



Dancers met demands of choreography with energy.

Montanaro's media magic seen in offbeat show

The Theory of Everything
Montanaro Dance
John L. Haar Theatre

review by Rosa Jackson

Montreal's Montanaro Dance provided an offbeat, light-hearted and sometimes inspiring look at life with their latest production *The Theory of Everything*, performed at the John L. Haar Theatre.

The show parodied a low-grade 1950's detective movie through a combination of dance, music and technology which Michael Montanaro defines as "integrated media."

Its characters were stereotypes: a hero and a heroine, good guys, bad guys and spies; but a twist was added. The plot centered around a briefcase with mysterious contents. We followed this briefcase as it was transferred from one pair of hands to another, "withholding its secrets from those who desire[d] them while bestowing great gifts upon those more fortunate." And in the process of obtaining, losing, stealing, hiding, replacing and finally finding this briefcase, a message was sent and received between two lovers.

What this message really consisted of was left open to interpretation, but the theme was secondary to the images on the stage which it tied together. The most intriguing aspect of the show was the integration of the performers' wide range of talents together with external media to create constant shifts in mood and pace.

The company, which is made up of eight female dancers, a male dancer and a musician, worked admirably together as a whole and as

individuals. An especially striking feature of the dancing was the imaginative use of lifts and balances. Much of the dancing verged on being acrobatic, and the dancers managed to maintain a high level of energy despite the demands of the choreography. They were also entertaining as actors, bringing life to the story.

The music, while in itself exciting and diverse, was not distracting. The props were effective in shifting the focus amongst the performers, but occasionally I found myself watching the props which the dancers were holding and missed some of the dancing. However, the huge papier mache telephone and the remote control briefcase did add an essential off-the-wall quality to the production.

My least favorite part of the production was the film. It was meant to be a farce and was therefore purposely ridiculous, but I felt that at times it pushed the show far over the brink of silliness. Judging solely from the film, *The Theory of Everything* could have been interpreted as a big joke which meant nothing, and I don't think that that is quite what Montanaro intended.

Montanaro is a multi-talented artist: he conceived, choreographed, and performed in this production. He and other members of Montanaro Dance are to be admired, because for the sake of being different they are willing to risk attracting only small, curious audiences such as the one at the John L. Haar Theatre. But if they continue to perform as they have in *The Theory of Everything*, they are sure to bring recognition to their art form.

Life in the BFA drama program and beyond

Interview by Rosa Jackson

The third year BFA Drama students will be making their public debut at Studio Theatre tonight with a double-bill consisting of *Memory of Two Mondays* by Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams' *Suddenly Last Summer*.

Two of these students, Keven Hare and James Anderson, took some time from their hectic schedules to discuss the season opener, as well as the BFA program and the theatre world in general.

Hare will play the role of an Irish immigrant, Kenneth, in *Memory of Two Mondays*, which tells the story of a young man named Burt who relives his experiences working at "an automobile parts distribution warehouse." Kenneth is one of the characters Burt remembers, more fondly than some of the others," says Hare.

Anderson will appear in *Suddenly Last Summer* as Dr. Cuckowitz. This character, whom everybody calls Dr. Sugar, is "looking for a relatively sane patient to practise his

technique for lobotomy on," says Anderson.

Both plays "take place in the memory recall of characters," according to Hare. "The two plays work thematically well together. The sets and lighting by Doug Parashuk pull the plays together extremely well. The realism melts away into a very expressionistic environment."

The director of the production, Jim DeFelice, faced a difficult task in choosing plays which contain equally strong roles for fourteen acting students; but as Hare observes, these plays are ideal. "I can't think of a better combination for our class."

The production will mark a turning point in these actors' training; their first opportunity to perform before a paying crowd and be exposed to the media. "During the first two years the emphasis was on training, not on performing," says Anderson.

Hare called the first year of the BFA Drama program "personal discovery awareness development." "They took us apart and put us back together," he says. "We were not ready to go before the public eye."

The graduates of the U of A's BFA Drama program have had a very high success rate, so this process is clearly effective. "According to the surveys done, the program is within the top three in Canada, and its movement training is top in North America," says Hare.

The program offers classical stage training, which both Anderson and Hare agree is an asset to any actor. "If you look at the very strong working actors in American film, they all have classical training," says Anderson. But he stresses that "it's always up to you to get work. Acting training won't help you get a job, but it will help you keep it."

Anderson adds that "it's a tough transition to make" from a drama program in which roles are assigned to every actor to the real world, where jobs are scarce. "You've got to be a little abrasive," he says. "Some people hustle better than others."

The degree of a BFA Drama student's success "depends on how aware you are when you're in the program," adds Hare. "For three years we are spoiled here. If you get comfortable and think this is acting, then

you're going to have problems getting parts when you graduate."

Anderson believes that the BFA program does not teach any particular philosophy or style of drama. "One of the strengths of the program is that we're in contact with a large number of professional training staff," he says.

How do the students adapt to having several teachers who all have their own approaches to acting? "It does get confusing," says Hare. "Acting is many things — it has intellectual and creative sides, and different teachers have different slants. Personally, I am taking bits of information, knowledge and experience from the teachers and forming my own view."

Hare plans to stay in Edmonton to work after graduating in the spring. "There are a lot of possibilities here," he says. Although Anderson intends to move to Vancouver when he finishes his training, he says, "the Edmonton theatre scene is very vibrant and exciting and I plan to work here as much as possible."

The production of *Memory of Two Mondays* and *Suddenly Last Summer* opens tonight at Studio Theatre and runs until November 14.

Ingemar as you see him make the same mistakes you made back in grade school. You feel the urge to say: "Ingemar, don't worry, I've been there too; and believe me, it gets better."

My Life As a Dog has plenty of charm

My Life As a Dog
Skouras Film
Principal Plaza

review by Elaine Ostly

If you think life is rough now, after mid-terms, it's good to remember that it wasn't much better when you were a kid. If you tend to romanticize your childhood, see *My Life as a Dog* and get a proper perspective.

Ingemar, star of the Swedish film directed by Lasse Hallstrom, would definitely agree. He is putting things into perspective all the time. He decides that his problems aren't so bad, compared to the fate of the man who, attempting to break the world record in jumping buses on his motorcycle, died trying to reach the thirty-first bus. "If he had just stopped after the first one, he would have been all right," Ingemar muses.

Most of all, Ingemar "just can't stop thinking about Laika," the space dog sent up by the Soviets in tests. He can't get over the fact that Laika was starved in the name of human progress.

Ingemar's concern for Laika matches his love for Sickan, his dog. In fact, he claims that he loves Sickan as much as his mother. However, he loses both his mother and his dog. It is the death of Sickan which makes him come to terms with his mother's death.

In fact, it is only Sickan who really accepts Ingemar for himself. Ingemar has problems at home; he simply can't do anything right. He spills milk, sets fires — inadvertently, of course, but it is putting a strain on his ill mother. So he and his brother were sent away to live with different uncles.

In the little town where his uncle works as a glassblower, Ingemar finds a measure of peace. His uncle and aunt are very warm towards him, and the neighborhood children accept him immediately.

The town is full of the most bizarre and lovable characters. The next door neighbor spends all of his time fixing his roof. Old Mr. Arvidson, who lives in the basement, bids Ingemar read him descriptions of woman's lingerie from a catalogue. Ingemar's uncle keeps on playing the same record over and over.

Ingemar's home problems are put on hold for a while, but his problems with girls are just beginning. He becomes good friends with Saga, who is a girl pretending to be a boy in order to play on the soccer team. She teaches Ingemar how to box, and catches him off guard when she becomes romantic towards him.

The movie works well because of its realism. The bizarre characters are pictured as normal people with a few odd habits. This movie contains both profound sadness and great humour. It is subtle, especially when dealing with sexual topics.

Anton Glanzelius does a good job in playing Ingemar. He does seem younger than twelve years old, however. Melinda Kinnaman plays Saga with great girlish sophistication and slyness. All of the supporting actors were well-cast. Lasse Hallstrom, the director, managed to elicit strong and natural performances from every actor. The 1950's setting is meticulously realistic, and the photography is great.

In all, *My Life as a Dog* is a charming, warm movie. You can't help but sympathize with

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