

The quest for the Golden Nose

by Virginia Gillese

Would you like to compete for a trophy made of a tennis shoe, a badminton racquet and a pair of nose-glasses painted gold and nailed onto two pieces of wood? According to Stephen Heatley, Artistic Director of Theatre Network, that's the grand prize of the main TheatreSport's tournament held in Edmonton every year at the end of May. Last year Edmonton's team won "The Golden Nose" trophy after competing against teams from as far away as New York.

"TheatreSports is for anybody who's interested in and likes the excitement of good competition and appreciates the skill of good performing. It's also for anyone who's looking for a good way to spend a Sunday night or is looking for a non-threatening way of getting their feet wet in the theatre," says Heatley.

Cathleen Rootsart, publicist for Theatre Network, noted that "the people involved range from waiters, sales-clerks, teachers, high-school students, and university students from engineers to recreation and drama majors."

According to Rootsart, TheatreSports is a competition for points, between two teams of actors, based on each improvisation they perform. They compete through a series of scenes which gain their impetus from suggestions from the audience. Points from 0-5



are awarded (usually by a panel of three judges though the audience, at times, also judges). Zero signifies boring and means that the improvisation is thrown off the stage — for audience protection. "The games are judged on their entertainment value, which doesn't necessarily mean they're funny," said Rootsart. Heatley added, "They can be a cross between gymnastics and party games. The audience participates very directly but they don't necessarily play in the games."

Started by Keith Johnstone at the University of Calgary about 10 years ago, the idea for TheatreSports was initially born out of a series of acting exercises Johnstone deve-



Stephen Heatley: "They (TheatreSports) can be a cross between gymnastics and party games."

loped while teaching at the Royal Court in London, England. "There were created to get actors to live for the moment and they eventually evolved into games and became TheatreSports. It's based on character narrative and status; keeping the actor alive and responsive in the moment," said Heatley.

There are certain basic rules that apply to TheatreSports. Says Heatley, "It's all improvisation which is based on suggestions from the audience. They (the actors) have five seconds, after being given a suggestion, to get on the stage and start a scene. If anyone is inappropriately obscene or violent they can be 'bagged', which is like the penalty box, (the sit out for one round with a bag on their head). Heatley stressed that, "In TheatreSports the actors contract themselves to accepting all offers on stage, non-blocking, and to making offers themselves."

"It's fun. It's an exciting thing to put yourself at risk. You're playing with others and you're trusting that they won't, and the audience won't, make fools of you," says Rootsart. Heatley adds, "It's entertaining and is good training not only for the theatre but also for the sharpening of life skills. You learn how to positively use what others offer you and how to make offers to others. It's

entertaining, exciting, and spontaneous. It's something that is sometimes very funny, sometimes quite moving, and it's a wonderful way to spend a Sunday night."

The criticism that competition and the arts don't mix is strongly refuted by Heatley and Rootsart with regard to TheatreSports. Heatley says, "TheatreSports is not just theatre, it's sport too; it's a mixture. Competition became involved in it because competition pushes people to strive for excellence and, whether we like it or not, there's competition in the arts. It's friendly, but it's competition nonetheless." Rootsart said, "It's very friendly competition. Even the teams rotate, so it's not like people are constantly pitted against each other."

"The Golden Nose is the trophy we compete for, and that tells you about the level of competition between us," said Heatley.

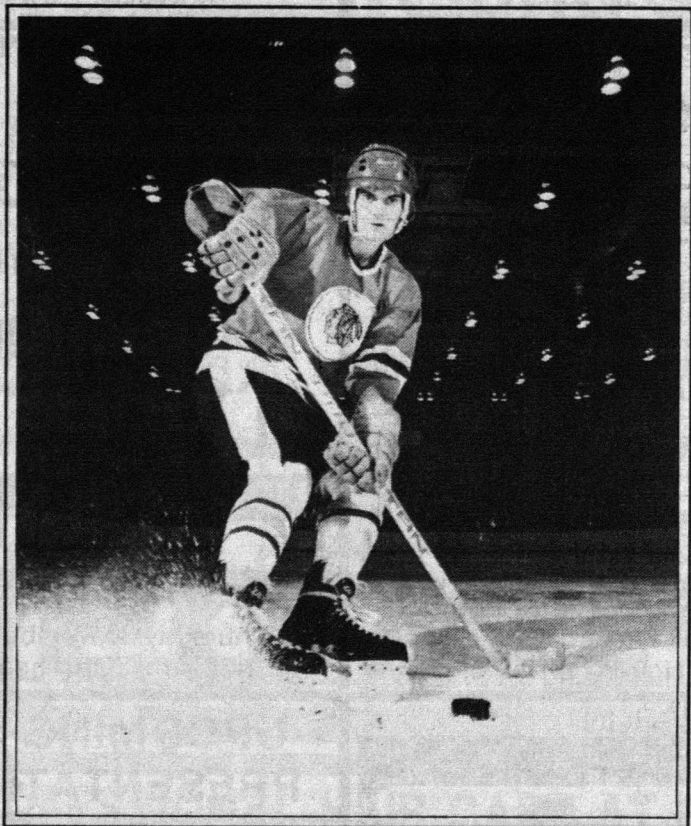
TheatreSports is held at Theatre Network every Sunday at 8:00 p.m. If you play, you get in free, and four workshops will be offered over the season for all those interested in becoming involved. As Rootsart pointed out, "Improvisation isn't only applicable to the stage, it's applicable to life, too. It teaches you to co-operate and create in whatever you're doing."

He plays to win

He's competitive. He likes a challenge.
He's also a team player.

He's got what it takes to become a
Certified Management Accountant.

If you're trying to decide about your future, call us.
You might be the player we're after.



Get a head start. Find out now what courses will give you advanced standing in the CMA program.

Our program specializes in management accounting and related management subjects as well as financial accounting.

Call: 428-6828

Toll Free: 1-800-232-1998

or write to:

The Society of Management Accountants

Canadian Commercial Bank Tower

1205 - 10104 - 103 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta T5J 0H8

CMA
Certified Management Accountant

Funny play lacks pathos

Filthy Rich
Northern Light Theatre
til November 10

review by Suzanne Lundrigan

Comedy is terrific but it isn't everything. Though the Northern Light production of *Filthy Rich* gets a lot of laughs, it falls flat when pathos is called for.

George Walker's play tells the story of an embittered and cynical private eye, Tyrone Power, who has turned his back on life.

Through no fault of his own Power becomes entangled in a mysterious disappearance. His formerly isolated existence expands to encompass a netherworld peopled with film noir characters: two femmes fatales, a powerful politician, a ruthless gangster, and a hardnosed cop. Power's sole ally during this distressing time is Jamie McLean, a smart alecky over-eager college student. Intrigue and scandal ensue.

As the play progresses Power evolves from a man who has abdicated from life and responsibility into a man who is once again willing to stand up for his beliefs.

This production neatly incorporates the comedy inherent to a play centered around a particularly witty and sharp tongued character, Tyrone Power.

However, it ignores or mishandles the theme of a man alienated from society who, upon being thrust back into its seediest realms, comes up fighting for his principles.

Whereas the lighter scenes involving dynamic verbal fencing sparkle, the more serious scenes dealing with self examination and explanation are stilted. Rather than being drawn into the action the audience is made uncomfortable.

Likewise the acting is riddled with inconsistencies. Wendell Smith as Tyrone Power is



Marianne Copithorne photo Greg McHarg

at his best when delivering the snappy one-liners. He is less comfortable with Power's more sombre aspect and thus less effective.

Steve Yorke as Jamie McLean is disappointing. An award winning actor, Yorke looked like a rookie during the first half of the play. His exaggerated gestures were nothing short of annoying. Fortunately, he toned it down during the second act and was somewhat less offensive.

Among the supporting roles, Marianne Copithorne as Susan Scott and Blair Haynes as Henry "The Pig" Duvall are brilliant. Copithorne as rich bitch cum villainess is marvelously credible. Haynes as the pinstripe suited gangster is a scene stealer.

As a comedy *Filthy Rich* works well. Unfortunately it rarely moves out of this realm and this play begs to be explored on different levels. C'mon guys, let us cry just a little.