



Gerry Salsberg and Valri Bromfield improvise a humorous sequence in the Second City Revue.

## Comedy with a fresh approach

By BOB McBRIDE

Good news for Toronto theatre-goers: Second City has arrived. Second City, an innovative idea in comedy cabaret entertainment, is capturing audience approval as well as critical acclaim. Combining strong doses of satire with occasional forays into the absurd (à la Monty Python), the Second City troupe has taken an exciting concept in comedy revue and made it click. The result is a brand of hilarity which is, to say the least, infectious.

The formula for such success lies in improvisational comedy. There are no scripts for the Second City sketches. The performers are their own writers, and sketches evolve from suggestions made by themselves, directors and the audience. The only properties are the chairs.

As you can well imagine, this imposes a stiff burden upon the performers. They discharge this responsibility by reacting to one another and the audience with discipline, poise and an obvious joy in execution. Producer and director Bernard Sahlins has assembled a group of actors whose credentials speak for their capabilities.

Jayne Eastwood, late of *Going Down the Road* and *Godspell*, is particularly outstanding in one sketch concerning a Leaside PTA (Many of the skits focus on Toronto life). The performers including Dan Aykroyd (CBC comedy), Gilda Radner (*Godspell*, CBC), Valri Bromfield (CBC), Gerry Salsberg (*Godspell*), Brian Doyle-Murray (film) and Joseph O'Flaherty (TV comedy), have launched a frontal attack on society's sacred

cows which exposes absurdities and depicts types encompassing the entire social spectrum.

The performers travel from funeral parlours to classrooms, from hospitals to the A&P, leaving in their wake a wreckage which only pointed satire can create. Even clichéd situations, such as the Malt Shoppe in the fabulous 50's, are given new life through expert choreography in musical routines and well-delivered punch-lines.

The Second City concept, born in Chicago, has sired a number of illustrious American performers and is certain to achieve the same degree of success in Canada. Toronto has been chosen as a second home for this revue and has been provided with a beautiful "3/4 in the round" cabaret theatre, with an impressive red and black decor. Sam Shopsowitz (of hot dog fame) is Toronto's chief investor in the enterprise, but the food available at the cabaret is not of his variety. Excellent crêpes and coffee concoctions in generous proportions are a fitting complement to the entertainment. Youth are the main clientele, and the entire operation combines an uninhibiting atmosphere with professional services. Dress, by the way, is casual.

The Second City concept should be of interest to members of the York Community. Student rates are available (a 50 per cent reduction) and free improvisational performances are given at 11 p.m. Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday, as well as 1 p.m. on Saturday. The regular feature revue *Tippicanoe* and *Deja Vu* begins at 9:00 p.m. Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday, with two performances Friday and Saturday at 8:30 and 11 p.m.

Second City is located at 207 Adelaide. For reservations 869-1102.

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