

# A taste of days gone by R & J - the verdict

by Eddi Laechswarm  
Brunswickan Entertainment

The casual observer might think that The Playhouse is only staging musicals these days - after all, TNB's *Rock And Roll* was immediately followed by an unfortunately short run of the fabled musical, *Forever Plaid*.

*Forever Plaid* ran for a long, long time in Toronto, winning a whole bunch of awards before heading off on tour across Canada. And that is how it ended up in Fredericton at the start of this week. It tells the story of a band called Forever Plaid, one of those four-piece guy groups who were all the rage back then. But alas they died back in 1964 on their way to their first big 'gig' when their car was hit by a busload of Catholic schoolgirls on their way to see The Beatles make their American debut on the Ed Sullivan Show (or so the story goes). But because of some cosmic shenanigans, they have returned to Earth so they can give that concert that they never had the chance to when they were still alive.

When you watch the show, it becomes apparent why such an elaborate set-up is required - *Forever Plaid* isn't a musical which tells a real story. Instead, it is basically a whole bunch of songs with comic interludes both between and during them. And that's about it. But that really isn't a complaint as that is exactly why the show works so well - there is no



The Plaids get ready to calypso.

messing around with an intricate plot where there are more twists and turns than the Cabot Trail. Nobody bursts into song for no apparent reason - they sing because they love to sing, because they have to sing. They also have to crack jokes and goof off too - after all, they are just a bunch of kids.

All four Plaids were quite wonderful - it would be hard to single out one actor in particular, but if you twist my arm far enough, I would pick Vince Staltari who played Smudge. Despite the fact that this part represented his professional debut, his comic timing alone made him stand out just that little bit more. Just a tiny bit. But you must remember that this is a musical, and so singing is pretty important too. None of the songs in *Forever Plaid* are originals;

instead they use a wide variety of rock and roll songs from the 50's and 60's which were probably familiar to the majority of the audience members. Even if you didn't know the songs, you would have been impressed with the four part harmonies that they were all delivered with - they just don't sing like that any more. Most songs featured some sort of comic interlude, with the highlight being the entire Ed Sullivan Show being performed in about three minutes whilst singing 'Lady Of Spain' - it was absolutely hysterical.

It might have been a nostalgic evening, but it was also one that seemed both fresh and, dare I say, new. But most importantly, it was also an awful lot of fun and a lot more enjoyable than anything involving singing animals.

by Mary Rogal-Black  
Brunswickan Entertainment

Last week's *Romeo and Julian* was the funniest tragedy I've ever seen.

Not that the concept of a homosexual romance as the centre of this tragedy is much of a stretch. It wasn't. Instead, good acting and direction brought out the comedy in the play.

Driven by the standout performances of Darren Elliot, Alan Wong, Katherine Atkinson and Rachel Jones, this modern adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* was a good evening's entertainment.

Rachel Jones, playing Mercutio, had the juiciest role, and rose to the occasion to become the star of the show. Mercutio had the best vulgar jokes, which Jones delivered with good timing and excellent physical comedy, and her dying scene - "a plague on both your houses!" - was the most compelling of the many deaths in the play. It'll definitely be worthwhile to keep an eye out for Jones in future productions.

Atkinson was another crowd favourite, with a solid comic performance as Julian's Nanny.

The large supporting cast included notable performances by Meredith Phinney, Hannah Grant, Kenny Fitzpatrick playing a perfect thug in the role of Tybalt, and Professor Randall Martin of the English Department, who also adapted the play for this production.

Perhaps the funniest three minutes of the production, however, were

provided by Joel Hunter in his role as the apothecary. Translated into modern terms, the apothecary becomes a drug dealer-dude, complete with tie-dyed T-shirt and blond dreadlocks. Hunter played this perfectly, mixing paranoia with indifference, and this take on the character, made lines such as "My good acting and direction brought out the comedy in the play," demonstrate Shakespeare's relevance for the Gen X audience.

Unfortunately, the comedy spilled over too easily into what should have been tragic moments, so that the climactic double suicide of the heroes wasn't what it might have been.

Produced by Theatre UNB and Stage Left Productions, director Greg Doran made good use of the theatre in Marshall D'Avery Hall, with actors frequently entering and exiting via the centre aisle in the audience.

Contemporary costuming, and a very basic set minimized distractions, allowing the audience to concentrate on the acting instead of the considerable requirements of a Shakespearean set design and wardrobe. These updated elements can be introduced into a Shakespearean play without many wrinkles, although the appearance of a handgun and a cellular phone in the last act might have been too much of a good thing.

Cellular phones aside, *Romeo and Julian* was a good play. The only other funniest tragedy I saw last weekend was *Muriel's Wedding*, an excellent Australian movie out now on video, and worth a screening with a true friend or a true love, gender of your choice, of course.

## Celebrating diversity on campus

The Festival of Cultural Diversity will be held on March 29th and March 30th. The theme this year is 'Unity in Diversity'. Local multicultural groups and student associations will be participating. All events are free to the public and student population—so come out and support Fredericton's multicultural community!

### Schedule for Festival of Cultural Diversity

<b>Friday March 29</b>	
12 pm -6 am	Blue Room Cultural Booths (countries from Asia, Latin America, Africa and Europe will be represented)
1:30 pm (tentative)	Panel Discussion "The Media's Interpretations of Cultural Groups"
<b>Saturday March 30</b>	
5:30-7:00 pm	SUB Cafeteria Vendor Stalls (Sale of native foods, posters, etc.)
7:00-10:00 pm	SUB Cafeteria Cultural Performance (songs, dances, foods and other entertainment will be provided)

FREE Festival T-shirts will be given out to the first 5 people who correctly answer the following questions. Those with the greatest amount of correct answers will be notified in the next week's *Brun*.

### Questions

- 1) What is the only South American country that has Portuguese as its official language?
- 2) What piece of (Canadian) native architecture is used to direct travellers?
- 3) What is the only landmark on Earth which is visible from space?
- 4) In the Rogers and Hammerstein musical, *South Pacific*, which country was Bali located in?
- 5) The Sahara Desert stretches over which country/countries?

Drop your entries in to *The Bruns* office by 9 pm on Tuesday.

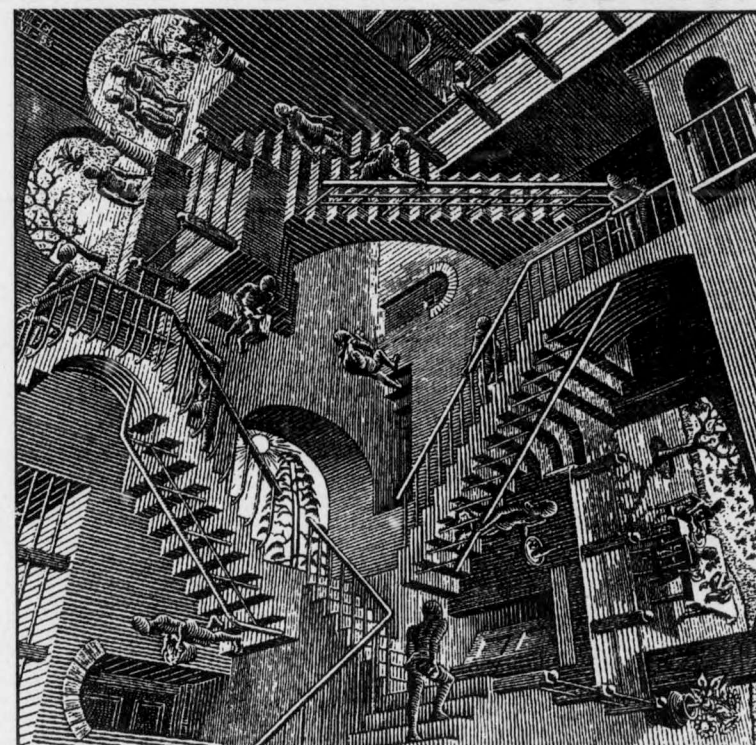
## The Physicists come to town

For Brunswickan Entertainment

Drama UNB and Physikal Productions are proud to present Friedrich Dürrenmatt's two-act comedy/drama, *The Physicists*. Performances will take place March 28-30 at 8:00 pm, in Memorial Hall.

Faced with the corruption and power politics running rampant throughout the world, the only refuge left comes in the form of a madhouse. However, murder and espionage wedge themselves firmly within that final sanctuary, transforming the only safe solitude where ideas can freely flourish into a twisted, distorted prison.

*The Physicists* revolves around a situation in which the powerful knowledge of individuals, if unleashed upon the world, would destroy it, and the brutal danger of science inevitably explodes. The boundaries of sanity and insanity blur and become difficult to determine, as the asylum's decrepit owner reveals the ultimate fate of society in the play's final scene.



Coupled with a whimsical sense of comedy, *The Physicists* portrays humanity's obsession with progress and the possible doom of all mankind.

Tickets are \$4 for students and seniors, and \$5 for others, and will be available at the door on the evening of the show.

## Exclusive at Film Society

This Monday, The Capitol Film Society has a little bit of an exclusive. Fredericton will be fortunate enough to have one of only two screenings in the Maritimes of Michael Hoffman's *Restoration*.

*Restoration* has an illustrious cast, and mixes humor, poignancy and historical detail to form an epic and entertaining journey through 17th Century England, an era of daring scientific, artistic and social adventurism as well as a time of raging plagues and natural disasters. The film tells the story of Robert Merivel (Robert Downey Jr.), a young man who abandons his medical studies for the decadent Court of King Charles II (Sam Neill). Finding favour with the fun-loving king, known to history as "The Merry Monarch," Merivel serves as a "paper groom" to the

youngest royal mistress (Polly Walker), but violates the rules by falling in love with her. Banished from the Court, Merivel's enforced Purgatory leads to a yet more painful fall-from grace before he can achieve spiritual and social restoration.

Other members of the cast include Ian McKeelán, Hugh Grant, Meg Ryan and David Thewlis.

Judging from the movie trailers shown at the society for the past two weeks, *Restoration* will offer a feast for both the eye and the mind. And remember, this is your only chance to catch it on the big screen in town.

The screening starts at 8:00 pm in the Alfred Bailey Auditorium in Tilley Hall on Monday, March 25th.

