calarco sets his adaptation in a Roman Catholic military school in the 1950s, one so oppressive that all extracurricular books are banned. One night, four schoolboys find a hidden copy of Romeo and Juliet, and secretly, out of sight of their masters, perform it.

Shakespeare's words become, for these boys, conduits through which to express their burgeoning passions, jealousies, and fears. The adaptation is, essentially, an abridged version of the original, but set in such a startling new context that it acquires new and hitherto undiscovered meanings.

Jack Paterson, director of the Vancouver premiere of the play, which ran at the Beaumont Studios Nov 7-18, describes Shakespeare's R & J as "a cross between Romeo and Juliet and Lord of the Flies.

"What makes it relevant to today's audience is love," says Paterson. "The play is about love. Love is love is love. It is its final statement I think. And since that seems to still be an issue now with areas like gay marriage, [putting the play on] seemed a way to sort of explore and touch on the subject of love, unconditional love."

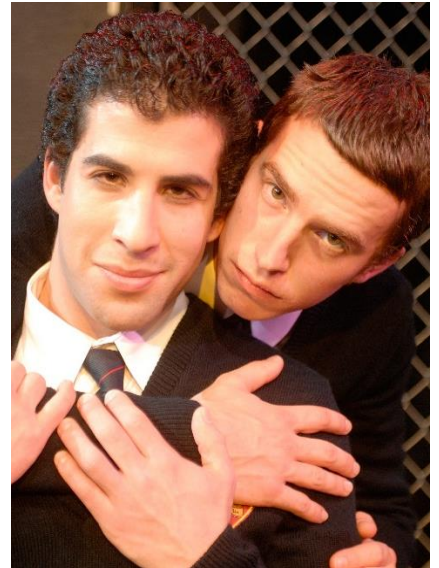
So how does recasting Romeo and Juliet in a homosocial context bring new light to this most famous of heterosexual romances?

"Well the playwright, in his notes, says very clearly that it's not a homoerotic play," Paterson says. "He actually states that all the boys are straight, which is surprising because Joe [Calarco] himself is gay and also Catholic. And he says in his notes in the beginning that this is not a play about Catholic gay people."

Paterson looks at his actors and laughs. "We're not sure if we believe him."

"I think Calarco lies," says Josh Drebit, who plays one of the schoolboys. "I think [the play] deals with homosexuality and homoeroticism. And it's such a nice way to show it, especially in a system like that, or any high school system, having two young guys or four or whatever, and feelings start coming up, whether they know what those feelings are at this point in their lives. "[Romeo and Juliet] is sort of a perfect mirror for something that's forbidden and these youths deal with that through the story and through Romeo and Juliet, and it gives them a vehicle in which to explore it. It's just a nice way to make Romeo and Juliet as prevalent and as real as it can be."

Drebit's cast mate Jason Emanuel concurs that the play is "very topical. There has been an awareness that's come into society, especially North American society--I know that some places in Europe are more progressive in that sense, where there is a certain understanding of gay relationships and how they should develop and evolve. I don't think [in North America] we've grown into it yet as a society, I don't think we've fully accepted it yet as a society.





"I think to be able to have such drastic circumstances--a Catholic school, teenagers reading a book that has been banned simply because of its power and passion and some of the things it has to say--taking all those circumstances in consideration, infusing it with the actors bringing it to life and the vision that Jack [Paterson] has created, I think it's a great opportunity for people to come to the theatre to see something that's real, that's relevant, and moreover is extremely moving," Emanuel says.

"And at the beginning of the piece, when you come into it, you don't really know where it's going to go," he adds, "and by the end of it, it takes you

you on a journey, so that you walk out and perhaps ask questions of how things have been built in society and the world that we live in."

Paterson, 32, is one of Vancouver's premiere young directors and noted in particular for his interpretations of Shakespeare (he directed last year's wildly acclaimed and multi-Jessie-nominated *Titus Andronicus*). Asked about the directorial approach that has won him raves, Paterson replies, "I want to see people on that stage that I know or that I recognize. So I want to see my world. I want to be able to understand why these people did what they did."

"For this play it's seeing four boys. Four teenagers. I remember that experience. I remember the hell it was. I remember my own sexuality, which is sometimes questionable depending on how much I've had to drink. Dealing with those issues at an early age. And I work very hard to try and find what makes these characters like us, or what makes us like them."

This intensely personal approach has once again yielded a winner.

Calarco, I agree, was probably lying about the characters being all straight; but he did so, I think, to prevent directors from turning the play into a standard, generic coming-out story. Leaving the actual orientations of the boys undetermined is a truer reflection of the chaos that is everyone's adolescence.

And Paterson and his cast convey this chaos superbly.

Everything about the show, from the economical yet kinetic blocking to Al Frisk's stark set to the committed, impassioned performances of Drebit, Emanuel, Daryl King and Omari Newton is focused, clear and direct. And the tension between the boys' initial, hormone-driven rambunctiousness and the gentler, more intimate modes of male interacting that they discover through reading aloud and giving life to Shakespeare's words--modes forbidden them by the patriarchal dictates of their school - is beautifully realized.

My only complaint about the show is that its run was too short; more people should have witnessed this exquisite production.

**Source:**

<http://www.dailyxtra.com/vancouver/arts-and-entertainment/recasting-romeo-and-juliet-10532>

# A puppet, a Dream and a Carol ruled 2006

By Jo Ledingham

AN ABUNDANCE OF THEATRICAL riches had critics wearing runners from January through December 2006. Dashing like Prancer and Vixen from venue to venue, we ink-stained reviewers had little time to check out many of the other entertainments that make Vancouver such a vibrant city. And it wasn't just quantity; it was quality. From last January's PuSh International Performing Arts Festival to late-in-the-year HIVE (an innovative three-evening event of short shows by local cutting-edge companies), the quality was exceptional.

Actors like James Fagan Tait, Jack Paterson, Sarah Rodgers and Dean Paul Gibson have emerged as exciting directors in the last few years. Studio 58 continues to turn out excellent actors and designers; SFU's School for the Contemporary Arts graduates some of the freshest play-makers; Theatre at UBC co-produced (with Electric Company Theatre and the PuSh Festival) Kevin Kerr's *Studies in Motion*, one of this—or any other—season's most technically advanced shows, thanks mainly to Theatre at UBC's head, Robert Gardiner. The big companies enjoyed considerable success, but See Seven, a collective of small, independent theatre companies known for their provocative, edgy work, still offered

the most exciting, complete season.

Working back through what was a stellar year, here are some of the highlights.

This month, Ronnie Burkett returned with a new show to The Cultch—*10 Days on Earth*—and confirmed what we have known all along: Burkett is a genius and a national treasure. His Theatre of Marionettes is no ordinary puppet company. Meticulously crafted right down to tiny leather shoes and velvet jackets, his marionettes become almost human as they live their little lives, grow old and die. Burkett's material is always somber but in *10 Days on Earth* a whimsical talking terrier and a chatterbox duck light up the shadows.

There was nothing "bah humbug" about the Playhouse Theatre Company production of *A Christmas Carol*, adapted and directed by creative, one-of-a-kind James Fagan Tait. This was an eclectic mix of styles presented with live music by Joelysa Pankanea and friends. Tait skewered sacred cows left and right and updated the language; best of all he gave us sublimely goofy Patti Allan in a Tinkerbell version of *The Ghost of Christmas Past* and exuberant Dean Paul Gibson as the best Fezziwig ever. Alex Diakun was a lean and mean Scrooge. This show was stuffed with more treats than any Christmas stocking could ever be.

*Urinetown*, directed by Donna Spencer,

returned to The Firehall and was even better than the first time around. The singing was more assured and Matt Palmer and Tracy Neff really clicked as the romantic leads. Jay Brazeau brought the house down with his fancy footwork; Barbara Barsky shattered glass three blocks away with her voice; David Adams thrilled us with his rich baritone and chilled us with his character's propensity for hauling poor folks without a penny to pee off to *Urinetown*. Concerns that a show with such an unappealing name would fail to get an audience proved unfounded; once the buzz was out, everyone figured they just had to go.

Yawn. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*—again. Not so. This *Dream*, directed by Dean Paul Gibson for Bard on the Beach was an absolute dream with what Gibson called a "fusion of fantasy, wrapped in a collision of style and humour." Alessandro Juliani and Meg Roe's soundscape—including "What's New Pussycat?" and "Mr. Sandman"—was full of surprises. Outrageous costumes by Mara Gottler looked like a blend of fairyland and the circus. Kyle Rideout was a sexually indeterminate, kinky Puck in tutu and black leather. And there was a funny little puppet and fabulous Scott Bellis and luscious Colleen Wheeler. A dream team, indeed.

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for gore you couldn't beat *Titus Andronicus*, directed by Jack Paterson for Mad Duck Equity Co-Op. Also directed by Paterson was sweet *Shakespeare's R & J* with its outstanding performance by Daryl King.

# Crime, Shakespeare, Peepshow best of 2005

By Jo Ledingham

*'Twas the night before deadline and all through my brain*

*Was the horror of writing "The Best Of" again.*

*This past year, like others, had the good, bad, the ugly*

*Impossible to wrap it all up so snugly.*

*So apologies to all whose shows I missed*

*To a handful, be glad there's no "Worst Of" list.*

YEAR END IS THE TIME to celebrate excellence in all its manifestations. Last year's Best Of was filed just before one of the most exciting shows of that year came to town, so I'm including it now. *The Black Rider*, a collaboration between singer/songwriter/actor Tom Waits, legendary Beat writer William S. Burroughs and American director Robert Wilson, was so stylishly Mephistophelean, so darkly funny that I went twice—a rare occurrence. Michael J. Scholar Jr., in white face and black lipstick was so seductively sinister I recommended locking up your daughters lest they run off with this Faustian horseman. It was part of the PuSh International Performing Arts Festival that promises to be even more exciting in 2006 now that Rumble's former artistic director Norman Armour is devoting all his time to PuSh-ing. This year's festival opens Jan. 10 and the lineup is available at [info@pushfestival.ca](mailto:info@pushfestival.ca).

Hard on the heels of *The Black Rider* came the utterly remarkable *Crime and Punishment* at The Roundhouse. It was remarkable that creator/director James Fagan Tait could take the huge and sprawling novel by Dostoevsky and transform it into less than three hours of spellbinding the-

atre. And it was remarkable that this cast of 20 included street people with no theatre training but whose choral work was so flawless. Hauntingly beautiful was Joelysa Pankanea's score. *Crime and Punishment*, co-produced by NeWorld Theatre, Vancouver Moving Theatre and the PuSh Festival, was such a huge—in every sense of the word—success that if someone doesn't come up with funding for a remount and a tour, that would be a real crime.

March is the obvious month for doing *Julius Caesar* and this Mad Duck Equity Co-Op Production opened on the Ides of March. Working with the Orson Welles/Neil Freeman adaptation, director Jack Paterson gave this show a thoroughly contemporary, brutally corporate look. The intimacy of the Jericho Arts Centre and designer Melissa C. Powell's tight lighting kept us riveted on a play we have seen many times—but never like this. Kevin Williamson's Cassius exuded both charm and malice that kept us guessing: is Cassius a true patriot or relentlessly ambitious? It's a question for all of us as the Liberal, Conservative and NDP leaders indulge in a little backstabbing of their own.

More backstabbing in *Freeport, Texas*, written by Michael Springate and produced by Sodium Glow, a trio of SFU grads. Within the concrete, steel and glass of the International Village (in Tinseltown Mall) director Olivia Delachanal created a new wild west: a combination of the American Dream gone sour and the old wild west gone corporate. Distinctive choreography by Aretha Aoki, almost surgical lighting by Adrian Lipsett and evocative music by Stina Hansen made this production excitingly "out there." Caught up in the deregulated energy indus-

try was Lera, searingly portrayed by Heather Doerksen who made her character's story so devastating we prayed it would end up a Cinderella tale. It didn't. But it was a great show with one of the best opening scenes ever: all the characters as gunslingers.

To the Cultch in May came Marie Brassard's *Peepshow*. While Brassard with her trademark digitally altered voice may be an acquired taste, she's a genius. She transcends boundaries—age and gender, even species—in this show, the centrepiece of which is the re-telling of Little Red Riding Hood. We have always known it as a cautionary tale told to little girls to arm them against the wiles of two-legged wolves. But is Little Red completely innocent? Alone on stage with only a chair as a prop, Brassard wove seemingly disparate words and ideas together and just when you felt completely lost, everything came miraculously and mysteriously into sync. Always mesmerizing, always psychologically complex, Montreal's Brassard is not to be missed if she comes this way again.

While Dorothy Dittrich is best known as a musician, composer and sound designer, she wrote one of the three monologues for Solo Collective's *fear some* back in May. Directed by Sarah Rodgers, Dittrich's piece, "If the Moon Falls," was short—sharing an evening of theatre with two other monologues—but it was a perfect jewel. The character, weighed down by the unbearable heaviness of everything from global warming and mad cow disease to genetically modified foods, was superbly and sensitively portrayed by magnificent Bridget O'Sullivan. A more perfect coming together of writer, director and performer is hard to imagine in what

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