

Top-notch production...

Theatre Francais soars with Moliere opener

Les Foubieres de Seapin
by Moliere
Theatre Francais d'Edmonton until Oct. 22

review by Gilbert Bouchard

Moliere is a much maligned man. Unlike Shakespeare, who for all his genius tends to totally lose modern audiences, Moliere has a wit, style, grace and a thorough knowledge of the common denominator. As well, Moliere's french is much more akin to modern french than the beautiful but weighty Elizabethan English. And as for plot, humour and timing, Moliere is close to a cross between Oscar Wilde and the Marx Bros.

Which brings us to the Theatre Francais d'Edmonton's (TFE) production of *Les Fouberies de Scapin*, a totally professional production of a truly delightful play.

The plot revolves around two youths, Octave (Norman Latour) and Leandre (Christophe Sudelain), whose fathers have left town (Naples circa 1671) for an extended business trip. The boys fall in love and marry two girls *without* their father's permission. So the boys, with the help of an off-the-wall servant, Scapin (Andre Roy) must find some way of conning their fathers into blessing the two weddings - which is not easily done, since the fathers had marriages of their own lined up for the boys. The result is an energetic and engrossing comedy of errors.

As for the production itself, the TFE is probably the most professional and mature theater in town, matching the Citadel most of the time, at one third the admission price.

The cast varies from professionals like Reginald Birus, who gives a spectacular performance as the crotchety old man Argante, to U of A students Cristophe Sudelain (a 2nd year arts student), and Laurier Garreau, (a grad student in playwriting).

What more can I say? Gerard Guenette, Andre Roy, and Normand Latour gave typically pleasant performances with their usual skill, and Christophe Sudelain and Helene Gendron (Hyacinthe) are two young actors who should be gracing the boards of the TFE for many more years to come.

All in all a perfectly delightful season opener.



From the left: Christophe Sadelain as Leandre, Andre Roy as Scapin, and Normand Latour as Octave.

photo Bill Inglee

Ross still appeals to all ages

Diana Ross
Northlands Coliseum
Oct. 13

review by George Koch

Unlike so many of yesteryear's singers who seem to live in the past, Diana Ross has grown and matured with the years, her music changing with the times. Today her appeal is wider than ever; people of all ages and from all walks of life showed up for last week's concert.

Performing on a round stage that gave everyone a good view, Ross sang a wide variety of songs from her long career - everything from her time with The Supremes through Lady Sings the Blues through Mahogany, to her latest album, *Ross*. I would have like to have heard more than the short medley of her old songs, but the crowd reacted much more strongly to

her newer material, such as songs like "Upside Down."

Whatever she sang, though, her voice was clear and strong as always, adjusting in mood to the style of each particular song. At times, she would have been better off in a concert hall with good acoustics, but that would have made it impossible to accommodate the crowds.

The large back-up band, complete with conductor, was competent but lacklustre, with each member doing their job without really shining. But people came to see Diana Ross, not her band, which at least performed well, except for "Touch Me in the Morning," where Ross and the band were thrown completely out of synch.

The background vocalists as well seemed nondescript. This, however, was due to poor engineering as the two certainly demonstrated the range and

power of their voices towards the end of the show.

In addition to her own material, Ross sang a number of other songs, including Michael Jackson's "Beat it" and the old-time classic "Why do Fools Fall in Love."

Diana Ross showed incredible freshness and enthusiasm for a singer whose career has spanned almost one quarter of a century. She bantered with the audience and told the occasional one-liner, which was invariably greeted with enthusiasm. The crowd, though lively, was nevertheless civilized enough for Ross to be able to go down into the audience several times to sing, dance and talk.

"It is my intention for you all to have a good time tonight," she said near the beginning of the show. And that we certainly did, because Diana Ross did more than just sing - she entertained.

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