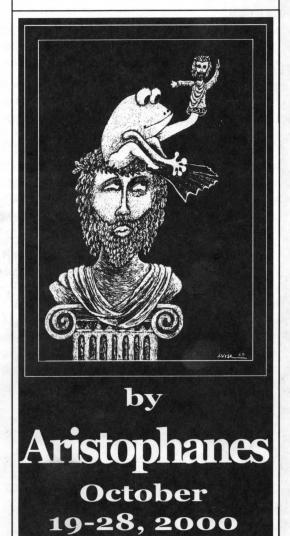
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Director's Notes

I once read that if we wish to understand the cultural values of the previous generation, we need only look to the games and toys of this one. The play-things of my childhood, for example, show quite clearly that my imagination was largely formed by the previous generation's fascination with Freud (sex), two world wars (violence), and the democratization of story telling by technology (cartoons, film, tv, pop music, video). For the twentieth century brought with it an unprecedented degree of access to popular culture. Indeed, for some time it looked as though this democratized culture, particularly as practised in North America, was poised to replace the centuries-old belief that the function of art is to elevate.

So what has this to do with Aristophanes, and with the production of *Frogs* which you are about to see tonight? Central to *Frogs* is the question of which plays and playwrights deserve to be considered of 'enduring significance,' and which to be relegated to the scrap heap of history. A belief in the necessity of doing this, of separating the 'low' works from the 'high,' is based on the notion that the function of art is to display that which is best about ourselves and our society. We may see the history of 'high art' as a succession of brilliant individuals, or as a collection of 'good' social ideas, but in either case our view of the function of art is the same: that it exists for the purpose of advancing the values of the society in which it is created.

Popular art on the other hand has no such aspirations. It aims to bowdlerize and mock the values on which high art is based. Anarchic by nature, popular art has reverence for no individual or idea that cannot stand up to the sheer energy of its rude, wide blast. Aristophanes, I would argue, was at the forefront of establishing this tradition. My reading of *Frogs*, and that of my collaborators, is that the playwright — while perhaps privately admiring and even liking the 'high art' that he makes fun of — knew that his function as comic dramatist was to 'take the mickey' out of the legacy that the previous generation had created. Indeed, I like to think (although there is no specific proof for this) that what Aristophanes was saying with Frogs is that any attempt to systematize theatre art into a code of enduring values would undercut the democratic participation of the viewer from which the theatre gains its essential life and significance as an art form.

Rather than trying to duplicate Aristophanes' own comic techniques, we have built our production from the story-telling vocabulary that we grew up with. For us the spirit of Aristophanes is best understood if we look to the Marx Brothers, Monty Python, Black Adder, Pee Wee and Sesame Street — the anarchic comedy to which our parents exposed us through the new story-telling democracy of television and film.

I would like to dedicate this production to the atavist in us all and to my great, great teacher Jacques LeCoq who inspired so many of us to explore our inner hell raiser.

Background Notes *Frogs*

Written in 405 B.C.E. and performed that year at the Lenaia festival at Athens, Aristophanes' *Frogs* is an extraordinary play. In the first place, it is practically unique in providing us with a contemporary, eye-witness account of fifth-century tragedy. While the author of *Frogs* was, to be sure, in the business of making jokes, not keeping historical records, Aristophanes' knowledgeable appreciation of the work of his predecessors and co-workers in the Athenian theatre was such that even his most outlandish parodies contain invaluable information about the nature of theatre in ancient Greece.

But in the second place, it is an almost unparalleled example of the ability of art to wrest laughter from despair. Written on the eve of Athens' devastating loss of a 27-year war, the play originally addressed an exhausted, demoralized audience. In addition to the casualties of 27 years of fighting, the war with Sparta also brought to Athens a ghastly plague which had killed a further percentage of the citizens, Pericles among them. Surviving Athenians, ruined by the Spartan blockade, were living on state relief; many would soon be starving. Athens' great leaders and generals were either dead, or exiled, or looked upon with paranoid suspicion, and populist demagogues were whipping up the desperate citizenry to ever more irrational and self-destructive acts. Spartan offers of peace had just been rejected by radical democrats, heedless of the consequences; and as Frogs took the stage in 405, the enemy, invincible thanks to the bottomless financial support of Persia, was encamped within a few miles of the city, preparing the spring offensive that would bring Athens to total defeat.

And as if these weren't grounds enough to fear that the end of Athenian culture was near, the year in which Aristophanes composed *Frogs* was also the year in which Athens lost her last two remaining first-rate tragedians, Euripides and Sophocles. With the city's first great tragic poet, Aeschylus, already dead, this double blow must have felt ominously symbolic of the end of an era—as indeed it was.

Thus Dionysus goes to Hades for help, for only among the dead will he find a playwright wise enough to save the city with his good advice. Setting his sights at first upon the populist poet Euripides, the god of theatre comes to realise, however, that the city is *already* in the grip of talk obsessed politicians and other lawless, crowd-pleasing relativists (like Euripides), and that salvation lies elsewhere: in the civic ideals, high standards, and serious moral purpose equivalent with both the glory days of Athenian democracy and with the poet who best articulated them, Aeschylus.

For the good advice Aristophanes gave his audience in *Frogs*, he was awarded the highest civic honours. The specific political recommendations he offered in the play were enacted, and his comedy was given an extraordinary honour never yet enjoyed in Athens by any play: a second performance in his lifetime.

Brian Richmond Guest Director



Born and raised in Vancouver, B. C., Brian is delighted to be back in his home province working at the highly respected Department of Theatre at the University of Victoria and with such talented colleagues as Jennifer Wise, Mary Kerr and Allan Stichbury. The Founding Artistic Director of Saskatoon's Persephone Theatre and Toronto's Guardian Spring Productions, Brian has also served as the Artistic Director for a number of Canada's leading theatres, including Montreal's Playwright's Workshop, Thunder Bay's

Magnus Theatre and Toronto's Theatre Passe Muraille. A four-time nominee for Outstanding Director in Toronto's Dora Mavor Moore Awards, Mr. Richmond was chosen as Outstanding Director for his 1988 production of Fire by Paul Ledoux and David Young. This production as well as his 1991 production of Michel Marc Bouchard's Lillies, was also chosen as Outstanding Production. The director of over eighty plays, he has worked for most of the major and many of the smaller theatres in Canada. As an avid supporter of new work he has had the opportunity to work with a number of Canada's leading playwrights, including Carol Bolt, Michel Marc Bouchard, Sally Clark, Dennis Foon, Thomson Highway, Margaret Hollingsworth, Ken Mitchell, Allan Stratton, Sharon Pollock, George Ryga, Charles Tidler, Paul Ledoux and David Young. He has also taught acting, play writing, directing and created a number of productions at universities and trade schools across Canada, including, the National Theatre School of Canada, McGill, Concordia, Simon Fraser, York and Waterloo Universities as well as the University of Toronto (where he received his MA in drama) where he currently still offers a course in directing. The President of the Toronto Theatre Alliance from 1988 -1991, Brian has also served on a number of Canada Council and Ontario Arts Council juries. He currently lives in Toronto with his wife and creative partner, actress Thea Gill. He will next produce and dramaturge his son Jacob's first play, Qualities of Zero, which recently won the MECA Award (Montreal English Critic's Association) as Outstanding New Play, as well as starting his new appointment as Resident Director at the Florida Studio Theatre in Sarasota.

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Allan Stichbury Scenic Designer



Allan Stichbury has designed for theatres all across Canada, including the Stratford, Shaw and Blyth Festivals. For Opera he has designed at the Edmonton and Manitoba Opera. He has also designed on Broadway, lighting for *Mr. Lincoln* at the Morosco Theatre. He has taught at the Banff Centre and The University of Alberta, as well as giving various workshops for organizations such as the Canadian Institute of Theatre Technology. Allan has taught at the University of Victoria since 1988. Most recent designs include Lighting for *Sylvia* at the Belfry Theatre, set and lighting for *A Christmas Carol* for

Theatre New Brunswick, sets and lighting for *Three Tall Women* at the Manitoba Theatre Centre and sets and lighting for *Babes In Arms* at the Citadel Theatre. For The Phoenix, recent designs were for *Les Canadiens* and *The Glace Bay Miners' Museum*. Allan is currently designing the sets for *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* at the Shaw Festival and the sets for *The Seagull* at the Phoenix. He exhibited at the 1995 and 1999 Prague Quadrennial. Allan is past president of Associated Designers of Canada.

Mary Kerr Costume Designer



Mary Kerr's sets and costumes have been seen at the Shaw, Stratford, Banff and Guelph Festivals, most Toronto theatres and major Canadian regionals. Acclaimed productions include: the premier of George F. Walker's Nothing Sacred: Canadian Stage, The Desert Song: Shaw Festival, The Big Top Ballet: The Royal Winnipeg Ballet and most recently, Into The Woods at Alberta's Citadel Theatre. She has created for the Canadian, Vancouver, Banff, Pacific Opera and New Zealand Opera Companies. Among her designs for Dance are productions for the Paris Opera Ballet, the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, the National

Ballet of Canada, and The Danny Grossman Dance Theatre. In 1994, Mary Kerr was Production Designer for the *Opening and Closing Ceremonies of the Commonwealth Games* in Victoria. Mary has been the recipient of numerous professional awards including 7 Dora Mavor Moores, and 2 Sterlings. Mary was awarded a third Sterling this past June for outstanding costume design. Ms. Kerr has represented Canada at the Prague Quadrennial Design Competition. Elected to the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts, her work is housed in the Mary Kerr Collection at the Metro Toronto Library. Recent work includes the critically acclaimed costumes for the Banff Festival's 1998, *Zurich 1916* by C. Butterfield, the national tour of *Still the Night* and currently sets and costumes for *The Toy Castle* television series. Mary is a Professor of Design at the University of Victoria and a member of the Directors Guild of Canada.

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Ereca Hassell Guest Lighting Designer



A former student and graduate of the Department of Theatre, Ereca has returned to design the lighting for the Phoenix' first production of the 2000-2001 season.

Most recently her designs include: Lighting Designer for *Time and the Conways*, Shaw Festival; *Art*, Mirvish Productions/ Manitoba Theatre Centre; *Rocks*, Manitoba Theatre for Young People. Other selected credits Lighting Designer for 13 shows at Shaw Festival, most recently *The Madras House*, *Getting Married*, *Joy*, *Major Barbara*, *Will Any Gentleman?* and *Mr*.

Cinders; Other productions include; Ethan Claymore, The Grand Theatre, Dinosaurs and all that Rubbish, Carousel Players/Young People's Theatre; TAP!, Choreographer William Orlowski; Angels in America Part Two, Rough Justice, The Citadel Theatre; If We Are Women, Manitoba Theatre Centre and Theatre Calgary; Possible Maps, Tarragon Theatre; Yard Sale, Theatre New Brunswick; Death and the Maiden, Manitoba Theatre Centre and Canadian Stage Company; Abundance, Theatre Plus Toronto; Steel Magnolias, Unidentified Human Remains, Manitoba Theatre Centre; Fallen Angels, The Citadel Theatre; Don Pasquale, Salome, Vancouver Opera. Associate Lighting Design credits includes Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat and Aspects of Love, Canada. Ereca has also won a Dora Mavor Moore Award for her design for Death and the Maiden.

Stacey Brown Composer/Musical Director



Stacey Brown is completing her 3rd year of a Bachelor of Music in Composition at the University of Victoria School of Music. Her previous theatre experiences include Assistant Musical Director/Pianist, West Side Story, Seven Brides for Seven Brothers, Pianist The Fantastics for Western Canada Theatre Company, and Sound Designer, Amadeus for Western Canada Theatre Company and Brighton Beach Memoir for Kamloops Youth Theatre. This is Stacey's first venture into the realm of original music for theatre. Stacey studied for two years with Dr. John Celona and is now a student of Michael Longton.

Kim Isbister Choreographer



After spending three months travelling through Europe, Kim is excited to be back at the Phoenix and to be finishing her degree in the Acting program. Before coming to Victoria, Kim trained in competitive dance for fifteen years and taught for two. Her work in Calgary included assistant choreographer for the musical productions of *Anne of Green Gables* and *The Wizard of Oz.* Kim's credits in Victoria include co-choreographer for last year's original dance production *Static* and choreography for *Colours In The Storm* in which she played Annie Fraser. Kim also appeared on stage as Quince in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

She would like to thank Director Brain Richmond for having faith in her as both a choreographer and an actor and for challenging her ability to do both.

Aristophanes' FR663

A new stage translation by Jennifer Wise**

Creative *Team*

Director Set Designer Costume Designer

Lighting Designer
Composer/Musical Director

Choreographer Stage Manager

Assistant Director Assistant Set Designers

Assistant Costume Designer Assistants to the Costume Designer

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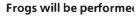
Fiona Deacon Jeremy McLeod Renée Stewart-Smith

Heather Libby

Marv Kerr*

Alexander Ferguson

*Department of Theatre Instructors



Prologue and Epilogue written by Aristophanes an *Tower of Song



Cast

Dionysus **Xanthias** Mule Zeus (Drummer) Pluto/Aeacus #1/Persephone's Maid (Lead Keyboard) Muse/Chorus Leader Muse/Dead Guy/Euripides' Maid Muse/Charon Muse/Heracles Muse/Inkeeper #1/Choreographer Muse/Sheep/Inkeeper #2 Muse/Aeacus #2 "The Beater" Muse/Aeacus #3 "The Servant" Muse/Chorus Leader #2 Aeschylus

Euripides

Meg Roe Jay Bennett Leslie Aimée Gottlieb Ryan Arnold Alexander Ferguson

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Colin Chapin
Kate Braidwood
Rebecca Henderson
Kim Isbister
Mitch Pollock
Emma Routledge
Renee Geronimo
David Kopp
Dalal Badr
Zachary Stevenson

ed with no intermission.

by Brian Richmond with apologies to and Jennifer Wise. og by Leonard Cohen

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Electrician

Lighting Board Operator Sound Coordinator

Sound Operator Head of Scenic Construction

Properties Supervisor

Properties Co ordinators

Painters for Goddess Drops

and Costume Stencils

Head of Wardrobe/Cutter Co ordinating Wardrobe

Maintenance Supervisor

Wardrobe Maintenance Supervisor Assistant Wardrobe Maintenance Supervisor

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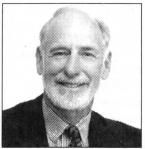


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Phoenix Phacts

... It's a Phact that Phoenix people are always busy working in the craft that they love. • Jan Wood directed a production of Macbeth for Shakespeare in the Park in Calgary this summer • Fort Steele Heritage Town was the scene of a busy troupe of Phoenix People as well. Pia Wyatt produced, choreographed and performed in the Fort Steele Follies. Peter McGuire directed this rollicking Musical Comedy. Behind the scenes were Jackie Adamthwaite, Stage Manager, Christina Cicko, Lighting Designer, Katie Lawson, Box Office Manager and Publicity. Strutting their stuff on stage were Michael Rinaldi and Gregory Tees. The script was written by T.J. Dawe and Michael Rinaldi • Bridget McGuire has been nominated for a Gemini Award for a Star Gate. • Kellie Barnum was Roy Surette's Assistant Director for the Belfry's production of Kilt, which features our own Chris Martin in a leading role and yes, that was his picture on the Fall Guide cover of Monday Magazine • Leslie Bland continues his role as Hoke in the Chemainus production of Driving Miss Daisy. He also directed and performed in Inspiration Theatre's production of Three Viewings at Dunsmuir Lodge. • T.J. Dawe and Shannan Calcutt were both huge hits on the Fringe Festival Circuit. • Bindon Kinghorn gave Directing Workshops in Madeira, Portugal and Directed the 2000 Parliament Buildings Players in Victoria • Celine and Camille Stubel travelled to Prague to perform with Sven Johannson's Dance Company. They were thrilled to be able to perform in The Estates Theatre where Mozart premiered Don Giovanni. • Kate Jamin, Jane Duncan, Mary Kerr, John Krich and Jim Leard have all provided input into the Royal B. C. Museum's Circus Magicus. • Working this summer at the Banff Centre for the Arts was Karla Stout as Wardrobe Manager. Students involved included Robina Cook, Stephanie Shaw, Karen Goddard, Chris Oliver, Fiona Deacon, Lindsay Walker, Jeff Henry and Michael Meloche • Ross Desprez was part of the Lies and Legends Company for the Belfry's summer musical. Karen Levis designed the costumes. • Vancouver's Bard On The Beach featured Gerry Mackay, Deborah DeMille, Andrew Long, Jason Mitchell Nicholas Harrison was Fight Director. • Aerwacol directed by Ami Gladstone, songs by Lucas Myers, featuring Matthew Payne, Camille Stubel, Michelle Monteith, Ben Lawrence performed at the Belfry in Victoria, in Toronto and at Vancouver's Fringe Festival. • Colin Heath is touring Japan with the ever popular #14 Bus.

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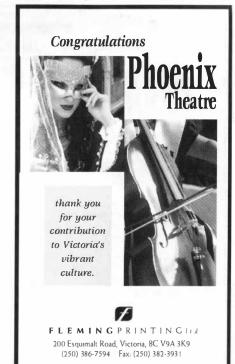


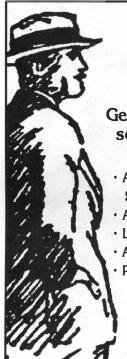
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