



York grad Douglas White (l) and Kimble Hall in Jean Giraudoux's *Tiger at the Gates*.

## Tiger & Remember lose in translation

*Tiger at the Gates*  
by Jean Giraudoux  
Theatre Plus  
until Feb. 2

*Remember Me*  
by Michel Tremblay  
Canadian Rep Theatre  
until Feb. 10

By JASON SHERMAN

Two plays written in French and produced in English: *Tiger at the Gates* has what every good translation needs, a sympathetic writer (Christopher Fry), and what every good play could do without, an unsympathetic director (Marion Andre). *Tiger* is a play of ideas about war, history and destiny, and strong emotions like jealousy and hate. The best way to convey either is probably not the way Andre chose. Giraudoux may have written about a civilization (Troy) remembered to a large extent in stone, but having actors standing about like so many statues is verisimilitude carried to a ridiculous extreme.

There may have been good reasons for the store-front window approach, such as focussing attention on the words or symbolizing the immobility of many of the positions taken. But interest in the play cannot be sustained unless we have actors who are able to compensate for the absence of action. The company is uneven, more often weak than strong, and we always have this *visual* problem in trying to reconcile who is being portrayed with who is doing the portraying.

Helen is painted in no less splendor by Giraudoux than by countless others, which makes the decision to have Gwendolyn Lewis play her difficult to understand. Lewis is certainly not the most beautiful human being on stage—hell, she's not even in the top five. This may sound cruel, but it's actually rather funny, particularly when Lewis attempts to lean seductively against a wall. Then there's Ulysses who, if he looked anything like Ken Pogue, must surely be the single greatest example of literary embellishment extant. Again, Andre may have been trying to dispel our expectations, but it's more likely Giraudoux is challenging our principles by undercutting the figures as they appear traditionally.

Michel Tremblay's *Remember Me* is about

two former lovers who talk about their pasts and futures. The fact that the pair are homosexual is merely that, a fact, and has little to bear on what Tremblay wants to talk about, which amounts of a series of metaphysical questions like Who am I and What am I doing. Similarly with the obvious religious imagery: the characters are named Luc and Jean-Marc; an unseen lover is named Yves; Jean-Marc is called Luc's Father-Confessor, only half in jest; and to make sure the point is not lost, the character wears a robe not unlike that worn by a clergyman.

Sex and religion seem to be functions of the script, means of getting to bigger questions. One recurring idea for both men is projection. Jean-Marc has rationalized his mid-life mediocrity through the notion that a part of himself lives on—is projected—through his lovers. Just as he has always seen his life projected in movies.

During the play, Luc slowly becomes Jean-Marc, repeating his very dialogue, while Jean-Marc becomes Luc's dying father, and not merely in the figurative sense. The men are clearly-drawn opposites, passions versus reason, love versus lust, even theatre versus cinema. The question perhaps is whether these oppositions can be reconciled. Likely not, and part of it has to do with their homosexuality, part of it with past lives neither wants to remember (because the odors of the past are painful), future lives neither looks forward to.

Tremblay is able to reverse clichés of the spiritually reunited lovers and suggest, somewhat subtly, that there is no temporal future for these two people because there can be no children. The final image of the ascension to Yves (i.e. Paradise) indicates a spiritual movement not unlike that of classical tragedy, in which the flesh putrifies while the spirit purifies.

It's a great play that has been given a luke-warm production, which is to say Alan Scarfe is occasionally hot and Robert Lachance is always cold. Whether the latter's inability to give a realistic portrayal stems from his rudimentary knowledge of the English language or the script is difficult to discern, but his constant lapses and fluctuations left a number of people visibly uncomfortable. Director Eric Steiner should get credit for trying to pass off Lachance's bad habits as idiosyncracies of his character, as a further projection of Jean-Marc onto Luc.

Highly recommended, for the text, and for the one moment prior to Scarfe's delivery of the word 'mediocrity,' a central word for the play and for the production.

## Everyman goes existential

By ZEZA MARQUES

A slovenly Manhattan apartment seems an unlikely setting for a morality play but it proves to be perfect for *A Thousand Clowns*, Palmerston Theatre's current revival of Herb Gardner's modern fable. Like the mediaeval morality play, it relates the recovery of grace of a Mankind figure fallen into evil ways, focussing on the specific crisis which is the pivotal point of his life. *A Thousand Clowns* tells the story of unemployed TV writer Murray Burns, and the sudden violent collision of Murray's devil-may-care lifestyle with the standards of the welfare agency that threatens to apprehend his live-in nephew. He is compelled to reevaluate his world vision, by confronting existential problems such as responsibility, identity and compromise.

Murray Lowry, as Murray, exudes an engaging charm without concealing the selfish, destructive side of the bravura. His glowing, wistful reverie of afternoons spent at cinema matinees instead of job hunting is especially tantalizing. In many ways, Murray is as much a Vice character as an Everyman—like a mediaeval Vice, he is portrayed in attractive comic terms that appeal to the imagination. However, the more we identify with Murray, the more we are condemned when the other characters reveal the shallowness of Murray's life.

The didactic element is not the only one linking *A Thousand Clowns* with the morality play: for both convey ideas with humor and wit. Charles Gray's direction balances thoughtful exploration of the serious issues with a buoyant zest for the comedy in Gardner's script. Brilliant moments are depicted by each of the actors, most notably by Philip Williams as a kiddie-show clown, and Howard Jerome as Murray's brother. Jerome shines in his evocation of Murray's contempt of "other people," by wrapping his body around himself like a shield, both involving and absorbing us by his very presence. Everything from the tumbling wilderness of inviting earthtones in Alanna Jones' bachelor apartment set, to Murray's slouchy pullover, to the ridiculous ukelele interludes over the scene changes, contributes to an atmosphere that moves us not only with wisdom, but with laughter.

### The Jewish Community Responding to FEMINISM



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#### MONDAY, JANUARY 28

4:00 p.m. — Room S 105 Ross Building  
Chana Sandburg — "The Art of Judaica — A different Approach"  
A visual slide presentation.

Chana Sandburg is a former Professor at York University. She is a visual artist who specializes in Judaic themes.

#### MONDAY, JANUARY 28

8:00 p.m. — Curtis B.  
"Is Art a Medium for Jewish Womens Expression"

A panel discussion led by Batsheva Avery, Reva Tward — Executive Director, Leah Posluns Theatre.

Batsheva is a singer, songwriter and broadcaster, former host of the Chai Program.

#### TUESDAY, JANUARY 29

4:00 p.m. — Curtis F  
"Perceptions and Misconceptions of Finding the Perfect Match"

A panel discussion with Gil Goldstein of Jewish Dateline, Sandra Gold of Sincerity Plus Matchmaking and Gail Solish of Jewish Family and Child Services.

#### TUESDAY, JANUARY 29

8:00 p.m. — Beth Emeth, Bais Yehuda, 100 Elder Street  
"Wife Battering — The Realities Behind the Myths in the Jewish Community" with Marilyn Hurvitz.

Marilyn Hurvitz is a single mother of four children who had the courage to remove herself from a violent marriage. Ms. Hurvitz is the coordinator of a self help group for Jewish Women who experience mental and physical abuse within the family, under the auspices of the Jewish Family and Child Services.

#### WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 30

4:00 p.m. — Founders Jr. Common Room  
"Family, Sex and Singles — The Jewish Community Evolving"

Keynote Address — Rabbi Irwin Witty, Cheaper by the Dozen — Jewish Family Option.

Workshops — 5:00 - 6:00 p.m.  
"Living Together" — Judith Posner, Professor of Sociology, Atkinson, Founders Jr. Common Room

"Singles with Children" — Leo Davids —

Professor of Sociology, Atkinson, Vanier 010  
— "Mikveh-Obligation or Choice"  
6:00 — Dinner, Vanier 010

Workshops — 7:00 - 8:00 p.m.  
"Marriage — New Rules for an Old Game" — Leo Davids, Professor of Sociology, Atkinson, Vanier 010

"Jewish Divorce — Obsolete for our Times?" — Shayne Kravets, Lawyer — Batsheva Avery, Founders Jr. Common Room.

#### Evening Programme

8:00 p.m.  
"A Humorous Approach — Is there Marriage after Sex?" — Vanier 010  
Val Kates — Educator, Humourist, Comedienne, Student.

8:30 p.m.  
"Family, Sex, Singles, and Students — The Jewish Community Evolving" — Professor Leo Davids, York University  
Estelle Altman, Consultant and coordinator of Jewish Family Life Programme.

#### THURSDAY, JANUARY 31

11:30 a.m. — Vanier 119  
"The Slowly Changing Synagogue — Women in Leadership" — Rabbi Alyse Goldstein  
4:00 p.m. — Vanier 109

"Image of Women in the Bible" — David Bakan, Professor of Psychology at York  
8:00 p.m. — Holy Blossom Temple — Foyer  
Philip Smith, 1950 Bathurst Street

"Jewish Women in Oral Tradition" — P'nina Adelman  
P'nina Adelman is a storyteller, folklorist, Composer of Contemporary Midrashim about women in Hebrew scripture. P'nina developed rituals for life cycle of Jewish Women.

#### MONDAY, FEBRUARY 4

12:00 p.m.—Stong, Room 205  
"Old Texts for New Eyes — Rediscovering Womens Stories"  
A discussion and workshop in creating new womens history. No knowledge necessary. with Sue Elwell

Sue Elwell is a co-author of *Jewish Women: A Mini Course for Jewish Schools* and Co-Editor of *The Jewish Womens Studies Guide*. Ms.

Elwell received her Ph.D. from Indiana State University and is presently pursuing studies toward Rabbinic ordination at Hebrew Union College — Jewish Institute of Religion, Cincinnati.

#### TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 5

12:00 p.m. — Bethune College, Room 218  
"Feminism from a Male Perspective" — Marty Lockshin, Professor Jewish Studies Department at York University  
David Cooper, Student Chairperson of Womens Symposium  
David Wiesenthal — Professor Psychology, York University

#### TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 5

7:30 p.m. — National Council House, 4700 Bathurst Street  
"Without Slander — The Challenge of Feminism and Jewish Tradition" — Norma Joseph — Rabbi Elyse Goldstein will be responding.

Norma Joseph was born and educated in New York. She is presently studying at Concordia University where she has taught for the past twelve years.

This program will be interpreted for the hearing impaired.

#### WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 6

8:00 p.m. — B'nai Brith House, 15 Hove Street  
"Recovering our Past; Renewing our Future: Are we Creating a Feminist Judaism?" — Drora Setel  
Denita Dubinsky, Graduate Student in Political Science — Rayzel Robinson, Executive Director of Jewish Student Federation  
Drora is a graduate of Harvard Divinity School where she received her M.T.S. in Hebrew Bible. A Jewish feminist historian, Drora has lectured extensively about women and judaism. Drora at present lives in Buffalo, New York where she teaches.

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