

**CENTAUR THEATRE COMPANY'S
WILD SIDE FESTIVAL**

presents

**ROBERT ASTLE'S PRODUCTION OF
THE HATS OF MR. ZENOBE**

A satirical tragicomedy in two acts
for solo actor

Written and performed by Robert Astle
With the precious collaboration of
Jim Jackson and Agnes Limbos
Stage Manager: Lisa Levacq

There will be a 15 minute intermission.

Special Thanks to: Dena Davida, Nathalie
Bonjour, Reimer Express, Terry Astle, William
Astle, Trish Barclay, the Canada Council for
the Arts, Nakay Theatre, Yukon Lotteries,
Brenda Anderson.

About the Author

Robert Astle – writer, director and actor, is an Albertan by birth. In 1977 he went to Europe to study theatre, improvisation acrobatics and creation at the famed Ecole Jacques Lecoq in Paris.

He returned to Canada in 1979, and in 1982, he co-founded, along with Jan Miller, and Jan Henderson - Small Change Theatre, a theatre collective. For Small Change Theatre, he co-created, produced and performed in that company's internationally-acclaimed clown and mask shows which toured to festivals and theatres internationally.

In 1990, Robert returned to Europe to collaborate on the creation of his one-man show *HEART OF A DOG* with Agnes Limbos. This collaboration resulted in the international theatre creation company "Les Etablissements", which has toured his solo performance plays to festivals and theatres in Belgium, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States. It was published by Nuage Editions in 1994.

In 1996, Robert created his second solo show, *THE HATS OF MR. ZENOBE*, in collaboration with American artist, Jim Jackson, and Belgian writer and director, Agnes Limbos. The work had its premiere at Theatre Network in Edmonton, Alberta (February 1977) and has played in Colorado Springs, Whitehorse, Calgary, and Kelowna. It was published by Nuage Editions in December 1997. Robert is currently living and working in Montreal. He is writing his new play: *THE PIANO TUNER*, which will be the last chapter of a trilogy solo theatre performances which is called: *REPUBLIC OF DREAMS*.

About the Play

I first became aware of the story of Vahan Poladian, the inspiration for Mr. Zenobe, through my colleague Agnes Limbos to whom I had sent some rough notes on the new piece I was working on. One day I received a call from Agnes, who was on tour in Switzerland. She had just visited the Musee de l'Art Brut (Outsider Art Museum) in Lausanne and seen Vahan Poladian's remarkable collection housed there. Strangely enough, his story dovetailed with many of the ideas that I had sent to Agnes just months earlier. Poladian was born in Kayseri, Turkey in 1902. When the Turks began systematically killing the Armenians in 1915 – the death toll reached 1.5 million – Poladian's family fled the country. With the assistance of relatives, Poladian attempted to immigrate to the USA, but he was refused entry. He went instead to Cuba, where he worked as a travelling salesman. Later, Poladian was able to return to Europe when France accepted him as an immigrant.

He settled in Paris, where he married an Armenian woman who bore him a daughter, Viviane. With the onset of the second World War, however, Poladian was conscripted by the French Army, and forced to leave his family. His unit was captured by the Germans and Poladian was sent to a POW camp. Upon his release at the end of the war, Poladian made his way back to Paris, only to discover that his wife and child had disappeared. For several years he searched in vain for them. He was briefly reunited with his mother after the war, but she died soon after and her death and the loss of his family was a devastating shock for Poladian.

In 1966 he entered the Armenian home in St. Raphael, France. The home gave Poladian a stipend of one franc a day, which he used to create his collection of hats and costumes. Twice daily, he paraded through the streets showing his collection of "Ancient Terrors and Glories". Poladian died in 1982 after refusing to eat.



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