

# An Evening of Comedy

by Jethelo Cabilete

The plot: a family manor, the natural death of one Sir Reginald Bishop, the gathering of family members for the reading of the will, and the petty arguments among relatives who have not seen each other in years. However, there's a twist; someone is murdering family members one by one in a bizarre fashion - a chess piece disappears whenever the killer is about to strike! Who did it? This is the centre for the opening play on campus by Theatre Fredericton, entitled The Farndale Avenue Housing Estate Townswomen's Guild Dramatic Society Murder Mystery. But, there's an even stranger twist; the play is a "play" within a play. Performed in Marshall D'Avray Hall, this play is a comedic adventure into the often insane world of theatre production and presentation.

Upon entering, one is handed a program with two separate sections; the first is the actual roster of cast, crew, supporters and associated members involved in the play, while the second section is the roster from the Farndale "production". The townswomen of Farndale have produced a play for their town, and this is evident throughout the larger play. The actresses and actor mingled freely with the audience, dispensing chocolate, conversation and even idle Farndale chitchat. Woe especially to people whom the cast knew; they would introduce them to the audience and even have long-winded conversations with the hapless "celebrity". Interspersed within all this townfolk chatter and mingling, are the humorous petty bickering, grandstanding and gossip that are played at an exaggerated level. The audience was kept in stitches with all the double entendres, innuendoes and mishaps that were operating at all times.

The actual play began with the mingling cast, proceeding to an introduction by two of the Townswomen's Guild, Phoebe and Thelma, who tell the audience what the Farndale Townswomen's Guild has done and will be doing. Of course, neither woman can resist verbally digging into her fellow guild member's life throughout the introduction. This conversation goes on while various cast members are strolling on-stage unknowingly, props are falling apart at random and numerous "real-life" emergencies keep cropping up that remove key cast members from necessary scenes. When the Farndale play begins, it is basically a director's (and performer's) worst nightmare come to life. Important cues are missed, props are not where they should be (or don't work properly), character lines are forgotten (much to the chagrin of the Farndale "cast"), the background sets are set-up incorrectly or don't have any function other than decorative (as witnessed by the painted stage right door that the cast were always trying to open, but couldn't) and grandstanding and upstaging among the guild members is constantly occurring. Add to that the convoluted plot and bizarre method of the murders, and you come up with a funny, witty and downright hilarious routine. As an added bonus, a question-answer contest was held before intermission, in which an audience member won a small prize; this was an excellent touch to the rest of the performance.

Director Susan Wright, the cast, and crew certainly produced several memorable evenings of laughter and hijinks with this play. The Farndale "cast" are as follows: Audrey Berkshire-Hatheway (Margot Hayes) as the hilariously overacting matron of the Bishop family, Gordon Pugh (John Powers) as the inept and overly dramatic Inspector O' Reilly replacement, Felicity Fairley-Jones (Marilyn Simms) as the (supposedly) murderous butler, had it not been for a family emergency and quick script rewrite, Thelma Greenwood (Nancy McGrath) in her role as Daphne Bishop, intelligent, but flaky daughter of Doreen and late Reginald, and Phoebe Reece (Patricia A. Rogers) the French maid with "the body of a Greek goddess" who, in the rewrite, was the murderess who later kills herself in overdramatic fashion (and I thought only Bugs Bunny cartoons had long death scenes). It was a fitting end to the evening, that the cast remained in character at the door of the theatre, bidding the audience a fond farewell; at one point, the CBC cameraman certainly got an eyeful with the continued hijinks at the exit.

# Duddy Kravitz Can Kiss My ASS

by Nathan Weinman

On Sunday, at The Exchange, I had the pleasure of interviewing Nova Scotian authors Laura MacDonald and Alex Pugsley. These two met in Toronto and beginning with sets of letters, intended for their own amusement, crafted one of the funniest, realistic and most touching stories about our generation; the fabled Generation X.

The novel titled "Kay Darling" is about two sisters who move to Toronto from New Brunswick. The oldest sister, Kay Pritchard, is an uptight straight white girl who is trying to finish a screenplay without losing her bottom of the totem-pole job at CBC. Meanwhile Claire, Kay's spirited but spiritually disorganized younger sister, is trying to complete her education, but keeps getting way-laid by smarty-pants Ph.D. students with Jean-Paul Sartre glasses, beautiful red-haired dykes with muscles and love sick painters - not to mention the worry of a possible pregnancy.

Then there is Will, the Dean Moriartish gay actor whose passion for life is destined for destruction when he falls in love with a guy who looks "as if he's just fallen from the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel." It is this wonderful ability to capture the feelings of our generation, that Alex and Laura have which prompted one critic to write, "Duddy Kravitz can kiss my ass: Kay, Claire and Will are where it is at... a great novel."

How exactly do you define our generation of never ending university degrees, displacement and melancholy? Lets find out.

Bruns: How would you define Generation X?

Laura: I just wouldn't bother, it's a media construct.

Alex: Anyone who was born after JFK and before disco is called Generation X.

Bruns: It's just that I noticed the similarities with the mainstream media stuff such as Reality Bites. How do you feel that this work differs from that type of feature film genre.

Alex: I would say this differs because even though there is that pop culture element, it deals very specifically with these people's lives.

Laura: There are many similarities... If you do a Hollywood movie you are going to have to cut down your characters quite a bit.

Bruns: Every generation has been defined in a novel, such as "On The Road," "Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas," and even recently in "Bright Lights Big City." Do you think that this work is going to be able to do the same thing?

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