

Tarragon Theatre OutReach Newsletter

Edition 1.2

Nov/Dec 2001

After two successful shows at the box office – ***Skylight*** and ***Elisa's Skin*** – we are thrilled to continue our 31st season with Governor General Award winner David French's ***Soldier's Heart***, the fifth play in the Mercer family cycle. For students grade 11+ there are still some seats available for the 1:30pm Wednesday matinees running November 21 to December 12. Tickets are also available for student matinees for Michael Healey's ***Plan B*** and Joan MacLeod's ***The Shape of a Girl*** in the new year. If you are interested in purchasing group tickets, please contact Kristen at 416-536-5018 x229.

Tarragon Educator Workshops

Tarragon Theatre is in its third year of providing quality educator workshops to secondary dramatic arts teachers. We have submitted a package to the Ontario College of Teachers in order to be recognized as an established provider of professional development to teachers. We will receive news about our status early in January. The OCT has indicated that when provider status is obtained the workshops will be credited retroactively. There is still space available for our first workshop of the year:

Creativity through improvisation

Devising something out of your self could be a definition either of creativity or of improvisation. This workshop will address improvisation as a method for students to access their creativity and begin to develop their own work and move beyond stereotyping. In this workshop, Leah Cherniak co-director of the award-winning Theatre Columbus and instructor at the National Theatre School of Canada, will explore how these can be linked, either on the individual level, or with a group, or collectively. Sunday December 2, 2001 10-4pm, Tarragon Theatre

Other upcoming workshops are: **Light the lights/sound the sounds** (an introduction to technical elements) on Sunday January 20 and **Adapting to your situation** (adapting prose and poetry to a dramatic script) on Sunday April 14. Please contact Mary at 416-536-5018 x243 should you want to register.

Tarragon Teacher Nights

This year our teacher nights have met with astounding success. We offer a complimentary ticket to Dramatic Arts educators on specially selected evenings. As well, teachers enjoy a pre-show drink and a discussion with a member of the production or guest artist. The following teacher nights remain this season:

Thursday January 10, 2002

Plan B, guest Michael Healey

Thursday March 21, 2002

Shape of a Girl, guest Kathleen Gallagher

Please contact Mary at 416-536-5018 x243 should you want to register.

OutReach News exclusive with actor Jordan Pettle

Toronto actor Jordan Pettle has been working steadily since he graduated from the National Theatre School. His work includes, among others, productions at the Centaur, Citadel and Tarragon theatres and several seasons at Stratford. Most recently Pettle has enjoyed success in Factory Theatre's hit ***Zadie's Shoes***, soon to be remounted by Mirvish Productions at the Winter Garden Theatre, and in ***Picasso at the Lapin Agile*** at Canadian Stage. This spring Jordan will be directing the 1998 SummerWorks hit ***Therac 25*** at the Factory Theatre, starring and written by his brother, Dora nominated playwright Adam Pettle. It was on Jordan's only day off – from a busy tech week schedule at Canadian Stage – that he kindly agreed to meet with me to discuss his first connection with Toronto theatre: a relationship that began over 12 years ago when he was a member of Tarragon's Spring Training Project.

MW: *Tell me about your decision to apply to Tarragon's Spring Training Project.*

Jordan Pettle: Well, I was in grade eleven at the time and I had started to do a lot plays in high school. I loved it and was craving more of it. I really wanted to learn more about acting. It was kind of a little bit scary [to go down to Tarragon to apply] but I was looking for more exposure to acting, that I wasn't getting in high school. It was really a desire to learn that took me there. I really, really wanted to learn about acting.

MW: *Looking back, what was a highlight of the program for you.*

JP: The great thing about spring training was meeting other people that were also interested in acting. I met students - creative people - from high schools around the city that I wouldn't have met otherwise. Kate Miles who's a playwright now was in one of my first classes. And it was really exciting, because we were really, really young and we were getting a chance to meet people of like mind who had the same kind of creative interest. Yeah, it was really good. That was one of the best things about it when I think back - meeting people... One of the things I remember most is when we would come out on



Urjo Kareda, artistic director Mallory Gilbert, general manager Andy McKim, associate artistic director
Kristen Van Alphen & Mary Wood OutReach

breaks from class. There was a Tarragon show rehearsing in the rehearsal hall, I think it was John Murrell's play *October*. Clare Coulter was in it and I remember she and the other actors coming out of the rehearsal hall and sitting in the lobby. The spring trainers would share the same lobby as the actors and they would just take out their sandwiches and eat their lunch. It really struck me that people did this. This is what some people do with their lives! Some people go to factories, some people go to offices and some people go to theatres and rehearse plays and have their lunch break in the lobby with a bunch of kids learning about acting. It was really, really exciting. Definitely. It created a reality that people actually did this and I started to love the stuff I was learning.

MW: *What about your instructors, the professional artists that worked with you during spring training?*

JP: There are teachers that I met during spring training that I still know and that I've worked with since: Jim Warren, Robert Crowd, Mark Christman, Maggie Huculak and Tanya Jacobs. And now, I'm part of that community so it was a great way for me to be introduced to the community and some of the people in it. And it was a great way to be encouraged because I guess I showed some promise, so it was nice to be reaffirmed in what I felt I was good at.

MW: *Could you think back over a particular moment, I know this is many years ago, to an exercise that really stuck out for you? When all of a sudden it was - okay I get it - and you were taken to that next level?*

JP: I do remember a moment when we did text work with Tanya Jacobs. We did an exercise where we'd start to take apart scenes. You would take a line of dialogue and we would start to talk about actions and techniques. These are methods I still use today. We'd talk about what the action of the line is. What you're doing to your partner, as opposed to just- *How do I say this line? What's the delivery of this line?* Acting became active. You learned that writing was about thoughts and feelings and that the line is an action. It was stuff I eventually learned in theatre school but because I'd received this training at Tarragon I felt way ahead of the game. I had already touched on that and I already had a technique. That experience had been grounding for me. I remember the moment realizing the ocean beneath the words, just how beautiful and dense a piece of writing can be, and how the actors' job is to mine the white between the lines. That's where our world lives - the emotional - the thoughts and feelings

between the lines. It was about bringing life to those words and all of a sudden I felt this sort of infinite ocean of possibility open up to me. I've always loved subtext. I love what's between the lines. I love interpreting.

MW: *You finished spring training and graduated from high school. Then you went to the University of Toronto Drama Program and eventually were admitted to the National Theatre School of Canada, for which you had to audition. How did Spring Training help prepare you for those experiences?*

JP: The Spring Training Project definitely gave me confidence as well as technique. It also gave me exposure to monologues. We did work on monologues in class and we even had to write our own monologues and perform them. So it definitely gave me confidence. Even though I was going to the University of Toronto, which was a new setting, I felt I already had my first groundwork for learning proper acting. I also felt this because the spring training instructors were professionals, not professors but professionals. They were people working in the business. That was the great thing about it and no one ever gave us a talk about what the "business" was like. It was never about training to be a professional actor. It was about learning the fundamentals of acting and getting exposure to the techniques. Learning, for example, how important movement is to acting. Fundamentals that have since, greatly helped me.

*The **Spring Training Project** is a free acting program for youths aged 15-19 that runs during the March Break and throughout the spring. Running concurrently are our **Young Playwrights Unit** and the **Under 20 for Under 20's playwriting contest**. In December, information about these programs is sent to schools across the GTA, and application forms are posted on our web site at www.tarragontheatre.com. We encourage you to familiarize yourself with these free accessible programs and help us find the best candidates by speaking with your students.*

Tarragon's New site has arrived!

We are thrilled to announce our newly designed website at www.tarragontheatre.com. We encourage you to visit our site, especially our education pages, and would appreciate any feedback you can provide for us. *Is the material relevant? What information would you like to see on the site?* You can email us your suggestions at outreach@tarragontheatre.com.

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