



# Entertainment

## From New York to Edmonton stage

interview by John Charles

"Why is it," asks Tony Giordano, "that rehearsal rooms never have a window? Or air?"

The question's a valid one since director Giordano spends so much time in them at theatres all over North America. In the last 20 years, he says, he has directed more plays than any other living stage director — and the computers at the Director's Union in New York back him up.

Giordano is in Edmonton to stage *The Return Of Herbert Bracewell*, which opens Wednesday on the Citadel's Shoctor stage.

The director's first Edmonton show was Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, two years ago, with James Whitmore and Audra Lindley, who also star in *Bracewell*.

"Len Cariou was supposed to direct the O'Neill, but left for an acting job," Giordano recalled, "and I was one of the few directors they could find crazy enough to undertake it in a three-week rehearsal time."

Giordano, born in Brooklyn 48 years ago, lives in Manhattan, but has worked exclusively outside of New York for the past two years.

"One thing leads to another, and some of my shows even overlap," he says. "And New York theatre has an incredibly destructive attitude these days. They don't know how to make anything work. No matter what you want to do, the promoters want you to use names that will mean something at the box office. But there aren't any theatre stars anymore. What they mean are TV stars from sitcoms or soaps who don't know what to do on a stage. So you can't do viable work."

Giordano says that because theatre has taken second place to TV in the States, stage directors are always trying to do something "filmic" to show that they could make it in Hollywood if given the chance.

"They usually end up doing things that don't help the play at all," he observes.

Giordano, who reminds one a bit of Alan Arkin ("you're the fifth person to say that!" he exclaims) was never involved in theatre as a boy. He attended a Jesuit preparatory school and college, studying the classics in Greek and Latin. In his last year of college he realized that reading a play excited him more than anything else, so he decided to get a master's degree in drama at Catholic University (Washington, D.C.) which has a high-profile drama department.

"I started directing my actor friends in scenes when I was 21," he said, "and it seemed very easy somehow."

Giordano has never looked back. In New York he's directed dozens of new plays, working with writers, trying to make the first act work, then the second. He's done readings and workshops, as well as productions with students at New York University.

Outside New York he's especially admired for his understanding of American classics, and recently directed Amy Irving in Tennessee William's *The Glass Menagerie*, and directed a six-month tour of Arthur Miller's *A View From The Bridge*.

His Citadel show, *The Return Of Herbert Bracewell*, by Andrew Johns, was discovered by Whitmore and Lindley, who brought it to him. It was staged off-Broadway two years ago, and got mixed reviews.

"It's a delicious little play — not great, but a wonderful theatre piece," Giordano said with relish. "It's about an old couple who were famous actors at the turn of the century, and are now trying to keep alive and interested in things. It takes place in the attic of an old Victorian house where he's rehearsing his comeback. The woman's part isn't as well-written as his, and we're having to find ways and intentions for her that aren't on the



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Giordano says his job is simple: "to create a performance by the actors for the audience."

"The director's work shouldn't be in view," he says. "As soon as an audience becomes aware of all the director's touches, that comes between the audience and the show."

"What do the characters want? What do they hope for? There has to be a moment-to-moment beat of life for the people on stage, which communicates fears and feelings. I'm not interested in art, I'm interested in that exchange."

*The Return Of Herbert Bracewell* plays through April 5.

## Yuppies' style of modern love

**Living Together/Staying Together**  
Nexus Theatre  
Run ends April 11

review by Cameron White

The last few years have seen Edmonton inundated with Yuppie love comedies and *Living Together* and *Staying Together* are no exception to the genre. However, these musicals by Michael McKinlay and Paul Donald differ greatly in quality and aim.

Both plays (part of a trilogy which started with *Sleeping Together* feature Steven Hilton and Rhonda Trodd as "children of the bomb". Unfortunately, *Living Together* is exactly what one has come to expect of light comedy in the 80s: more clichés about modern love.

Some of the lines are moderately funny and a few are even pertinent, but they cover no new ground and don't linger long in the mind.

The actors show the strain of performing such a poor script. Hilton's expression degenerates into little more than histrionics and Trodd looks as if she is in great pain whenever she sings. *Living Together* tries to make too much of an overused subject and lacks innovation.

*Staying Together* succeeds because it does not try to make any great statement about love or life. Two strangers meet in an airport, share a layover, and fall in love. Foolish, romantic, sentimental? Yes, and lots of fun too.



Light comedy: romantic and sentimental

photo Keith Zukowski

The players enjoy the lightness of the play, and it shows. Trodd is charming as the young girl going off to Paris for the first time, to "sit in cafes with Communists who smoke Gitanes". Wilton is hilarious as the wordy, but terribly insecure wanderer. Responding

to the actors enthusiasm, the audience relaxes and enjoys themselves.

*Living Together* and *Staying Together* are at the Nexus until April 11. Save yourself some money and see *Staying Together* by itself at noon — it's a nice light lunch.

Get: free movie tickets!  
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 Use: all the jargon you learned in your 1st-year Fine-Arts Requirement course!  
 Join: the Entertainment team at the Gateway!  
 Meeting for all writers on Tuesday, 12 noon  
 Room 282 SUB