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fearing awe (much like an English class). Roberts, also from Britain, was more chatty, suited for the intimate, decorated interior of Orange Hall. His interpretations of Richard III, Lear, various clowns and, of course, fools, were uniformly good. Especially impressive was how he created tension with non-existent foils. After playing nearly a dozen great characters, Roberts started to lose steam by the time he closed with Hamlet.

Probably the furthest thing from Shakespeare was Jeffery Hirschfield's *All Meat Radio*. The Edmontonian's brand of crazy bizarreness played to roaring crowds. Much of the humour is physical, carried off with zany gusto by its expandable (four to six members) cast. I'll be ready for more of Hirschfield as soon as my spleen recovers.

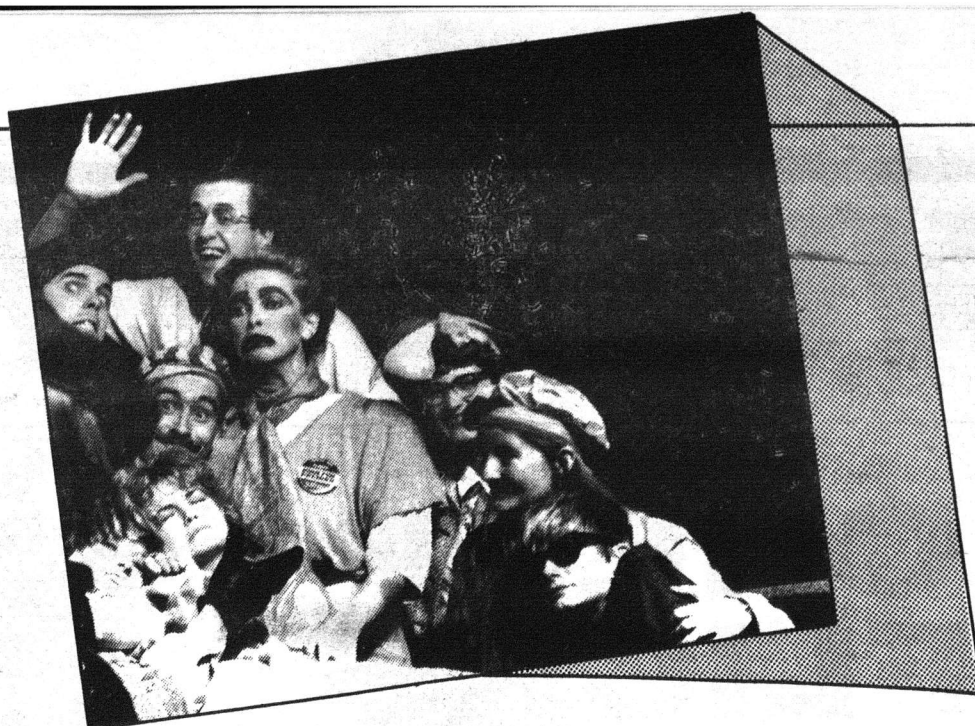
Other billed-as-comedy shows didn't fare as well. *Paradise on Hold* wanted to be a *feel good farce about Edmontonia but wound up like Entertainment Tonight's Mary Hart*: too damn perky! *Alberta Bound* started with the same idea in mind but he bites missed the jugular too many times. Rumor has it *Alberta* is undergoing a mild facelift before it hits the Son of Fringe stage.

Phoenix Theatre's *Soap on the Rocks'* improvised version of *Hamlet* was not the "climax" soap character Rodney Revellier promised, but the Soap troupe's six-day run proved consistently entertaining. Stay tuned at the Phoenix downtown...

Brian McGugan followed his bizarre though reverent contortion of Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* of last year with Neil Simon's *The Visitor*. Simplifying the psychological dynamics between two ex-lovers into video game manoeuvres, McGugan highlights the primitive subtext of the situation. Simon probably dream he'd never see this version.

Mega-hit *Batman on a Dime* was an amusing X-rated musical from Calgary's One Yellow Rabbit. Kirk Miles confirms our suspicions as an apathetic, alcoholic, more-than-latent homosexual Robin while Michael Stirling Green's suitably wild and crazy and corrupting as the Joker. Never really ascends from obvious innuendo.

The Public Eye is a clever, incidental early work by Peter (*Equus*, *Amadeus*) Shaeffer — i.e. no horses, no wigs. Advice to directors everywhere: either adapt British scripts into Canadianese or insist actors adopt uniform British accents. Trivia note: playing the



The Soap on the Rocks cast rehearse for tragic production of Hamlet.

upright husband was none other than *Alberta Report* scribe Stephen Weatherbe (who did not quite measure up to CFRN's Danny Linehan's riveting performance as various thugs in *Morocco*).

Lovers and Other Strangers was probably the most juvenile play at the Fringe. The ABOP actors show a natural knack for comic acting but the Renee Taylor/Joseph Bologna script is pointless, sexist, stereotypical and cliched, an unholy marriage of *Love American Style* and *The Honeyymooners*.

It was hard to believe the people who brought us the above travesty also presented David Mamet's *American Buffalo*. The young cast emphasized the intensity between three men in a risky situation in a small space. Minor flaws in the performance seemed to arise from exhaustion, specifically an inability to keep the intensity level up.

Like *Buffalo*, *A Cry of Women* dealt with violence, but turned out to be a dull impressionistic collage of the lives of four women in terrorist-ridden Northern Ireland. The experimental, intense acting and precise chorus work could not compensate for the general melodrama.

An unsung gem of the festival, *Canadian Gothic* was an outstanding directorial debut by U of A student Doug Tokaryk. The Joanna Glass family drama deals with topics ranging from a possible suicide, teenaged pregnancy and racism. Played in a subtle and sensitive manner by Janet Smith, Lenne Greenwood

Calgarian Grant Lowe's interpretation of *La Duchess de Langeais* played quietly to full

houses of Michel Tremblay fans and others interested in 60-year-old tranvestites. During the hour-long one-person show, Lowe mimes across the stage, confesses he toured the world "on my ass", drinks one-and-a-half bottles of whiskey, and wins the sympathy of the audience. By the end, the audience is cheering for La Duchess and crying with her.

While Tremblay makes sophisticated comments about vanity, aging and homosexuality, a much simpler message was given in *Received in Confidence*. The play, also from Calgary, is basically an educational scenario of a high school boy in the process of admitting to himself he is gay and later coming out of the closet. It's a play that was preaching to the converted at the Fringe but that should be touring schools. Ironically, the play depicts the boy falling in love with his gay teacher and casts the straight-laced principal as the villain.

There was a lot of dancing at the Fringe, not just at the street dance but in the venues as well. The most popular dance event was Makonde Theatre Co.'s *Namanve*. The show was actually a combination of theatrics depicting life and death, tribal and new world values from a Ugandan perspective. Don't miss it at the Horizon stage or see it gratis at SUB Theatre Sept. 14.

Another meeting of cultures was presented in *Tree Whispers*, by Calgary's Sun-Ergos. A dancer and a poet told stories simultaneously in the tradition of Indian storytellers who tell tales at the same time. As a result, audience members were sent reeling

as attention continually shifted from one man to the other.

Lorna Sutherland and Diane Shantz used the same technique for their absorbing *On the Train*. Sutherland's voice slip-slided from cold calculating to soothing deep tones effortlessly when she read her long poem. Shantz's choreography and dancing lent sensual aspect to the account of a woman's train journey.

The Beast Under the Bed is an enchanting work danced with precision and strength by Maria Formolo. She kept up a superhuman pace in the hour-long show, transforming from a bird-like swamp creature to a reek muse to an arctic tundra. More soon, please, Ms. Formolo!

Contrasting with Formolo's smooth-as-silk show was Stageside Turnout's debut. Ever have one of those days? The trio seemed underpracticed, one of the members had the flu, technical gremlins were amok. Most of the dance numbers were cheerful Broadway-types but it was frustrating to sit through long musical interludes in which Richard Link played completely unrelated Eric Satie meets Marvin Hamlisch electronic ditties.

Arete is a "physical comedy" — i.e. populist mime — troupe that dared to reveal what Alex Dumas was really talking about in *The Three Musketeers*. For example, the King and the Cardinal have it out in a Stampede wrestling match (called by Wailin' Ed, no less) and the fate of France teeters on the outcome of a round of *Let's Make a Deal*. So close to magic, both adults' and kids' mouths hung open.

Rounding out this selection of Fringe things is the most controversial play of the festival, *Pre-meditated Sister*. After it was slammed in the dailies, many people went either to see how bad it really was or to see if they should ever trust the critics again. The truth, as ever, lies in the middle, although admittedly, reading the entertainment pages will no longer be like reading the Bible.

Terry Colp's debut as scripter and director could have used a few month's work but the script is not unsalvageable. Having the action revolve around a trio of Heavy Metallists was a relief from the predominant trendiness of threatredom. Especially strong is Colp's sense of rhythm in dialogue. Unfortunately, the best parts, the sardonic musical numbers, are saved for last, after the less forgiving either switch off mentally or leave.

Burrell, Barry, Bard a popular Fringe trio

by Suzette C. Chan

Anna Barry and Michael Burrell are two of the nicest people you could meet on the Fringe. Over the brief history of the festival, the pair has developed a Fringe following that looks forward to seeing them each summer. Their kindness is reciprocated. Barry and Burrell spend the last days in Edmonton trying to come up with ideas for next year's festival.

Why do they come back? "Because we enjoy it," said Anna Barry.

Barry and Burrell have been friends for years, tracing back their histories to work at the Old Vic in London — before Honest Ed Mirvisch of Toronto bought the theatre. Said Burrell: In theatre terms, we're 'legit' but we're bastards in real life."

Barry was the first to arrive at the Fringe, three years ago. Fringe organizer Brian Paisley asked her back last year and she brought with her *Mistress Mine*, a play about Anne Hathaway, Shakespeare's wife.

Barry is particularly fond of the play not only because her mother Judith Gick wrote it but because it deals with a very important although overlooked aspect of Shakespeare's life.

"When talking about Anne Hathaway, people always pounce on the obvious," she said, "that she was older, pregnant, when they were married, an illiterate peasant. But her family was as well to do as Shakespeare's. In fact, her father had to bail him out a few times."

Barry said she did not have a show ready for Fringe '85 but told Paisley said he was setting up a children's stage this year, Barry did not hesitate in bringing the show to Edmonton.

Barry was raised on Shakespeare as was Michael Burrell. But it was Burrell's own *Hess* the actor chose to perform when Barry persuaded him to come Fringing last year.

"If I knew he would upstage me like he did, I wouldn't have asked!"

Burrell seized the opportunity to perform

Hess in Canada.

"I had stopped playing *Hess* for three years," he said. "I said I would only do it again if I were invited to Canada to do it."

Burrell had intended to present his two-character play *Love Among the Butterflies* this year. The play enjoyed a successful sold-out run at the official Edinburgh Festival, but its stars were caught up with other projects.

Burrell spent from May to June writing *Burrell on the Bard*.

He was careful to pick three different

Fringe binge continued

by Suzette C. Chan

If you were one of hundreds of people turned away from Fringe hits after lining up two hours for tickets, fear not. The Son of Fringe debuts, proving there definitely is *Life After Hockey*.

Several theatre spaces have accepted bookings for a number of Fringe faves. The biggest post-Fringe binge is at the Horizon Stage in Spruce Grove. The father of the Fringe is happy he has an offspring.

"They got my blessings," said Brian Paisley of the Chinook Theatre. "I'm proud we begat a son!"

Rather than begrudge someone riding his Fringe-tails, Paisley welcomed it. "We're trying to create an opportunity for artists to meet audiences. "He felt it would be a "shame" if some of the most successful Fringe shows were not staged again.

He said the mini-Fringe will not prompt him to increase the number of festival days next year. The Fringe is a nine-day event.

So confident is the fledgling Horizon Stage (three years old) of its bouncing baby, that the theatre is picking up the cost of flying two *My Miami Melody* cast members in from Toronto.

Horizon hopes this is the beginning of a bright long-lived family.

The Horizon Stage Son of Fringe schedule

kinds of plays, a history (*Richard II*), a comedy (*Twelfth Night*) and a tragedy (*King Lear*), from different periods in Shakespeare's career: and early, a middle and a late play respectively.

"I've never played any of those characters in a complete play," said Burrell. "Lear is certainly my absolute favourite."

Burrell has enjoyed universal praise over his portrayal of Malvolio. "I find him incredibly difficult," he admits. "You have to walk the fine line between playing him as a real person and as a caricature. If you can get it on

the edge, people will believe he's real although impertinent and obnoxious, but they find him funny...a good example is Brian (Paisley)!"

Despite that comment, Brian will probably be delighted to have Anna and Michael back again next year. The pair are already planning a collaboration next year. Undoubtedly, audiences will be as delighted to see them perform as they are Burrell and Barry are delighted performing.

For a last look at Burrell on the Bard and Anna Barry's show, see sidebar.

is as follows:

Friday: *Life After Hockey*, 7 p.m.; *My Miami Melody*, 9 p.m.

Saturday: *Youth's the Stuff*, 2 p.m.; *Alberta Bound*, 4 p.m.; *Life After Hockey*, 7 p.m.; *My Miami Melody*, 9 p.m.

Sunday: *A Coupla White Chicks Sitting Around Talking*, 2 p.m.; *My Miami Melody*, 4 p.m.; *Namanve*, 7 p.m.; *Alberta Bound*, 9 p.m.

Monday: *Youth's the Stuff*, 7 p.m.; *Namanve*, 9 p.m.

Tuesday: *Mistress Mine*, 7 p.m.; *Doppelganger*, 9 p.m.

Mistress Mine is a show Anna Barry brought to the Fringe last year. It is also part of a double-Shakespeare night with Michael Burrell's *Burrell on the Bard* at the Chinook Theatre. The run started last night and goes until Sept. 8. Tickets are available for the shows separately or as a special double-bill package. Curtain times are 7 and 9:15 respectively.

Following Burrell, Barry and the Bard are four shows sponsored by celebration of Women in the Arts. *Sparks from the Anvil*, *A Coupla White Chicks Sitting Around Talking*, *B.L.T. Down* and *Jewel* were all written by and/or directed by women. *Anvil* goes Sept.

12 at 9:30 p.m., 14 at 7 p.m. and 15 at 8:30 p.m. *White Chicks* is on Sept. 11, 13 and 15 at 8 P.M., *B.L.T. Down* is on Sept. 12 and 13 at 9:30 p.m. and 14 at 10 p.m.. Finally, *Jewel* is on Sept. 12 at 8 p.m., 14 at 8:30 p.m. and 15 at 10 p.m..

If you missed Makonde Theatre's *Namanve* at the Fringe and the Chinook, students can see the Ugandan spectacular at SUB Theatre Sept. 14. Admission gratis.

Behind the Fringe started a two week run at the Nexus Theatre yesterday. A 50 minute version is staged on weekdays at 12:05 p.m. Monday, Wednesday and Friday and at 11:50 on Tuesday and Thursday. The Friday and Saturday night shows start at 8:30 p.m. and are 90 minutes long.

Nexus booked *Life After Hockey* before the Fringe and will stage it in April.

The Phoenix Theatre can't fathom how rumors started that they are holding over *Batman on a Dime* and other Fringe hits. The theatre's downtown space is booked for September but may be able to fit grunge shows around its Christmas schedule. However, the Calgary's Nebulous Rebels are confirmed for early October with a Fringe '84 show.

The soaps will continue at the Phoenix downtown Fridays at 11:30 p.m. Also, look for familiar Fringe faces in Phoenix's season opener, *Beyond Therapy*.