



Princess of Dublin

written by
Marianne Ackerman

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April 4 - May 14, 2000



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Gordon McCall, Artistic Director



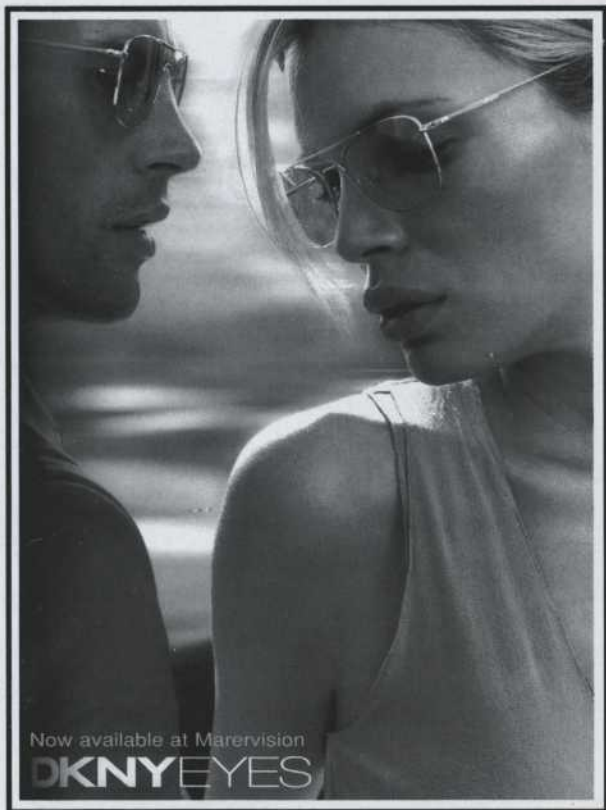
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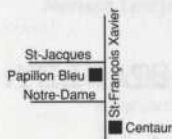
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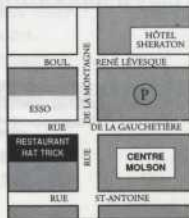
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COMPANY

Gordon McCall,
Artistic Director



april 4 - may 14, 2000 THE CENTAUR THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS

VENUS of DUBLIN

by Marianne Ackerman

Directed by
Set & Costumes designed by
Lighting designed by
Additional Music by
Additional Flute Music by
Sound Design by

Assistant Direction
Dramaturge
Stage Manager
Apprentice Stage Manager

Artistic Team

Gordon McCall
John C. Dinning
Robert Krause
Anthony Rozankovic &
Kate Kellar Yoshitomi
Ben Chaisson &
Gordon McCall

Karen Taylor
Gordon McCall
Christina Hidalgo
Merissa Tordjman



Starring

in alphabetical order

Eric Davis
as MICHAEL ROURKE

*Talented with a paintbrush but equally adept
at finding money in crowded places.*

Mary Harvey
as GINGER HOGAN
Manager of Hogan's Hotel, Dublin.

Richard Newman
as EDMUND KEAN
*Once a great star of London's Drury Lane Theatre,
now attempting a comeback in Dublin.*

Locations – A modest hotel room, Dublin, Ireland.
– Inside a church, Dublin, Ireland.

Time Spring, 1831

Act One Scene One: *Late afternoon.*
Scene Two: *Early afternoon, the next day.*
Scene Three: *Early evening, a few days later.*
Scene Four: *3 p.m., the next afternoon.*
Scene Five: *4 p.m., that same afternoon.*

THERE WILL BE A FIFTEEN MINUTE INTERMISSION

Act Two Scene One: *Midnight, the next night.*
Scene Two: *Early the next morning.*
Scene Three: *Morning, St. Patrick's Church.*
Scene Four: *Later that same day.*

Venus of Dublin

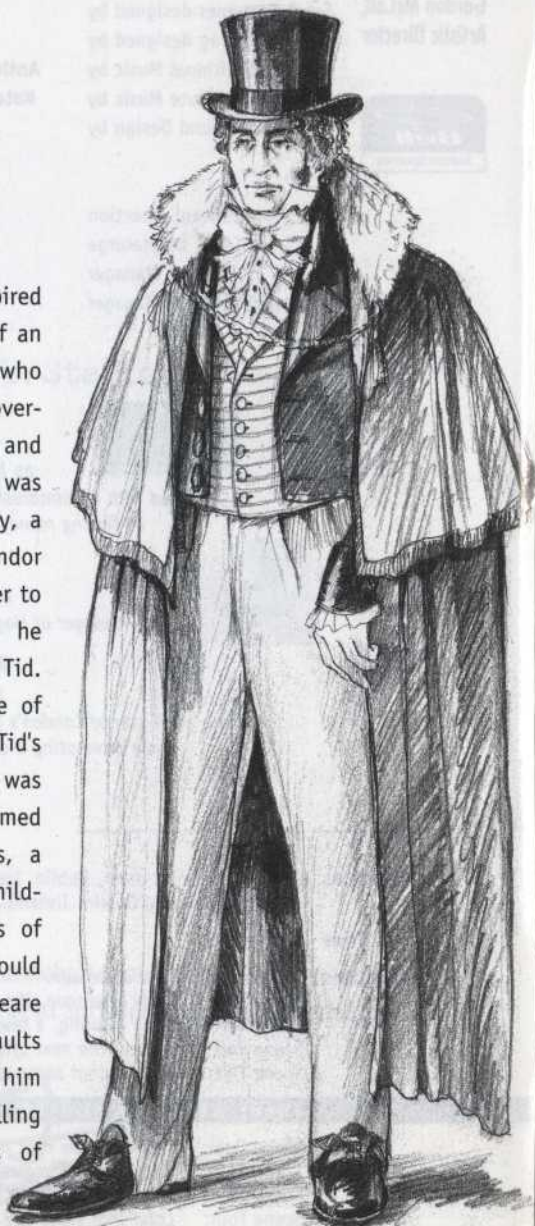
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From Venus of Dublin, published by Nuage Editions

By Marianne Ackerman

Venus of Dublin was inspired by a monstrous marvel of an artist, Edmund Kean, who rose overnight from impoverished obscurity to fame and fortune on the London stage. He was born in 1787 or 1789 to Ann Carey, a sometime-actress and perfume vendor who promptly handed the infant over to another some-time actress, whom he affectionately remembered as Aunt Tid. Though he claimed to be the Duke of Norfolk's son, (the Duke was Aunt Tid's long-time lover), his real father was either a tailor or a carpenter named Aaron Kean, or his brother Moses, a ventriloquist. He led a peripatetic childhood in the alleys and backstages of London. At the age of three, he could recite long passages from Shakespeare but was equally agile at the somersaults of Harlequin, skills which helped him survive a hard decade as a strolling player in the provincial theatres of England.



The Playwright

Marianne Ackerman



Once he became famous, Kean claimed to have studied at Eton and sprinkled his conversation with foreign phrases culled from wide if not deep reading. A self-made genius, he transformed his flaws into art. He was, said the Drury Lane manager who discovered him, "a head too short" for the stage. Though he never did find his way to the brooding introspection of Hamlet or the tender heart of Romeo, he excelled in portrayals of villains and outcasts—Shylock, Richard III, Macbeth, Othello—virtually redefining the British public's understanding of these roles.

Kean's performances drew enormous crowds, inspired hyperbole from major critics and purple prose to match his flashy, hypnotic style. He attracted great intellectuals to the theatre who had hitherto given the art a pass. Lord Byron worshipped his fellow romantic, entertained him at table and celebrated his art in verse. Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote, "To see Kean play is like reading Shakespeare by flashes of lightning."

Years later, a similarly intoxicated commentator summed up Kean's impact and context: "In contrast with the wide, sleepily-flowing river of classicism, Kean's art was like a pent-in, impetuous mountain torrent, leaping from rock to rock, foaming and seething, thundering and splashing, now glittering like a thousand diamonds in the sunlight, now hiding itself in dark mysterious abysses. Whatever else it might be, it was not art of the soothing, sleep-producing kind. And it seems clear that it was precisely its exciting, rousing quality, not any deep emotional appeal, its biting, stimulating sarcasm, and not any infusion of serene, large-minded humour, that gave it such enormous importance and influence".

All this was said about the decade of Kean's glory, a time he greeted with fierce appetite and mistrust. "If I succeed, I shall go mad," he wrote, when the call came from Drury Lane. He suspected as much, he willed it so. As suddenly as Kean rose, he fell, and both times in the bitter month of January.

In the winter of 1813-14, Kean's personal fortunes had reached an all-time low. He walked from one provincial engagement to the next, carrying his

In 1988, Marianne Ackerman won the Quebec Drama Festival's Best New Play Award for a comedy called *Snakeprints*, directed by Gazette film critic Bruce Bailey and presented at Centaur Theatre. While rehearsing for the QDF in a loft provided by Créations Etc., she met Clare Schapiro, and together they founded THEATRE 1774, launched in 1989 with *Echo*, directed by Robert Lepage. Her plays include *Woman by a Window*, *L'Affaire Tartuffe* or *the Garrison Officers Rehearse Molière*, *Céleste*, published by Nuage Editions, and *Blue Valentine*. She directed a film, *White Brush Red Wine Death in a Paris Café*, co-produced with Gregor Hiltner, which was seen on Bravo and TVQ, and at festivals in Montreal and Paris. Her first novel, *Jump*, set in Montreal during the 1995 referendum, has recently been published by McArthur & Co. Born in Belleville, Ontario, Marianne is a graduate of the University of Toronto (MA Drama, 1981) and Carleton University (BA Political Science, 1976). In 1976-77, she studied French at the Sorbonne. She was theatre critic for *The Montreal Gazette* from 1983 to 1987, and book columnist in 1995-96.

son Charles on his back, while his wife Mary and ailing four-year-old Howard rode in a coach. Then, suddenly, the invitation came to perform at London's Drury Lane Theatre, his life's ambition. A week later, Howard died. In London, the theatre management kept him dangling for weeks, until he was sure they'd lost interest. Finally the call came. He made his way to Drury Lane alone, battling a snowstorm. At the single afternoon rehearsal, the stage manager fled in despair, predicting disaster if Kean proceeded with his idiosyncratic interpretation.

Attendance was poor the night of January 26, 1814, when he walked onstage in a black wig. (Every Shylock since Shakespeare's choice, Richard Burbage, had worn red hair.) Perhaps grieving, perhaps fearing the worst, Mrs. Kean stayed back at their lodgings. After the first night reviews came out, the theatre sold out, Edmund was offered a lucrative three-year contract, and Mary exclaimed, "I knew you would do it!"

What she said on January 17, 1825 when her celebrity husband appeared before the King's bench on a charge of Criminal Conversation has not been recorded, but the ordeal of having his sweaty love letters to Mrs. Robert Cox read out in public destroyed Kean's marriage, and ruined his career. His affair with Charlotte Cox had been an open secret for years, according to him, a costly secret. Counsel for the defense, a Mr. Scarlett, accused the near-bankrupt Cox of feigning outrage because he needed money. Bitter as his client must have been, Scarlett also pleaded seduction: Kean's behaviour, he said, was justified on grounds that "irresistible temptations had been placed before him and that he simply couldn't shake himself off from the advances of such a beautiful woman."

Nevertheless, the law against adultery was clear, the proof, undeniable. Mr. Cox's property had been damaged. The jury proclaimed Kean guilty but signaled their sympathy by greatly reducing the award for damages.

When he returned to Drury Lane, enormous publicity surrounding the trial filled the theatre with righteous indignation. He was shouted down, pelted with rotten fruit, forced to leave the stage. In desperation he set out on a tour of the Americas, hoping London would forgive, at least forget.

It was during Kean's trip to New England and Quebec in 1826 that he underwent one of the most mysterious and memorable experiences of his life. While performing at the Theatre Royal in Quebec City, he met a group of Huron chiefs. They invited him to their village in nearby Lorette where he was honoured, presented with medals, a ceremonial dress, and a Huron name: Alanienouidet.

By the time Kean returned to London, the adultery scandal had blown over. Though he was permitted to work again, his performance, always erratic and exciting for being so, quickly deteriorated. Drury Lane management lost confidence as Kean slipped into drink, drugs and fantasy, punctuated by several valiant attempts at a comeback.

In his decline, Kean claimed he'd "gone mad" during his time in Lorette. He remembered that lost weekend as a highlight of his life, and swore Alanienouidet was his true identity. He could be found most reliably in taverns, or wandering the streets of London dressed in the skins and beaded robes. He had calling cards printed with his native identity, gave the occasional lecture about Huron life, and commissioned an English artist Frederick Meyer to paint him as Alanienouidet. Today this small oil portrait can be seen in London's Garrick Club.

Kean's encounter with the Huron is, naturally, the morsel that would attract the attention of a Quebec writer. Having read the story of his rocky Quebec tour as related by Edgar Andrew Collard in *The Gazette*, I was inspired to dig out what few facts have been recorded. The Huron encounter appears in virtually all biographies of Kean. It was clearly an important experience. But just

what happened? Could the chiefs have imagined in Kean's shamanistic powers, a chance to resolve their dispute over land? He could have stayed with the Huron, who lionized him. Why did he chose the precarious return to London?

In the early 1990s, Robert Lepage and I undertook to delve into these mysteries. The result was a vast wilderness romp of a play called *Alanienouidet*, which followed Kean to a smoke-drenched longhouse in the woods of Quebec. Three Huron chiefs and a cast of colonial actors populated this backstage tale of unhinged genius confronting native spiritual forces. The Huron spoke fluent Iroquois (their actual language has been lost). The rest of the cast spoke English and French. The play was performed at the National Arts Centre and the Quinzaine Festival in Quebec City, a memorable experience, but after the final performance, Robert and I agreed we had not totally emerged from the dense forest of a great idea for a play.

Time passed. Kean persisted. When Centaur Theatre's Gordon McCall expressed interest in this "great idea for a play", I decided to

move the action forward in time, follow the ailing Kean back home, where he would be faced with the awful prospect of living through decline, concerned with survival and immortality. What interested me was that tiny oil painting in the Garrick Club, the enduring image of a fine-featured thespian, standing almost goddess-like in a highly romanticized wilderness landscape, Quebec painted from Kean's tales, *Alanienouidet* incarnated by a downtown London journeyman. It struck me that the creation of this painting could be the perfect lightning rod for a play about art and the high cost of living as Kean lived, bold and fast.

He was 46 when he died after a performance of *Othello* starring himself and his son Charles, who had been sent to Eton but refused his father's advice to join the civil service. As for greatness, Edmund Kean's was an ephemeral creation. His innovations have long since been swallowed and stolen, forgotten or rendered commonplace. His humanity, his universality, lie not in achievement or the price he paid, but in his existential predicament, one man's fidelity to the terribly trying, bone-wearying challenge of playing Kean ■

Copies of Marianne Ackerman's novel *Jump* and her play *Venus of Dublin* can be purchased at the bar in Centaur Theatre's Seagram Gallery.

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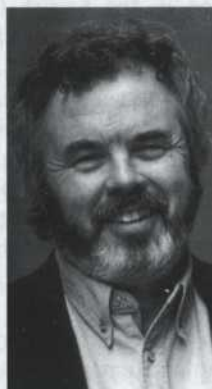
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A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Gordon McCall



I have had the pleasure of sharing the creative journey of this play with Marianne Ackerman from conceptualization to realization. Over the course of almost three years we have shared moments of elation, frustration, anxiety and delight in the development of this project. Through it all we have been led on by the intoxicating knowledge that the great Edmund Kean brought his theatrical magic to Quebec only to discover that his immortality might be forever crystallized in the regalia of a Huron Chief. The excitement I felt about Marianne's initial idea for this play remains with me to this day. I want to thank Marianne for her imagination, dedication, partnership and, most importantly, for this play. I also want to thank the large number of artists and other collaborators in the Montreal community, including members of Playwrights Workshop Montreal, all of whom helped us develop this play through numerous readings and workshops. To our actors, designers, stage managers and artistic, production and administrative teams of Centaur, thank you for creating the new world of this premiere production.

Have a great evening,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gordon".

Montréal...

biographies



Gordon McCall

Director / Dramaturge

Gordon is the Artistic Director of Centaur Theatre. Holder of an M.F.A. in directing from the University of British Columbia, he is also the first Artistic Director of Vancouver's Touchstone Theatre, Winnipeg's Prairie Theatre Exchange, and Saskatoon's Shakespeare On the Saskatchewan Festival. In addition to performing his many duties for Centaur last summer, Mr. McCall was one of a group of Artistic Directors from across the country representing Canada at the Edinburgh Festival. Having directed the English-language World Premiere of *For the Pleasure of Seeing Her Again* for Centaur last season, Gordon is honoured to be directing the play's current six-city national tour and looks forward to participating in another first for Centaur next fall when *For the Pleasure of Seeing Her Again* will receive its American Premiere as part of the 50th Anniversary season of the acclaimed Arena Stage in Washington, D.C. This year for Centaur, Gordon has directed *The Crucible*, *The Gin Game* and *Venus of Dublin*. As always, Gordon would like to thank his Centaur family for their passion and excellence and his wonderful wife Eloise, and sons, Sean and Spencer for their love and support.



Karen Taylor

Assistant Director

Karen is director and performer with the Free Fall Iguanas, a Montreal comedy troupe she helped found in 1994. She just finished directing Grae Phillip's *Everybody's Fucking But Me!*, last seen as part of Centaur's Wildside series. Karen is thrilled to be working with Gordon McCall, and to be part of the Centaur team once again. Last year she was Assistant Director for Ben Barnes in Centaur's award winning production *Waiting For Godot*. Karen has also acted in a number of independent films; and audiences have enjoyed her weekly performances on CJAD radio, at the Comedy Nest and in touring revues of the Free Fall Iguanas.



Eric Davis

Michael Rourke

An alumni of Concordia University's Theatre performance program, Eric has been living and working in and out of Montreal for the past seven and a half years. Fresh off The Montreal Young Company's run in which he played The Provost in *Measure For Measure* and various roles in *The Possibilities*, he is very happy to be returning to Centaur for the premiere of *Venus of Dublin*. Other roles include Paul in David French's *That Summer*, Gil in James Nichol's *Every Dream* (Blyth Theatre Festival); Florizel in *The Winter's Tale*; Dollabella in *Anthony and Cleopatra*, (Centaur Theatre Company); as well as various film and television roles. He sends his love and thanks to family and friends.



Mary Harvey

Ginger Hogan

Mary is delighted to be performing at Centaur again. She was last seen playing Juliet in Ann Lambert's *Very Heaven*. Most recently she played Rita in *Educating Rita* (Village Theatre), Tempe Brennan in *An Evening with Tempe Brennan* (Moyses Hall McGill), and toured western Canada in English Suitcase Company's production of Stephen Berkoff's *Greek*. Originally from England where she played Roxanne in Sam Mende's production of *Cyrano de Bergerac* and had her own company New Heritage Productions; she now enjoys living in the beautiful Eastern Townships with her partner, son and large dog! She would like to thank Gordon and Marianne for this wonderful role, and dedicates this performance to her late father.



Richard Newman

Edmund Kean

Richard is pleased to be back at Centaur and back in Montreal, a theatre company and a city he loves. He is thrilled to be the first actor portraying Edmund Kean in *Venus of Dublin* and would like to thank Gordon McCall for giving him this opportunity. Mr. Newman is most proud of his role in developing many new Canadian plays, including Montreal-born, John Lazarus' *Homework & Curtains*. Some additional theatrical highlights include roles as Roy Cohn in *Angels In America* both for Canadian Stage (Toronto) and Phoenix Theatre (Edmonton), the latter resulting in Best Actor Sterling Award, Malvolio in *Twelfth Night* (Centaur Theatre), Merv in *The Sisters Rosensweig*, (Vancouver Arts Club Theatre), Kent in *King Lear* (Women In View, Vancouver), and several years ago at Vancouver's Firehall Theatre, the title role in an award-winning production of Michael Ondaatje's *The Collected Works of Billy The Kid* directed by Gordon McCall. Recent television work includes roles on *Beggar's & Choosers*, *Secret Agent Man*, *Dead Man's Gun*, and *First Wave*, as well as the mini-series *P.T. Barnum*. But his most popular TV credit (at least with his 4 year old daughter Sofia) is as the voice of Franklin The Turtle's Father on the popular children's cartoon show. Also a singer/songwriter, Richard is a member of the eclectic Vancouver rock band, Sweet Dick.

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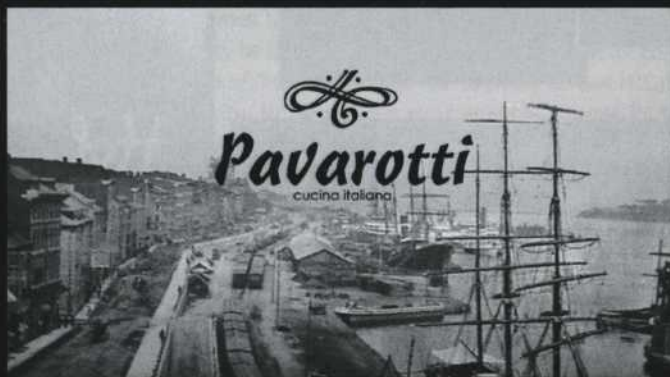
John C. Dinning

Set & Costume Designer

In his 22 year career, John has worked across Canada for such companies as Vancouver Playhouse, Theatre Calgary, Alberta Theatre Projects, The Citadel, Prairie Theatre Exchange, The Shaw Festival, Theatre Plus, Theatre New Brunswick and the Saidye Bronfman Centre. For Centaur 1998: *Angels in America, Part Two: Perestroika* and *For the Pleasure of Seeing Her Again*. He has also designed ballet: *Giselle*, *Swan Lake*, *Le Tricorne* (Les Grandes Ballet Canadiens). John is proud of the number (25) of new Canadian plays that he has helped bring to the stage, such as *Fire*, *Gone The Burning Sun*, *The Mad Boy Chronicles*, *I Love You Anne Murray*, *Some Assembly Required*, *All Fall Down* and *Inquest*. John has taught design at various institutions including The National Theatre School of which he is a graduate, and is a member of the Associated Designers of Canada. John also designed sets for a recent production of *Sleuth* (Saidye Bronfman Centre). He spent a summer remounting *Giselle* (Les Grands Ballets Canadiens) as well as working on the tour of the production *For the Pleasure of Seeing Her Again*. He recently designed sets and costumes for *The Crucible* and *The Gin Game* (Centaur Theatre Company).

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Rob Krause

Lighting Designer

Rob is pleased to be back in Montreal among old friends doing new work. Most recently for Centaur Rob designed the lighting for the premiere of *Having*, in the spring of 1999. A career spanning 18 years in the theatre (10 years as a lighting designer) has led Rob to a variety of locations and challenges. Some favourites include: *My Country's Good* with Gordon McCall (Sudbury Theatre Centre), *Wrong For Each Other* (Roxy, Owen Sound) and *Forever Plaid* (Theatre Brockville and Showplace Theatre in Peterborough).



Anthony Rozankovic

Additional Music

Anthony Rozankovic was born and raised in Montreal. He learned to play the trombone at Notre-Dame College, and then went on to study at the Montreal Music Conservatory of Quebec where he acquired a knowledge for composition, analysis, orchestral conducting, composition technique etc. Since then his career has taken off. Anthony has won several composition awards including: Arranger Of The Year at l'ADISQ for *Qui sera le Pere Noel?*, *La Bande Magnetik's* CD in 1995 and First Prize, OFQJ Competition, Lyon-Montreal, for *Hoketus* in 1992. Past selected credits for theatre include: *Governor of the Dew* (Globe Theater) and *Blue Valentine* (Theatre 1774). Anthony also loves playing jazz on the piano. As for the rest, offer him a drink and he'll tell you everything.



Kate Kellar Yoshitomi

Additional Flute Music

For over 20 years, Kate has been an active flutist both as a performer and teacher. She has had a wide range of performing experiences from participating in large ensembles to solo recitals. She has been involved in such venues as theatre, musical theatre, and variety shows. She is currently in rehearsals for a solo recital and for a musical, *A Time to Remember*, which will premiere in May. BMus Degree and BEd Degree from Queen's University and a Med Degree from the University of Toronto and currently teaches flute with the Community Music School at Douglas College in New Westminister, BC.

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Gordon McCall, Artistic Director

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DRIVING MISS DAISY

by Alfred Uhry

WIT

by Margaret Edson

THE WEIR

by Conor McPherson

OLIVER

by Lionel Lin

TRICK OR TREAT

by Jean-Marie deJé
translated by Robert Dixon

Ben Chaisson

Co-Sound Designer

Originally from Halifax Nova Scotia, Ben is happy to be in Montreal at the prestigious Centaur Theatre Company. Ben is an award winning graduate of the Dalhousie University theatre department as well as an alumnist of the Banff Centre for the Arts. Ben has worked from east to west and back with such companies as Neptune Theatre, Jest in Time Theatre, Eastern Front Theatre, Ships Company Theatre, Banff Centre For the Arts, and currently the Centaur Theatre Company. Ben has also worked with international artists like The Furanno Natural Studio from Japan and Patricia Perez from Venezuela for her solo dance project *Anaconda*. Ben would like to thank Beth Kates and his family for all their support



Christina Hidalgo

Stage Manager

Chris was born in Manila, Philippines and came to Canada when she was two years old. Chris has worked on over 50 professional productions at theatres including: The National Arts Centre, Theatre New Brunswick, Great Canadian Theatre Company, Manitoba Theatre Centre, and the Stratford Festival. Centaur credits include: Stage Manager for (*Having, Picasso at Lapin Agile*) and Assistant Stage Manager for (*Twelfth Night, Angels in America I, and If We Are Women*) Montreal credits include: *My Mother's Courage*, (Saidye Bronfman); *The Infinite Festival*, (Infinitheatre); *Leacock Speaks*, (Geordie Theatre); and the past four summer seasons at Theatre Lac Brome. She just finished stage managing the Montreal Young Company's productions of, *Measure for Measure*, and *The Possibilities*. Chris is very excited to have the opportunity to be working with Gord and the gang once again.



Merissa Tordjman

Apprentice Stage Manager

Merissa is very pleased to be working at Centaur. She recently graduated Dawson College in the Liberal Arts Program. Previously Merissa stage managed *Finbarr's Final Fling* (1998 Annual Fundraiser, Centaur Theatre Company) and was part of the running crew for *Angels in America II: Perestroika* (Centaur Theatre Company). She also stage managed *1949* and, *Saturday, Sunday, Monday* (Dawson Theatre Department), *Company* and *Evita* (Lyric Theatre) and was assistant stage manager for *Hello Dolly!*, *Guys and Dolls*, *Fiddler on the Roof* (Lyric Theatre) and *The Gin Game* (Centaur Theatre).

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Juan Aquino

Juan Aquino was born in Lima Peru and has lived in Montreal since 1989. He studied painting and drawing at the University of Lima, Peru and also obtained a degree in Psychology. Later, he studied at UQAM in Montreal where he received a B.A. degree. Before coming to coming and during his early years here, Juan concentrated on painting Peruvian landscapes and also the Inca Indians of Peru.

To Aquino, the human body is an amazing universe of shapes and textures. This outer shell shapes itself according to age, gender, race, customs and personal experience. The personality of the model also reflects a deep emotional charge that the artist tries to portray.

Juan Aquino also does commissioned portraits.

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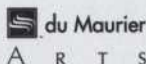
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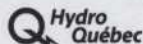


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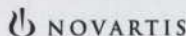
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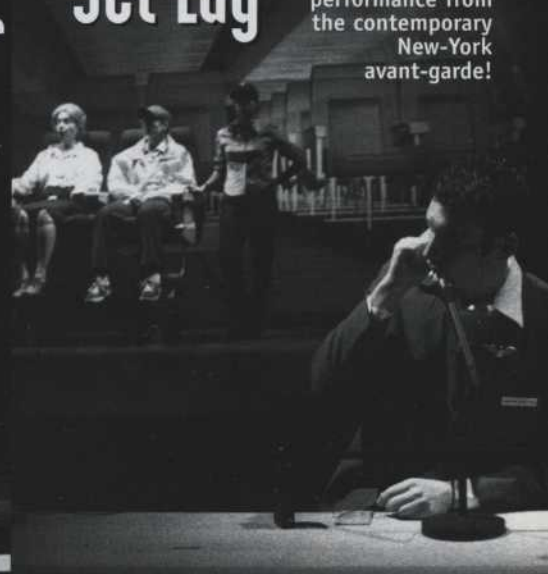
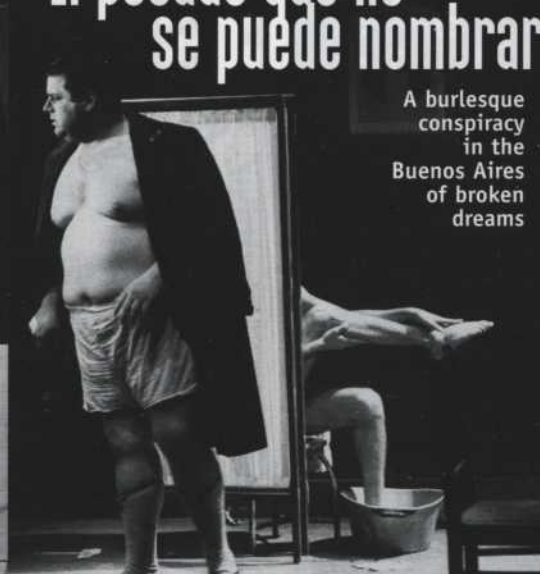
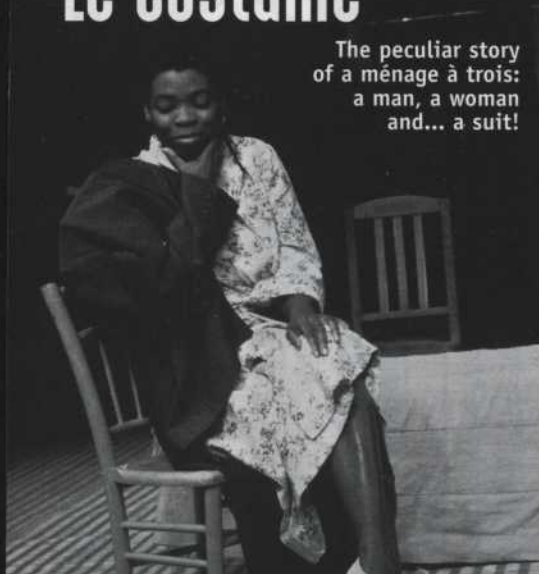
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