

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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**Playwright & Screenwriter**

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November 3, 1997

The John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation  
90 Park Avenue  
New York, NY 10016

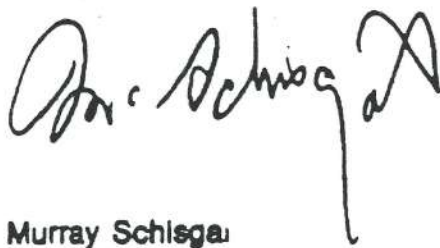
Dear Sirs:

It is with genuine enthusiasm that I recommend Mr. John Monteleone for a Guggenheim Fellowship.

As the author of six plays on Broadway, including "Luv" and "Jimmy Shine," and the co-writer of the film "Tootsie," among others, it is some thirty-five years in theater and film that causes me to celebrate John's talent as both writer and actor.

I would be very happy to speak to anyone to further discuss what it is that qualifies John for the kind of encouragement and support that your organization is famous for.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Murray Schisgal". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized initial "M" and "S".

Murray Schisgal  
MS:jml

Nov. 2, 1997

John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation  
90 Park Avenue  
New York, New York 10016

To whom it may concern:

Since my Hollywood writing career (Writer/Supervising Producer The Cosby Show), and advertising career (Vice President/Creative Director Ogilvy & Mather), I've had the pleasure of getting to know John Monteleone. Mr. Monteleone produced and starred in a staged reading of one of my plays, HIM AND HIS LAST NIGHT OF SANITY. He is a talented performer and writer, whose work should be seriously considered.

Don't hesitate to contact me if you need any specific positive feedback on John Monteleone.

Sincerely,



Gary Kott

Sunday, May 17, 1992

## THEATER REVIEW

# Powerful Performance In 'Diary of a Madman'



By LEAH D. FRANK

**A** SHORT but intense adaptation by John Montealeone of Nikolai Gogol's "Diary of a Madman" is at the Dowling College Arts Center in Oakdale through May 23.

The powerful solo performance piece chronicles the slow downward slide of a man from a position of clerk in an indifferent government bureaucracy to his final frantic hours as an inmate in an insane asylum. Mr. Montealeone is not only the script's architect, but also plays the title role, and as such he brings to life Gogol's penniless middle-age civil servant, and also all contemporary men drowning in hopelessness and despair.

The play takes place on a raised platform set in the center of a large area that represents the small rectangular floor of a room. The space is sparsely furnished with a tiny writing table, a wood chair and a narrow mattress and a bedspring.

At times, the nondescript room serves as the man's bleak boarding-house lodging, his office, his manager's study or his cold asylum cell. No matter what its use, however, the room seems like a giant abstract leg-hold trap from which the only escape is self-mutilation or death.

It is clear from the beginning that the diarist is odd. He has a nervous manner, and he wraps his arms around himself as though he was protecting his body from expected blows. He rocks back and forth on his heels. His pants are too large and ride up too high on his waist, and his shoes are scuffed and unpolished. With his black curly hair, his small round wire-frame glasses and his shadow of a beard, he has the stunned look of a deer caught in the headlights of a speeding car.

The madman confides to the anonymous reader of the diary that he has been seeing and hearing things no one has before. For example, he describes in the most rational manner his obsession with his boss's daughter and how the intensity of this feeling has led him to steal the letters her dog has written to a neighbor's dog. It was through the canine letters, he explains, that he discovered more about the young woman.

As his delusions become increasingly bizarre, and as his behavior appears more and more out of sync with the rest of his neighbors and co-workers, the madman seems to gain an element of dignity out of his delusions.

From being a paper pusher in a large bureaucracy, he turns himself into the King of Spain. When he places his chair on his head as a crown, Mr. Montealeone musters a believable and tragic regal bearing for the impoverished, sick and lonely man. What is created is a lunatic in an insane world whose last hope at achieving worth as a human being is through madness.

Under Keith T. Fadelici's expert direction, "The Diary of a Madman" takes on a dramatic flow in which the



John Montealeone

tension builds inexorably toward the climax. Even as you realize the inevitability of the ending, Mr. Fadelici manages to keep alive the possibility that somehow a miracle will occur and that the imbalance between the sane and the insane will be righted.

Mr. Montealeone meets the almost impossible task of portraying a demented man who is sinking into the quagmire of hopeless melancholia by finding out elements of humor that fit like pegs between layers of tragedy.

There is no time when Mr. Montealeone steps across the boundary between performance integrity and excess. He never yields to the temptation to make fun of the character's range of disorders.

When the character relates, for example, how he can hear the two dogs talking, Mr. Montealeone does so in a natural manner, as though it were the most normal of daily occurrences.

The effect is to create an empathy with the audience, so that when the battered, defeated madman reaches up from his bed and quietly says, "Mother, take pity on a sick child," the sentence sums up the human struggle, not just the life of one man.

Tamar Cohn is responsible for the set design, in which a simple floor and a few pieces of furniture make a statement about various kinds of human prisons. She is also credited with the costumes and lighting design, which together create a sense of unease, as though one might expect to leave the theater only to enter the twilight zone.

"The Diary of a Madman" may be effective theater, but it is too short for a full evening. There is so much talent in evidence that the next time around, perhaps this particular creative team might find a companion piece to fit with "Diary," or whatever else it chooses.

## The Diary of a Man's Mad, Mad World

**THE DIARY OF A MADMAN.** Adapted for the stage and performed by John Monteleone from the short-story by Nikolai Gogol. A one-man play directed by Keith T. Fadelici with set, costume and lighting by Tamar Cohn. Tonight, tomorrow and next Friday and Saturday at the Performing Arts Center of Dowling College, Idle Hour Boulevard, Oakdale. Also June 30-July 2 at Theater Row Theater, 424 W. 42nd St., Manhattan. Seen on opening night, last Friday.

By Steve Parks

STAFF WRITER

**F**UNNY, HE doesn't act like a madman. Not at first, he doesn't. A nerd, yes. A guy who's paralyzingly shy around women, sure. But a madman? The world would be a dangerous place if every guy who couldn't get a date was driven insane by his social deprivation.

But wait. The world is a dangerous place. And maybe part of the reason it's dangerous is that we don't recognize a madman until he's gone completely bonkers. On the 11 o'clock news, after some guy has blown away 20 people at a diner where a waitress turned him down for a date, neighbors always describe the assailant the same way: He was a quiet fellow, always kept to himself.

The nameless, buried-by-bureaucracy clerk in "The Diary of a Madman" is just such a fellow, except that he's nonviolent — so far. He's got a dead-end job and a hopeless crush on the boss' daughter. Nikolai Gogol's story of descent into madness has been adapted insightfully by John Monteleone, who also performs the solo role with the casual intensity of a man who doesn't realize his own fury.

In this lean production at Dowling College, the madman's scribbles are transformed into a video diary for the stage. Snippets of the clerk's written entries are projected between scenes, providing a cryptic chronology to the progress of his madness.

We meet the clerk on the job, at a corner desk about the size of a nightstand. His wire-rimmed glasses and buttoned-to-the-neck shirt tell us instantly that he's a social cripple. So we're not surprised when he trips headlong over his own desk as he retrieves a hanky that Sophie, the boss' daughter, has dropped.

This is slapstick, so it's OK to laugh. Later the humor is darker and the laughter is muffled by guilt.

It is funny when the clerk reads aloud letters he imagines are written by Sophie's pet dog. He has stolen the letters in hopes of discerning the girl's impression of him. He's

devastated when he reads: "Sophie can barely contain her laughter whenever she sees him."

"Filthy lying bitch!" he shouts. Although we can't be sure whether he's referring here to the dog or the daughter, the revelation that Sophie finds him ridiculous accelerates his descent into madness. Soon despair over his powerlessness overwhelms him. He compensates by imagining he's the king of Spain, answering only to the name Ferdinand.

Monteleone keeps faith with the Gogol story, testing the conscience of his audience. The sicker his madman becomes, the funnier his lines. And laughing at him becomes a little sick, too.

But it can't be helped. Monteleone is both funny and pathetic as the madman. Keith Fadelici's direction is active: There's a lot going on here for a one-man show. Tamar Cohn's spare set — a desk, chair and bed evoking a life in solitary — is rearranged constantly.

On opening night, the diary entries projected on the brick wall behind the set were seen only fleetingly. Early on, these handwritten notes merely tell the date of the entry you're about to witness. But later, these postmarks of the madman's state of mind flash by too quickly to be read. A pity. It's fun to puzzle about their meaning. / ■■



# Seeds of Innovative Drama

### PROFILE

By Aileen Jacobson

**I**T WAS THE FEEL of concrete underfoot, the sounds of jets and trains, the sight of a motorboat scattering a flock of geese that got John Monteleone started on his new play, "Farmland."

During the spring of 1987, he took his acting class to the canal on the campus of Dowling College in Oakdale, where he teaches drama. But, instead of the expected bucolic experience of grass and quiet splendor, they found a new parking lot and the sounds of civilization. Thus was born the seed of his play, which is about a family losing its farm. It is running this weekend and next at Dowling.

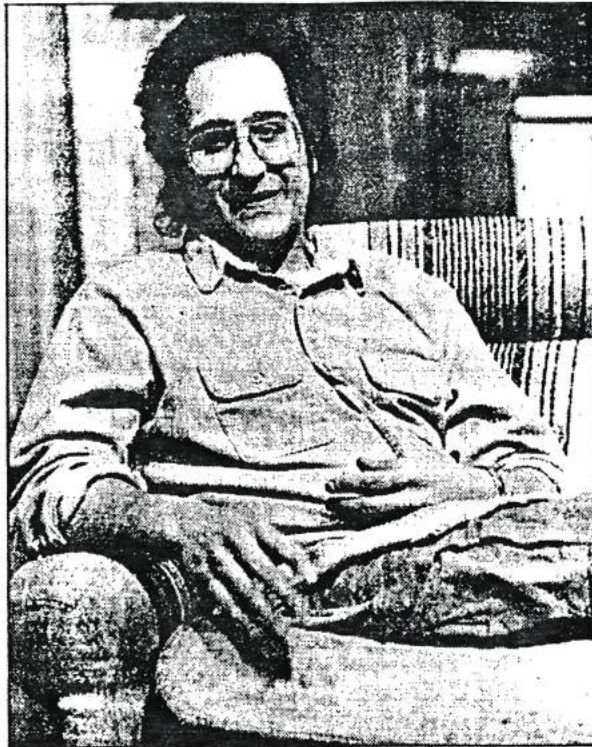
"The play is about foreclosure, but it has a lot of metaphors and symbols," said Monteleone. "It's about intrusion, pollution and noise." The 32-year-old playwright, who is also directing the play, said he is not opposed to all development but to "indifferent development" that destroys natural resources and the general quality of life, such as proposals that would build over the pine barrens on the East End.

"Farmland," the first full-length original production by his group, The Actors' Workshop of Long Island, marks a milestone for Monteleone in what he hopes will be a new theater company, one that will provide an alternative to the theaters on Long Island that generally produce revivals of proven audience pleasers.

Since 1984 Monteleone has operated The Actors' Workshop as an acting school, occasionally presenting workshop productions at various locations. Now the workshop is in residence at Dowling, where Monteleone recently was named a professor in the drama department. The cast for "Farmland" includes a couple of Dowling students but is mostly made up of adults, several with professional aspirations.

"This, to me, is the beginning of a professional company," said Monteleone.

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Jennifer Jecklin

**'Farmland' playwright and Dowling College Theater Workshop founder John Monteleone**

the workshop gets free rent at the college's Performing Arts Center in exchange for giving Dowling faculty and students free admission to its productions. (Tickets are \$7 for others; call 737-6911.)

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Please see **PLAYWRIGHT** on Page 14

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 7, 1988.

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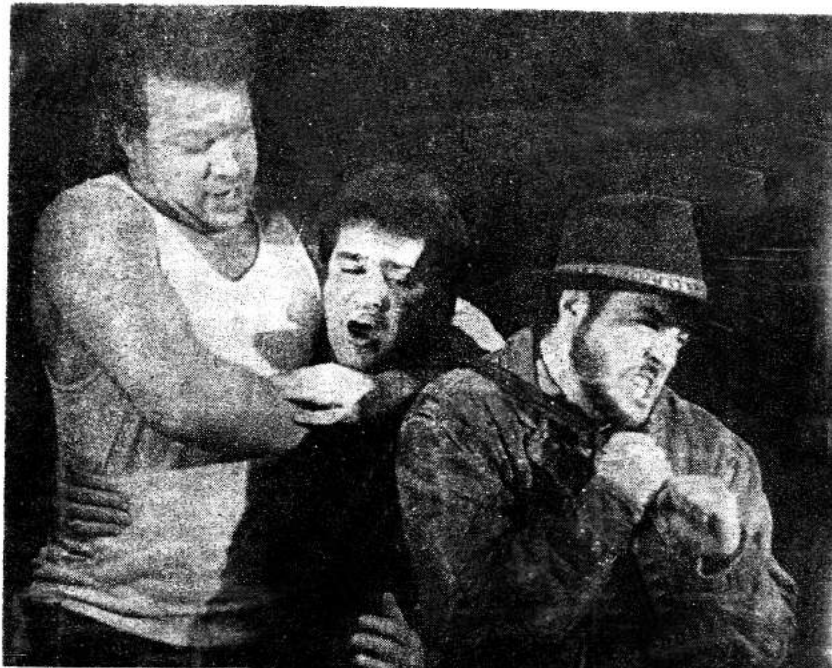
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A viewing of "Farmland," which is subtitled "a comic, absurdist, tragic farce in two acts," revealed a play as eclectic as its subtitle suggests. Some parts are broadly funny — particularly those involving a failed, much beaten prizefighter, expertly played by Dan Segruts — while other parts sag under the symbolism (one character can't find his feet, his eyes, his heart or his identity after the farm is lost) with which the play is laden. The acting covers a wide range, too, from solid to silly.

Referring to his writing — influenced by playwrights he admires, including Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, Edward Albee, David Mamet and Sam Shepard — Monteleone said, "My style is still emerging . . . I'm a new playwright. We all start somewhere. We all start in obscurity."



Another influence on his play, he said, was watching the neighborhood in Inwood, where his grandfather built a house still inhabited by some of his aunts and uncles, change from a small-town ambience with open fields to a factory wasteland.

Though he continues to visit the Inwood house, he moved to North Babylon when he was 6 and now lives in Centereach. He attended Dowling two years before graduating from the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University.

An actor in Off-Broadway and regional productions for several years, he returned to Long Island six years ago to teach and act at Arena Players in East Farmingdale. Later he founded the workshop because he wanted to have his own school. It has had as many as 100 students, though now he is limiting it to 30, he said, because of his Dowling teaching responsibilities. He's also working toward a master's degree in educational theater from Adelphi University.

Monteleone plans to produce two of his one-act plays, "Visitations" and "The Propbox," in February. "He and She," another of the eight plays he has written, was given a public performance by The Actor's Workshop last year.

"I want to develop a different kind of theater on Long Island, one that offers new, innovative works," he said in his painted brick and cinderblock office in the performing arts center. How to provide that and still draw an audience is a problem, he said.

"I don't have an answer . . . I would like to see more innovative, new work, work that's risky, that deals with the issues of our world . . . I want to see art that's not being done just to pay the bills. I want to see the soul of the theater." □

From John Monteleone  
"Farmland"

SUNDAY, JULY 8, 1984

## 'Tiger,' 'Zoo Story' Share Double Bill

By LEAH D. FRANK

**T**HE Arena Players Repertory Company recently opened the Second Stage, a small theater next door to its primary space. It is here that the company presents either developmental work or work that, for a variety of reasons, might not be done in the main arena. And it is to the Second Stage that popular shows from the larger stage are moved to provide space for a longer run.

The Arena Players are presenting, through July 22, two one-act plays at Second Stage, Murray Schisgal's "The Tiger" and Edward Albee's "The Zoo Story." The one-act play

### THEATER REVIEW

can be a small gem of theater art, and many of America's finest playwrights, among them Eugene O'Neill, Edward Albee and Tennessee Williams, became known because of their early experiments in this mode of dramatic expression. The genre has fallen out of favor over the years, and it is only in such places as the Arena where we're treated to an evening of one-act plays.

"The Tiger" and "The Zoo Story" are thematically linked. In both works the protagonist is searching for the answer to the question "Who am I?" In each play the main character feels impotent in what is perceived to be an indifferent, uncaring world. And both plays revolve around an act of violence.

In "The Tiger," which is the least successful of the two in both script and in execution, a mailman has kidnapped a young housewife and mother and is threatening to kill her. He forces her to disrobe and hints at adding sexual brutality to the crime of abduction. Unfortunately, this play is supposed to be a comedy, and Mr. Schisgal has tried to lighten his story by turning the woman into a dizzy blonde who gets turned on by the insane mailman. This idea of a woman responding positively to physical violence is the stuff out of which pornographic movies are created.

She sympathizes with the lunatic ravings of the kidnapper, she tries to teach him French, she becomes seductive and willingly and adoringly makes love to him. When he lets her go, she asks to see him again and promises that next time she will also clean up his filthy apartment. It's a particularly demeaning portrait of women.

The mailman suffers from a severe identity problem. He is self-educated, extremely bright, and he believes himself to be trapped in a world populated by dreary, dull people he considers to be insensitive and one-dimen-

sional at best. It galls him to have to deliver their mail. He has twisted his dissatisfaction with the world into misogyny, which leads him to the kidnapping.

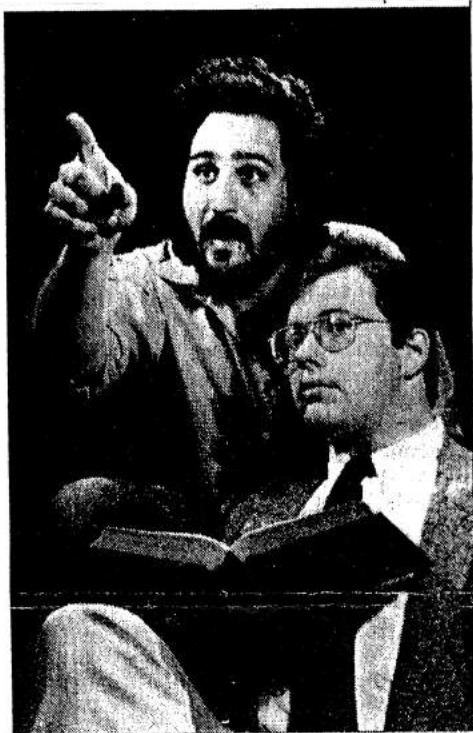
Lane Luckert plays Ben, the mailman, with a high-pitched intensity that becomes tiresome in a very short time. If he has spent time analyzing his character, it is not apparent in his rushed performance. Linda Bub is Gloria, the victimized housewife. Miss Bub displays a bent for comedy with her affected New York accent and her wide-eyed, goofy responses to her bizarre situation. One of the best scenes in the play is when she attempts to teach Ben unintentionally totally mispronounced French.

"The Zoo Story," which follows "The Tiger" on this twin bill, has not lost any of its dramatic power in the 24 years since its premiere. It tells the story of Jerry, a man who has consistently lost every battle large and small in life. The play is filled with Jerry's unanswerable questions: Who are we? Who am I? What does it all mean? Are we animal or vegetable, and what is an animal anyway?

Jerry walks into Central Park and intrudes on Peter, a man who is sitting on a park bench peacefully reading a book, calmly going through life. Their contact is so forceful that the play's ending remains a shocker regardless of how familiar "The Zoo Story" has become.

Lane Luckert is more successful as the subdued Peter than he was as the insane mailman in "The Tiger," although here, too, he occasionally rushes through his dialogue. Jerry is played by John Monteleone, an actor who is more than capable of handling Mr. Albee's complex character. Although he occasionally lapses into rote line reading, when he is on target his performance is a mixture of wild-eyed fear and soaring strength.

The director, Frederic De Feis, has not explored the various levels inherent in either play, especially in "The Zoo Story." The things that are wrong with the evening, such as the rushed performances and the uneven pacing, are primarily directorial flaws. However, "The Zoo Story" is an exceptional work of art. It is receiving a solid production at the Second Stage, and it's worth the effort to get to the Arena Players Repertory Company to see it.





# Perfectly Wonderful

May 20, 1993

Suffolk County News

by Kevin Molloy

The bearded hustler peers out through blue colored sunglasses, a bandana wrapped around his head, as he smooth talks the 14-year-old runaway girl just newly arrived in Manhattan's Washington Square.

"Hey, Songbird," he says, using the nickname he gave her moments before. "You gotta be careful. You have no idea what kind of people you come across in the park."

No idea, indeed. Drunks, homeless men, street kids and even arms merchants can all be found in the park on a Spring day. And John Monteleone is only too glad to introduce you to all of them, from the comforts of a folding chair at Dowling College.

In all, you'll come across 11 different characters in the one man show *Perfectly Normill People* in which he performs and wrote with assistance from Denise Welborn. And while most will seem familiar to anyone who has traversed the Greenwich Village park, though only from a distance, Monteleone brings them to his audience with a depth and clarity that will leave you feeling like you've spent an hour conversing with them.

There's the fast talking businessman trying to repossess appliances and furniture from a near-suicidal man; the southern "preacher" who appears to be espousing redemption and salvation, until he hands out the flyers proclaiming "McBuddy burgers are the key to salvation!" And assorted homeless men and drunks, who alternate between leaving you in hysterics and breaking your heart with their insightful perspectives on life and the people around them.

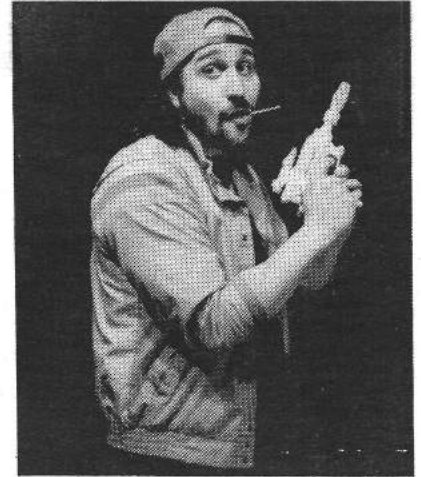
Monteleone is spellbinding in his portrayal of the 11 different roles, slipping with ease from the street hustler to kid growing up in the inner city to a high-powered arms merchant, and even a retired Jewish woman. Gender and age have no boundaries on this performance. Within seconds, he *is* a homeless man, or a child, or some guy handing out advertisements on the street with an original and hysterical line to draw you in.



The many faces of John Monteleone in his 'Perfectly Normill People,' now playing at Dowling College.



And as each character touches you, the social commentary about life, gun control, homelessness, the women's movement, and simply the way people living in the fringe element of society are treated seeps into you almost unnoticed, until you have time to think about it during a costume change. You realize that, as odd as these characters are, they're all just perfectly normal people, just like you and me, only maybe a little different. But not by much.



Monteleone is brilliant in *Perfectly Normill People*, a perfect follow-up to his critically acclaimed *The Diary of a Madman* which he performed at the college last year. As Dowling's artist in residence, Monteleone has

said he wants to push beyond the barriers and constraints of traditional Long Island theater, providing high calibre drama with important social themes. In this production, which is expertly directed by Denise Welborn, who shares writing credits, he succeeds in this goal, perhaps better than he may have expected.

Although *Perfectly Normill People* is not your standard community theater fare, dealing with some adult material, the honest, funny, and sometimes tragic themes the play deals with have broad-based appeal.

*Perfectly Normill People* will run at the Dowling College Performing Arts Center through May 30. Admission is free, but reservations are necessary. Call 244-3155 or 244-3399 for reservation and information.

# A One-Man Cast Of Many Voices

**Newsday**  
FRIDAY, MAY 21, 1993

**PERFECTLY NORMILL PEOPLE.** A multi-character monologue written and performed by John Monteleone. Directed by Denise Welborn, who also designed the set. Sound effects by Andrew Bleiberg. At the Performing Arts Center, Dowling College, Oakdale, through May 30. Seen opening night last Thursday.

By Steve Parks

STAFF WRITER

**M**OST OF the "Perfectly Normill People" John Monteleone has created are deeply disturbed. But what's really frightening is that they all seem like people you might actually encounter in Manhattan's Washington Square Park.

That's the venue for his collection of 11 monologues. Director Denise Welborn's spare set — a park bench, a garbage can, a shopping cart brimming with returnable bottles and, in the second act, the chalked outline of a body on the pavement — is amplified by Andrew Bleiberg's recordings. Each new scene is established by its own distinguishing urban sound effects — from police sirens to pigeon cooing.

This startling day and night in the park begins at lunchtime. A bill collector is brown-bagging it and he's brought along his cellular phone. This is a working lunch, but it's no picnic. The first call is to a Mr. Smith. A late payment is the least of Mr. Smith's troubles. His wife's in a coma; his daughter's committed suicide. Ah, but no matter. The "account representative" of Things 'n' Things suggests that paying this particular bill is just what Mr. Smith needs to turn his life around.

Salesmanship is a favorite target of

Monteleone in "Perfectly Normill People." In "Special Offer," true believers are offered coupons — good for a day off from purgatory or worse — with each purchase of a Buddy Burger. And in "Homer's Oddysey," a weapons peddler in a cowboy hat briefs his colleague on how to sell nuclear missiles to Third World countries. "Threaten to sell 'em to the other guy," advises Homer as he feeds the pigeons. "Look at that little fella. He took it right out of the other-un's mouth," Homer says admiringly.

Then there's the "ex-feminist" of "It's a Man's World." Joan, a divorcee going through menopause, gives advice to a young mother in the park with her kids. Joan regrets spending so much of her energy confusing equality with similarity. "The question I forgot to ask myself is: 'Equal to what?'" In her quest to be equal to men, she had turned herself into one.



John Monteleone



John Monteleone in 'Stargazer'

Some characters are more abstract. In "Hell on Wheels," for instance, there is little coherence to the monologue as a Vietnam veteran speeds around the park in his wheelchair, emitting his own "vroom-vroom" sound effects.

"Stargazer" shamelessly attempts to make us ashamed of our prejudices. "I forgive your fear, I forgive your indifference, I forgive your hate," says the homeless man in a black garbage bag. "I forgive you so I can have some peace." And in "Suffer the Little Children," a lollipop-sucking juvenile crawls around, going "pow-pow" with a toy gun. "I don't have a real gun — yet," he says a little too pointedly.

Monteleone demonstrates a convincing range in evoking 11 distinct characters with the help of costume changes and props. His weakest performance is his portrayal of the lone woman in the cast. The ex-feminist is too shrill here. Better to play Joan as a man, since that is what she has become.

While this provocative gallery of solo characters might benefit from a bit of editing and the elimination of at least one monologue, "Perfectly Normill People" is a bravura dual performance. Both as a writer and as an actor, Monteleone's best work here reminds me of a gentler, though not kinder, Eric Bogosian. ■

# The New York Times

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 4, 1988

## Actors Workshop Stresses Flexibility

By CONNIE SICA

IT'S called a black box stage. In the world of the theater, that loosely translates into a flexible seating and stage arrangement, used to create a particular environment for the audience. This can be an arena or a center, thrust or proscenium stage.

The flexibility and agility delights many theatrical groups, especially those involved in innovative and experimental presentations. It is the perfect instrument for the cast of "Farmland," a new contemporary play produced by the Actors Workshop of Long Island at Dowling College in Oakdale.

"The world intimidates; I try to build," said John Monteleone, artistic director and founder of the Actors Workshop and dramatic arts instructor at the college. "Nobody is allowed to say I can," he said about his stu-

dents, "they can only say I am discovering how."

The concept of the Actors Workshop of Long Island originated four years ago in a small studio in Bayshore as a "means of employment." Today, it enjoys the privileges and facilities of Dowling College, and is operated through the college. "Our production can be multimedia events, incorporating music, dance and fine arts because of the center," Mr. Monteleone said.

"You can play through a straight story line, but I want my audiences to think," said the artistic director, who is also the author of the current production. In the play, farmland is a metaphor for purity. Real-estate foreclosures in the farming community serve as a larger metaphor for the system's bureaucratic invasion into an individual's personal dignity. "A farmer once said, 'The white man took land from the Indians. Now, the politicians are taking the land from the farmers,'" the playwright said.

Through the intricacies of family relations, the play, through absurd moments of farce and tragedy, examines the triumph of human survival despite crushing events in people's lives. For some people, death is a welcome relief; for others, an illusionary crutch of wealth and fame offers a reprieve from despair.

"As the family unit dissolves, the children pursue the American Dream," said the playwright, explaining how a farmer's son dons a hard hat to construct brick buildings in the fields where he once "jackhammered corn."

Using the black-box concept, sound

effects, emanating from the catwalk above the audience; and slide projections highlight and extend the action and imagery on stage. Environmental scenes, from Long Island's landscapes and seashores to contractors' bulldozers, flash before the audience.

"It's always easier to give an act, a little line, than build," said Gary Valentine of Stony Brook, who portrays the play's character of Sammy. Although a member of the Actors Workshop for only eight months, his background as a standup comic qualifies him as a seasoned performer.

Another acting veteran, Diane Harrington, strongly identifies with her role. "I fully understand the frustrated actress in Sue Ann," said the Kings Park resident, who has returned to acting after a hiatus of six years.

Mark Ingrassia of Smithtown is on the other end of the spectrum; this is his first acting exposure. "I try to get the underlying feeling of Joe's surrounding," he said softly, staying within his understated stage personality.

The basis of John Monteleone's philosophy is that the center of improvisation is the moment-to-moment experience and that this transformation is a vital, pivotal process for the workshop's participants. "It's the opening; the craft of how the actors and the actresses work themselves and work by themselves that is paramount because the actors of a play are interpreted by them," said the artistic director.

During his acting career, the artistic director took part in 40 productions and he is the author of eight plays. His formal education includes a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the New

York University Theater School of Arts graduate program and he expects to get an master's degree in educational theater from Adelphi University next year.

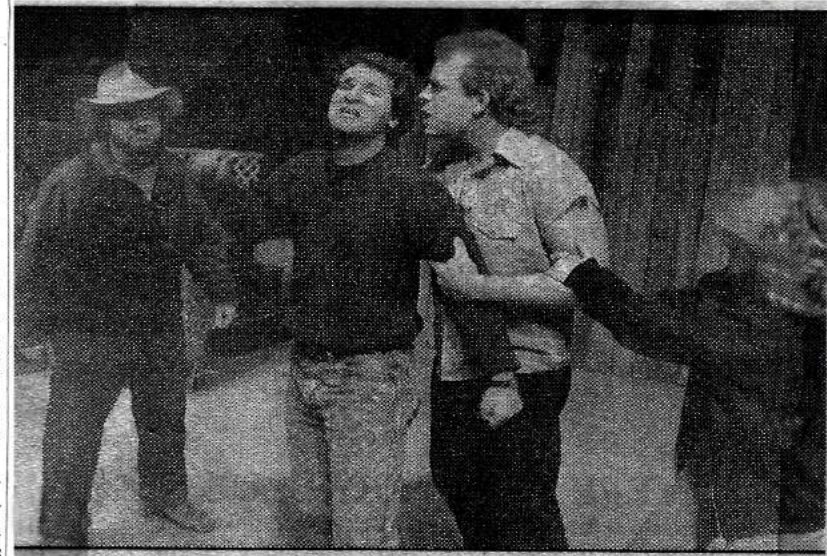
His first acting experience, however, did not occur on the stage. "At about the age of 3," he said, smiling, "my mother dressed me in an Italian folk costume: black hat, shirt with ornaments and black pants. She put me on the seat of a chair to dance and sing 'Papino the Italian Mouse.'" It was a form of play between a mother and child, he said, and it was a natural expression for his mother; she studied opera for 13 years.

Today, John Monteleone's creativity of acting, writing and directing is channeled into Actors Workshop,

which is divided into segments. The beginners' work serves as an orientation to opening up to the experiences of observation and imagination, and the second stage, the intermediate, is learning the expressive moment and to go with one's feelings.

In the final analysis, the director concluded, acting is the personal instrument of the artist, adding that he always tells his students, "It's O.K. to be expressive. You're important. You're important to yourself. You're the miracle."

(The play opened Friday at the college's Performing Arts Center. There will be performances at 8 P.M. this Friday and Saturday and Dec. 16 and 17. Tickets are \$7. Call 737-6911 for reservations.)



The New York Times/Michael She

Cast members rehearsing a scene from "Farmland" at the Actors Workshop of Long Island at Dowling College.

Farmland is a metaphor for purity.

# Southampton Press

**John Monteleone**

FEBRUARY 18, 1993

By Renee Schilhab Gordon

Leaning forward in a chair in his living room in Sag Harbor, John Monteleone is talking a mile a minute, gesturing, making faces and stabbing the air with his finger.

Mr. Monteleone is a man who has a lot to say, and he says it in machine-gun style. The 36-year-old actor, playwright and screenwriter who moved here from Centereach last month because he liked the area's scenic beauty and less frantic pace, spoke in an interview last week about the acting classes he plans to give here, his desire to get involved in the local arts community, and the ideas he tries to convey in his writing.

An artist-in-residence and adjunct professor at Dowling College in Oakdale, where he teaches acting and produces and directs plays, Mr. Monteleone says that the truths he has learned throughout his life are a focus of his plays.

High on the list of those truths is the belief that society loses a sense of community, caring and identity when individuals shed their roots or backgrounds and become more alike. Another idea is that some of society's ills, such as poverty, homelessness and crime, could be solved if people were more aware of others and the nature of other people's problems.

Asked where he gets his ideas, Mr. Monteleone lets loose with a boisterous laugh. "I don't know," he said, taking an uncharacteristic pause to think about it, "I guess I write to get things off my chest."

An imposing presence at six-foot-one, Mr. Monteleone sports a beard, wire-rimmed glasses and wavy black hair that falls to his shoulders. Without really resembling either one, he calls to mind Richard Lewis, the comedian and actor, and actor Al Pacino, whom he admires but resists comparisons to.

Since 1985, Mr. Monteleone has been teaching acting at Dowling College. As the

## Mr. Monteleone is now gearing up to offer acting classes on the South Fork.

college's artist-in-residence, he produces and directs his own plays as well as classic and contemporary works, sometimes performing in them. His job at Dowling seems similar in some respects to playwright and director Jon Fraser's post at the Southampton Campus of LIU.

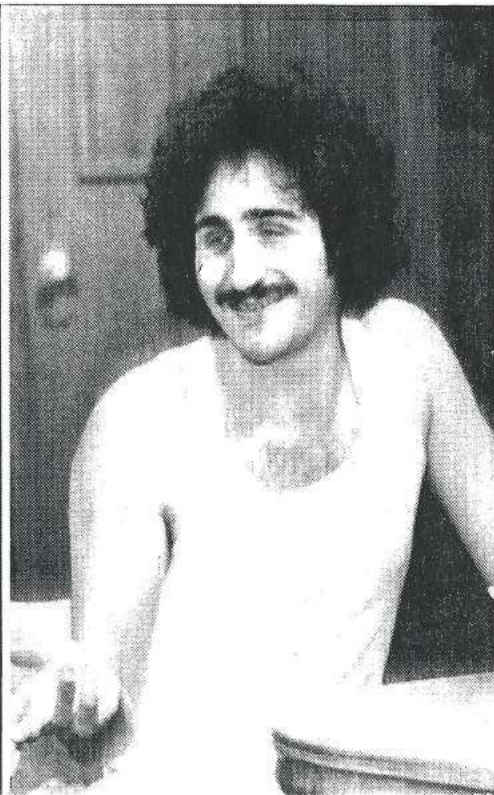
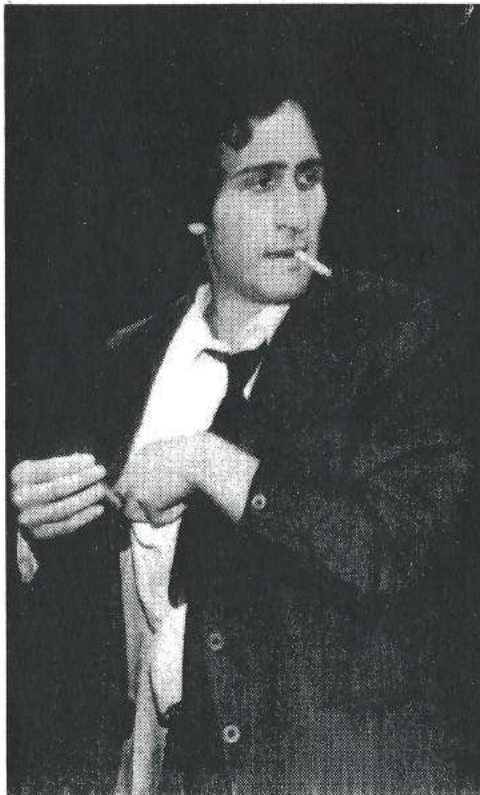
In addition to having appeared in more than 40 productions, in venues ranging from off-Broadway to schools, he has written a screenplay, "The Garden," about a man and a woman who learn to appreciate themselves, others and nature, and authored 14 plays—of which a half-dozen have been staged, including "The Box," "Homesick," and "Charade."

His stage adaptation of "The Diary of a Madman," based on Nikolai Gogol's classic short story and produced at the college, earned rave reviews from *The New York Times*. In what was called a "powerful" solo performance, Mr. Monteleone played a civil servant who struggles to preserve his dignity as he descends into madness. The actor later staged and videotaped the play at The Theatre Row Theatre in Manhattan and is now trying to sell the tape.

"Mr. Monteleone meets the almost impossible task of portraying a demented man who is sinking into the quagmire of hopeless melancholia by finding out elements of humor that fit like pegs between layers of tragedy. There is no time when Mr. Monteleone steps across the boundary between performance integrity and excess," Leah D. Frank wrote in *The Times*.

Mr. Monteleone, who has taught private acting classes before, is now gearing up to offer acting classes on the South Fork. But that isn't all he wants to accomplish here. He also wants to act, produce his plays at local venues, collaborate with local artists, and produce films. Especially captivated by the thought of the famous artists who currently have homes or once resided here, he mentioned the late novelist John Steinbeck at the top of a list that could include such other notables as the novelist Peter Matthiessen and the playwrights Edward Albee and Joe Pintauro.

Currently, there are acting classes taught by Mindy Washington at the Southampton Village Cultural and Civic Center for those who want to study the craft. The only other place for acting lessons accessible for East End thespians is at the Gateway Theater in Bellport.



A few of the many faces of actor and playwright John Monteleone: clockwise from upper left, in "Design for Murder," "December in New York," "The General and the Jew," "The Zoo Story" and "The Diary of a Madman." Mr. Monteleone, who recently moved to Sag Harbor, currently teaches drama and mounts productions at Dowling College in Oakdale.

"I really want to work out here," he said. "I can't stress enough that I'd like to get involved in the artistic community."

### Friend's Death Led to First Role

Mr. Monteleone was born in North Babylon, the only child of an Italian-born mother who sang opera at Carnegie Hall and a second-generation Italian father whose eclectic work history included stints as a paint store owner, barber and shoe salesman.

During the 11th grade, Mr. Monteleone's depression over the death of a close friend who accidentally drowned propelled him himself by trying out for a school production of the 1920s musical "Good News." He won the role of the Irishman "Pooch Kearney" and his spirited performance earned raves from his teachers and friends.

"I discovered I had talent. A feeling told me I was attracted to acting," he said.

Armed with a theatre scholarship after graduation, he entered the drama program at Dowling College, where his mentor was Ned Bobkoff, who worked in the 1960s at the experimental La Mama theatre in New York City. For his performance at the school as Yank Smith in Eugene O'Neill's "The Hairy Ape," he won the semi-regional finals in the American College Theatre Festival. Yet despite such early successes, he grew frustrated with the limited scope of Dowling's drama program. After two years, he left to study at the Tisch School of the Arts in Manhattan.

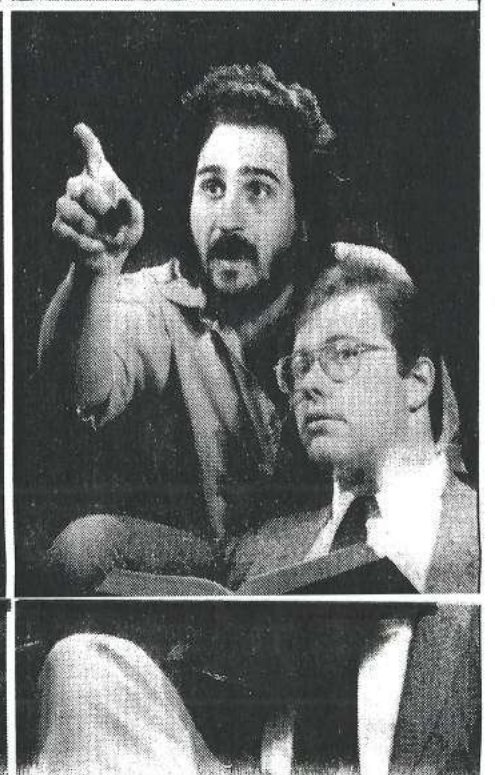
At Tisch, his interest in drama flourished. In an intensive program he likened to "boot camp," he studied acting, singing, dancing, voice and movement and performed in plays including "The Dragon," "Geography of a Horse Dreamer," and "Monkey." His teachers included such notable talents as Joseph Chaiken, founder of the Open Theatre in Manhattan in the 1960s, the director Robert MacBeth, and acting instructor Peter Kass.

After his graduation from Tisch with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree, Mr. Monteleone worked in the theatre in New York City, primarily in off-off-Broadway plays including "The Butler Did It." In classic actors' fashion, he earned a living by waiting tables, answering telephones, pumping gas, and running an elevator at NYU.

But by 1983, increasingly dissatisfied with the "dumb Italian street type" roles he was getting, and concerned about his mother who was ill on Long Island, he packed up and moved to Farmingdale, where he started his own acting school. He also began in earnest to write plays with meatier roles for himself.

### Themes of Transformation, Growth

Inspired by playwrights such as Sam Shepard and Samuel Beckett, by his own observations, and even by news reports on television, Mr. Monteleone writes about forgiveness, alienation, the disintegration of the family and transforming oneself through increased awareness. Some of his plays have farcical elements, and all are laced with symbolism, comedy and tragedy.

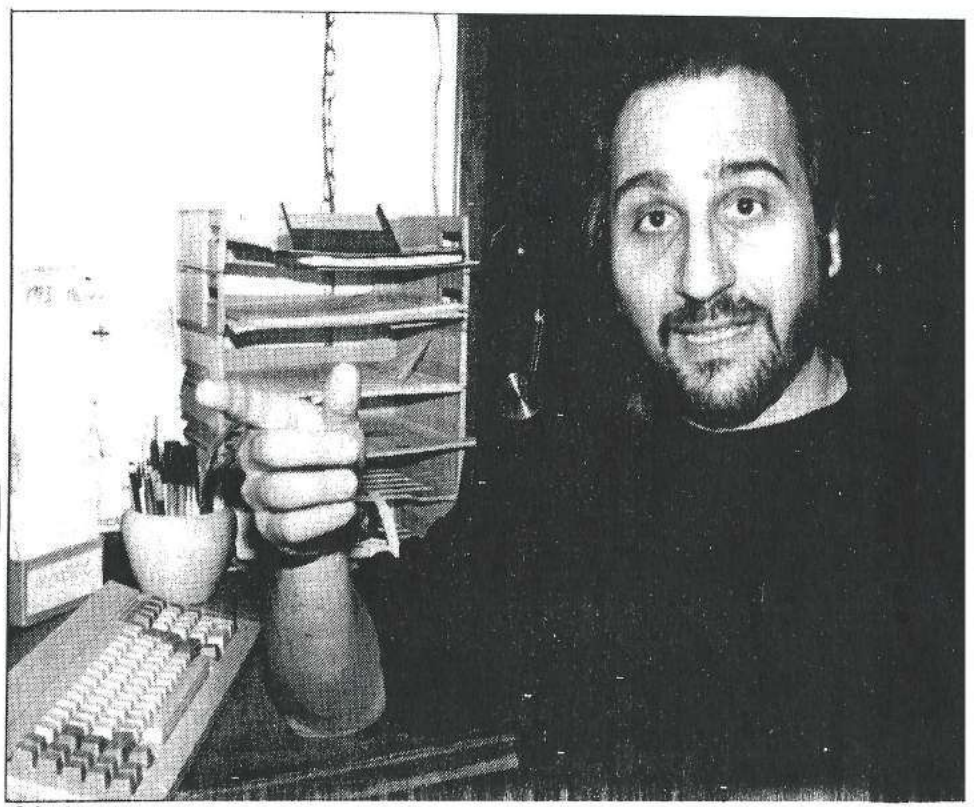


His contemporary comedy "Farmland," about real estate foreclosures in the farming community, is a metaphor, he says, for purity and how bureaucracy can cause a person to lose dignity. "Home," an absurdist one-act play, explores the modern family in the context of an increasingly frightening world.

One of the actor's own realizations greatly influenced his work. Raised to view himself as an Italian-American with strong ties to the Catholic church, he later discovered he could reject such values and adopt a set of his own. This discovery prompted him to write "Homesick," a one-act play about a dysfunctional family (not his own, he says) and a young man who seeks his identity.

Writing nearly every day in the home where he and his wife Carol have a sweeping view of Sag Harbor Cove, Mr. Monteleone also spends a lot of time on the phone, getting information about local theatre companies, offering to do readings of his plays at local establishments, and inquiring about the Bay Street Theatre in Sag Harbor, where he said he would love to work.

"It seems like there's definitely something going on in theatre here," he said. "It's not middle-of-the-road Long Island looking for musicals, mysteries and farce. People are sophisticated, and there's real potential for interesting theatre."



John Monteleone makes a point during an interview at his Sag Harbor home.

—RSG Photo

# The New York Times

## 'General and the Jew,' Part Folk Tale,

By ALVIN KLEIN

**T**AKING chances is one of the things a living theater has to be about and nothing is chancier than putting on a new play, and a serious one at that. Arena Players is presenting (through Nov. 25) "The General and the Jew," by Arthur Schwartz — a first dramatic effort by a Plainview playwright whose previous credits have been in comedy; both as a writer and as a performer.

Mr. Schwartz's play is part didacticism, part folk tale, part melodrama — a curious misalliance. It is set in Czarist Russia, in 1910, when the oppressed Jewish people hoped for a new life in America. The production is inspired by the stories that Mr. Schwartz was told about his ancestors. He has called it a "heritage play."

When the playwright tunes into homespun language, the characters become people — warm and alive. But a true ear has not been transmitted into a distinctive voice.

"The General and the Jew" is essentially a work of moral concerns and issues — it is about individual versus collective responsibility and conflicting priorities — here the play buckles under the weight of pompous platitude-dramatizing. For a fillip, there are melodramatic flourishes to generate a little excitement and to wrap up the plot.

Mayer Schindel, a young lieutenant in the Czar's army, returns to his Jewish family from which he was kid-

napped as a child. To the townspeople, he is the returning hero, and heroes are expected to be miracle workers.

Mayer is soon put to the test. When a poor neighbor is arrested and savagely beaten for disobeying an ordinance against peddling in an area restricted to Jews, he negotiates with Captain Ivanov, a Cossack, for the prisoner's freedom and for a few hundred townspeople to leave the country.

For Mayer's part, he agrees to leave himself to no longer threaten the captain's vicious authority.

What, you are asking, gives the good lieutenant bargaining power over the evil captain? Easy. Mayer's mentor,

### THEATER IN REVIEW

benefactor and father figure is a Christian, Gen. Alexis Tarkov — a most influential and handy name to drop.

From here on, in a second act that spans two weeks, Mayer is confronted with more moral conflicts than anyone deserves to face in a lifetime. They are spelled out on cue, usually in the form of heavy-handed maxims.

When it is revealed that Mayer may have to choose to be by the ailing general's side, rather than honor his agreement with the captain, the doctor tells him: "This may very well present you with a moral dilemma!" This may very well be how to program a play, not develop one.

Soon everyone is mixing in, telling

Mayer what he must do. A rabbi beseeches him to get more emigration papers for the rest of the townspeople. His family insists he cannot take responsibility for everyone. Mayer himself argues that "determination is stronger than tyranny" and that the rest of the townspeople must remain and defend their faith.

In the rabbi's resigned response — "Merely do your best, no less," at once advice and command — there is more power and irony than in the whole play. For the rabbi's gentle pacifist philosophy is enormously guilt-inducing. And Mayer's idealism does not preclude a violent streak. There are subtle shadings in these ideological antagonists.

The captain and the lieutenants are opponents of other colors — all red and white; the former is decked out like a Russian devil. Committing clichés ("The big fish eats the little fish") is not the least of his crimes.

Should the lieutenant have bargained for those few hundred papers in the first place? Will the Czar avenge himself on the Jews who remain? Who is responsible for whom? Don't ask.

It gets convoluted and contrived. "The General and the Jew" is a play of loose beginnings and unrealized possibilities. Mayer's childhood abduction is a convenient set-up; his relationship with the general is overly general — suggestive rather than explored. Nothing is made of the intriguing notion that he was raised by a Christian.

Where Mr. Schwartz is at his best, in the family scenes, the production de-

tails serve him sympathetically. There's an inviting and authentic ethnicity here — the straw-strewn floor, the wood-burning stove, a creaky wooden door stuffed with paper to cover the holes. And the performances ring true.

Lillian Richards and Michael J. DiSalvo are very dear as Mayer's old parents. As his fiancée, Pam Pugliese is radiant. John Monteleone is a many-faceted Mayer — almost childish pedulance with the general, all romantic ardor with his fiancée, defiance with the captain, acknowledging his own strengths while he is testing it.

James Davies is bombastic and humorous as the general — the most interesting character. And George Anderson (Captain Ivanov) is better than good at being worse than bad. Where he is allowed some leeway, as when the captain projects his own evils onto the system ("I'm an administrator!" he declares), Mr. Anderson proves that he can establish the character as well as reinforce a stereotype.

Frederic DeFels gets considerable crackle from a final confrontation scene and throughout has directed a problematical play with more attention to its possibilities than its problems. The heavy musical underscoring is, however, a bit much.

In this staging, "The General and the Jew" has been dealt a loving hand. But this is an unsatisfying work. The playwright's weaknesses are all the more glaring because he has not trusted his own simple strengths.



## review / 'General and the Jew'

By Leo Seligson

"The General and the Jew," which had its premiere last night at the Arena Players Theater in East Farmingdale, is set in "Fiddler on the Roof" country, a 1910 *shtetl* (small village) in Czarist Russia where Jews live in constant fear of pogroms and continual hope of emigration to America. There the similarity ends. "Fiddler" was a musical. "The General and the Jew" is a libretto. With its epic portrayal of good and evil, magical overtones and background interludes of Russian and Jewish music, the evening is soon awash in melodramatic posturing worthy of an opera.

The plot has a storybook simplicity. Mayer Schindel, a Jew in his 20s, has returned to his family after spending most of his life in the Czar's Army, which conscripted him as a child. His close freindship with a Russian general comes in handy when a malicious cossack, newly appointed to head the police in the area, throws young Vulf Brodsky, one of the townspeople, into jail for disobeying a minor, long-unenforced ordinance barring Jews from peddling at the fair in Minsk. Enlisting the clout of his friend, the general, Schindel gets the man freed and also gets hold of 250 black-market emigration papers that will enable his townspeople to leave for America. He is a hero. But Ivan Ivanov, the villainous cossack, is furious and vows vengeance upon courageous Mayer Schindel, once his protector, the old, terminally ill general, dies.

If this sounds like pretty heavy going, it is. But it is to playwright Arthur Schwartz' credit that he displays an ear for dialogue and an eye for the dramatic which breathes life into his otherwise bigger-than-life, cardboard charac-

ters. Some of the lines which caught my fancy: Schindel's mother, mocking some of his inflated plans, says: "Listen to him. From the air he makes knishes." Or in the realm of epithets, which abound: Schindel says: No tyranny is stronger than determination; no coercion is stronger than will. Ivanov, always constumed in some shade of devil red, wastes few words. "A law is a law," he says.

The play's biggest trouble is that its most interesting aspect gets short shrift. That is the relationship between the old general, Alexis Tarkov, who is a Christian, and Schindel, who has served him as an adjutant. It is made clear that that a strong father-son relationship developed but why and how is a mystery. The general's own family, if he has one, is never explained and the general emerges merely as a handy plot device. However, he is potentially one of the play's most interesting characters. As it is, Schwartz, has partially developed him into a three-dimensional character who offers the evening's only comic relief. He needles his doctor, saying he carries the smell of death with him; and, as a man who prides himself as having always done things on schedule, he is offended by talk that he may live longer than expected.

But, like Schindel; the rabbi, Reb Zofsky, and a few other characters, the general often goes on talking long after he has anything to say. Under the direction of Frederic DeFeis, the play attains tension and excitement in its later scenes. The cast is uniformly good. Leathery old James Daviies is well cast as the general, despite a faint shakiness with his lines last night. His booming bass projects conviviality as well as command. John Monteleone is an engaging Mayer Schindel and George Anderson a hiss-worthy Ivanov. "The General and the Jew" runs through Nov. 25. /■

# THE EAST HAMPTON INDEPENDENT

Vol. I No. L

August 17, 1994

50 Cents

## Frankie And Johnny Connect

By Bridget LeRoy

Well, I'll admit it. Although scenes from Terrence McNally's *Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune* must be as rife within the casting room or monologue classes of New York as "What I Did For Love" was on the cabaret scene in the late '70s, I have never seen any of it. When the movie *Frankie and Johnny* came out, with Al Pacino and Michelle Pfeiffer, I passed that up as well. I knew that *F & J*, in the grand tradition of works from *Romeo and Juliet* through *Marty*, was the tale of two lonely misfits, a short-order cook and a waitress who buck the odds and start a romance. If Pfeiffer is a misfit, then what am I? Sure, they could glue another cold sore on her mouth (like they did in *The Witches of Eastwick*) but let's

guard by Johnny's confession of love and refusal to leave. Amazing coincidences appear in their pasts as the walls break down. And the question — in ways both amusing and heartbreaking — keeps resurfacing: Can Frankie and Johnny find true love (or at least complacency) before the night is through?

### Perfectly Set

The play was staged in the Renee Fotouhi Gallery on Newtown Lane, a place perhaps not usually thought of as conducive to live theater. But this play, which takes place in Frankie's cramped New York apartment, is perfectly set in the small space by director Maria Pessino, who uses every corner and niche. It gives the audience a feeling (not unpleasant) of being in the same room with the actors rather than



Johnny pontificates, Frankie acts disinterested.

Clara-Christine Newman Photo



James J. Mackin Photo

John Monteleone and Andrea Gross connecting in *Frankie and Johnny*.

get real here.

And reality is what *F & J* is all about. It's about real people with real emotions, trying to make lasting connections and a difference in someone else's life. It's about desperation, hope, anger, humor, sorrow, love. The entire play, which begins with a noisy orgasm in the dark, takes place during the post-coital hours of Frankie and Johnny's first date. Putting up her defenses immediately ("Do you want a sandwich before you go?"), Frankie is thrown off

removed by a huge proscenium and dangling velvet curtains. This closeness makes them all the more real to us — we see the whites of their eyes, their fillings, their perspiration.

The actors were made for these roles.

It was an inspired piece of casting. John Monteleone plays Johnny with such vigor and energy that he could easily overwhelm the audience and make them feel uncomfortable, but he doesn't. What a difficult fine line to tread — to play an enthusiastic, slightly

crazy, Shakespeare-quoting hashslinger who refuses to leave a girl's apartment after having sex — but to play it without expressing a sense of evil. Never once does the audience feel that Frankie is in physical danger — he's nuts, but he's harmless.

Andrea Gross plays wisecracking, overweight Frankie — who can't wait for her lover to get dressed and get out — with a glimmer of hope beneath the surface at all times; it shines through her eyes, it shines through her face. Her cathartic moment is heartbreakingly

real, the penultimate confessions of a woman whose mother abandoned her in a world where angels of mercy are beaten up by their husbands, lifelong marriages mean an end to conversation, and the moon can turn you into a wolf.

The story is a classic, and the production meritorious. To experience good, live theater in an "alternative space," see *Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune*. Performances run from tomorrow through Sunday. Call 324-5797, between 3 and 6 p.m. for tickets.

# The Southampton Press

SOUTHAMPTON, LONG ISLAND, N.Y. / THURSDAY, AUGUST 18, 1994 / 75 CENTS

—Clara Christine Newman Photo

## 'Frankie and Johnny'

### McNally Play at a Gallery Pointed, Touching Delight

By Lee Davis

"Frankie and Johnny in the Claire de Lune," Terrence McNally's thoughtful 1987 work about human loneliness and its partial cure—currently being given a delightful production by the Oddfellows team of Maria Pessino and Jacqui Leader at the Renee Fotouhi Fine Arts Gallery in East Hampton—was conceived as a kind of "Marty" for our time.

Thoroughly distorted and largely trivialized in its film form by the presence of two superstars (Michelle Pfeiffer and Al Pacino) and a bundle of rewritten dialogue, it possessed, in its original, theatrical shape, the sweet-hearted gropings of two of life's ordinary people needing love, needing acceptance, needing loneliness. The fear of being alone in conflict with the fear of belonging run like leitmotifs through the building and the destruction of human relationships, and this is what makes both "Marty" and "Frankie and Johnny" so personally recognizable, and so enduringly true.

Marty made his conquest in a dance hall. For the Eighties, Terrence McNally moved the campaign into a bedroom. The butcher and school-teacher of the Fifties have become a cook and a waitress in the Nineties. In "Marty," there was a series of verbal gropings while dancing; in "Frankie and Johnny," it's a collection of pre and post-coital conversations. Left to someone with less genius than McNally, (or Paddy Chayevsky, for that matter), the concept is a perilous pit, waiting for a fall.

But nothing like that even remotely happens. The play shines, levitates, whirls on words that refuse to stay earthbound, despite their subject matter. The clever deception of the master playwright of turning what seems to be everyday speech into split-second revelations that raise little fountains of recognition and appreciation in its audience is rampant in this play, as it is in the rest of his work. But this one is beautiful for its economy, its reality, its pointedness. The play proceeds in a

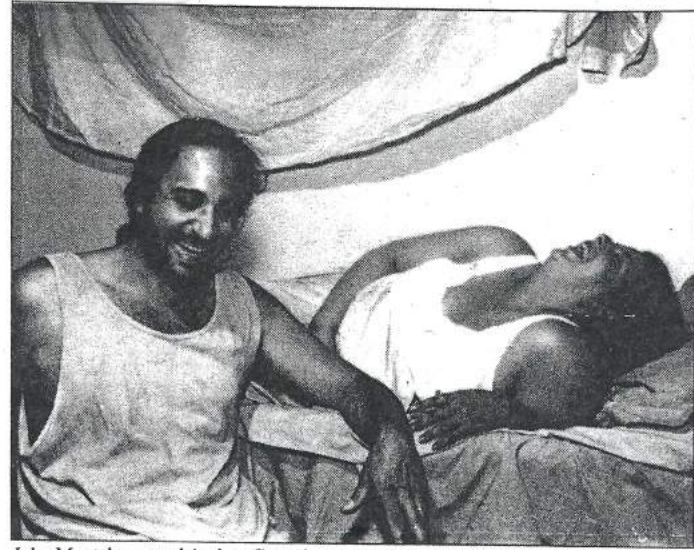
direct line from apprehension to revelation—the classic context of classic drama—but it's done with such airy ease and with such an abundance of humor and humanity, it seems scarcely to touch the ground.

Of course, this demands the same sort of nonchalant brilliance in direction and performance, and Mr. McNally's little masterpiece is in good and loving hands in East Hampton. Maria Pessino has directed with a sure and energetic hand, moving her two actors around the spare suggestion of a claustrophobic New York apartment, placing them almost literally into the laps of a small audience on folding chairs. But more than this. Her fine eye for detail, highspeed pacing, and ability to knit an ensemble serves the play, the actors, and the audience well. Realizing the intimacy of both space and subject matter, she's directed in that spirit, and the result is as comfortable as a gathering of friends.

Which isn't to minimize the performances of Andrea Gross and John Monteleone. They play blithely in sweet proximity, and the evolution of their relationship is a joy to experience. As Frankie, Andrea Gross balances a clever wall of clever words, a defense mechanism of glibness, with a well of need, changing the balance, withdrawing it, finally offering it with tender effectiveness. She seems to grow both in stature and beauty as the play and her reality unfold.

John Monteleone's Johnny is a finely shaded drawing of a compulsive, sweet, caring and agonizingly uncertain human—in other words, lots of us in our worst and best moments. In the words of Oscar Hammerstein, he's a man who stumbles, but a man who cares, and Mr. Monteleone conveys him with a refreshing complex of blind energy and forgiving gentleness.

"Frankie and Johnnie in the Claire de Lune" is a touching delight, which concludes this weekend at the Renee Fotouhi gallery on Newtown Lane in East Hampton. The box office number is 324-5797.



John Monteleone and Andrea Gross in a scene from "Frankie and Johnny" at the Claire de Lune" by Terrence McNally at the Renee Fotouhi Gallery.

—Clara Christine Newman Photo





## Opinion

# Apple Pie In Hell's Kitchen

"Expecting your arrival tomorrow, I find myself thinking *I love you*: then comes the thought — *I should like to write a poem which would express exactly what I mean when I think these words.*"

— W. H. Auden

It's hard to imagine a sweeter, funnier, more all-American play than "Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune." It's right up there with Mom's apple pie — that is, if Mom's cooking ever handed you a laugh.

*Maria Pessino's production of Terrence McNally's "Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune" is one of the most moving evenings of theater this reviewer has ever had the joy of attending. Don't miss it! It is a pure delight.*

But it's also a deep-dish creation, and Mr. McNally has something profound to say. It deals, like Auden's work, with the heroic struggle of ordinary people to say "I love you," and somehow express exactly-what-they-mean.

### Extraordinary

Forget the movie. We knew Michelle Pfeiffer never slung hash in her life, despite her much-publicized lack of makeup. And Al Pacino, great actor though he is, hardly came across as a short-order cook.

Kathy Bates and F. Murray Abraham must have seemed like real people when the play first opened at City Center in New York in 1987, but this is today, and now we have Andrea Gross and John Monteleone, directed by Maria Pessino, who do an absolutely extraordinary job.

The play is set in Frankie's one-room walk-up near Hell's Kitchen, its only furniture a TV set, a fridge/stove unit, a stool, and an unmade bed.

At curtain's rise the stage is dark. We hear the sounds of a man and a woman making noisy, graphic love,

### PATSY SOUTHGATE

Most lovers are content to mutter sweet nothings and get on with their day, but Mr. McNally's characters have been knocked around. They back off, rephrase, deepen, clarify. This is their last chance at connecting, and for once, they've got to get it right.

Like Auden's famous unwritten poem in prose, "Dichtung und Wahrheit," 50 paragraphs on *I love you*, 50 stabs at saying exactly-what-you-mean, "Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune" is a dramatization of the formidable effort required to create intimacy — the "labor of love" love really is.



"FRANKIE AND JOHNNY in the Clair de Lune," starring Andrea Gross and John Monteleone, will have four more performances at Renee Fotouh Fine Art East.  
Clara Christine Newsum

### Play It Again

An all-night disk jockey plays Debussy's "Clair de Lune," which Frankie thinks is the most beautiful music she's ever heard. Johnny calls in to ask him to play it again, for Frankie and Johnny, but the announcer says he never takes requests.

As dawn breaks, however, Frankie and Johnny sit side by side on the bed peacefully brushing their teeth while the disk jockey, miraculously, plays "Clair de Lune" again, for them. They've been saying "I love you" all night, in a million different ways, and finally, it has come to be exactly what they mean.

Ms. Pessino's production, presented by Oddfellows Playhouse and Jacqui Leader at the Renee Fotouh gallery, is one of the most moving evenings of theater this reviewer has ever had the joy of attending.

John Monteleone, an experienced actor, is wonderful as Johnny. But the real discovery is the stunning dramatic power of Andrea Gross, whose every gesture, every glance, glows with feeling and intelligence. It's hard to take our eyes off her. She is a revelation.

"Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune" will play again this weekend. Don't miss it! It is a pure delight.

followed by Bach's "Goldberg Variations" on the radio. The lights come up.

### High-Risk Stuff

Frankie (Ms. Gross) works as waitress in the same joint where Johnny (Mr. Monteleone) cook. They've noticed each other, gone out on a date, and she's asked him to come up. Now she wishes he'd leave. She feels like eating ice cream and watching TV, her usual routine: home alone, but Johnny's not about to go.

So they embark on the funny, safe, brave task of getting to know each other, and we go along for the ride.

They lie about their ages and squabble about everything from a meatloaf sandwich to the Beatles, asserting their human importance, insisting on their own truths. They drag their pasts out into the open — high-risk stuff: she can't have children, he's done time.

They endure tough confrontations and soar in leaps of faith. They are not used to tenderness, and for them, it's a terrifying challenge.

## On the Town

# 'The Butler Did It,' and does it well

By CLIVE BARNES

**THE BUTLER** *Did It*, a new comedy thriller by Walter Marks and Peter Marks, has an almost entire cast of Butlers and seems to be on its marks. The marksmanship and the butlers started last night at the Players Theater.

Comedy thrillers are clearly difficult to write, because although popular few examples have emerged. But they are also a species of theater very difficult to write about. This is because it is clearly unfair to offer anything but the skimpiest details of the play itself.

It is curious that the actual thriller-thriller is nowadays an almost defunct theatrical form. It was preempted first by the movies and later by TV. Those two highly realistic narrative arts are able to achieve levels of tension and suspense that is virtually outside the scope of the theater.

However, the comedy thriller, which is an urbane, often campy, comment on the original format, remains acceptable.

It specializes in dextrous changes of plot, intentionally ridiculous shocks, intended to amuse and surprise but scarcely frighten.

In recent years the two most successful comedy thrillers have been Anthony Shaffer's *Sleuth* and, still running on Broadway, Ira Levin's *Deathtrap*. In the first, one of the protagonists was a detective story writer, and in the second the hero is a playwright who wrights and wrenches comedy thrillers.

In *The Butler Did It* — a classic title, by the way — the Marks have made the central character a stage director. He is staging the play — and the characters are called Raymond Butler, Angela Butler, and Victoria Butler. Oh yes, then there is also Aldo. He is the Butler's butler.

The director — in the play, not, if you gather the complexity, of the play — is called Anthony J. Lefcourt, and Lefcourt comes out of left field. He plays games. And he tries to surprise his cast into taking the thriller he is directing,

that play within the play, as a matter of life or death. He is kidding, of course. Or is he? Certainly Detective Mumford — yes, there is a detective, but scarcely a Kojak — is clumsily uncertain. A Butler did it — or did he or she? — and which Butler?

These jokes on the plays of innocence (remember *Dial M For Murder*, or even better *Rope*?) depend on the style of the writing, the swiftness of the direction, and the deftness of the performers. And sometimes the daftness of the audience.

*The Butler Did It* is lightheaded, lighthearted and funny. The plotting is ingenious, and Doug Rogers (he is the real director, not his theatricalized alter-ego) has staged it at a rare old pace.

The acting is never less than adequate, and often good. Alan Mixon cuts a crazily grandeloquent figure as the director, John Monteleone has a promising look of puzzlement as Aldo, while the two women, Gerriane Raphael and Patricia Kalem-



John Hallow, John Monteleone and Alan Mixon are in "The Butler Did It," a comedy/mystery opening Wednesday at the Players Theater.

ber are delightful, and the young Miss Kalember in her New York debut, happens to look gorgeous. (This kind of play brings out sexist remarks, be-

cause they, like the play, are so old-fashioned.)

This is not high art. But then neither is it low comedy — simply a diversion of fun and mayhem.



Alan Mixon plays the director and Patricia Kalember the ingenue in "The Butler Did It," at the Players Theater.

# Daffy 'Butler' delights

By Peter Wynne

Drama Critic

Q. "The Butler Did It" is (choose one): 1. A whodunit; 2. A thriller; 3. A parody of whodunits and thrillers; 4. All of these.

A. Yes.

This daffy entertainment, which opened at the off-Broadway Players Theatre last night, is at least everything mentioned above and boasts a plot with so many twists that one is put in mind of the politician said to be so crooked he has to screw his socks on in the morning.

The script is the work of composer and lyricist Walter Marks ("Bajour" and "Golden Rainbow") and his brother, novelist Peter Marks ("Collector's Choice" and "Hang-Ups"). And if at times their humor is more blunt instrument than stiletto, it doesn't much matter. The show offers two hours of good, clean fun, and if you miss the New York production, don't worry too much. This one, I suspect, will be turning up at summer stock and community theaters till after the millennium.

## Play within a play

Not that you should avoid the show's current incarnation. A revival may not have so fine a cast as that assembled for the world premiere by director Doug Rogers.

It's hard to explain exactly why the performances are as good as they are without revealing many of the show's surprises. Let's just say that "The Butler Did It" features a play within a play and that most of the actors have two roles — one set of characters performed abysmally on purpose and another set played rather well.

In addition to being a parody of whodunits and thrillers, the play is also a comedy about show business — theories of acting, rehearsal practices, drumming up publicity, infighting among performers, things like that. Little of it is new in itself, but the material is used in unexpected ways.

Alan Mixon is a proper blend of oil and ice water as the desperate and despotic Anthony J. Lefcourt, and Gerriane Raphael is his match as the unscrupulous Angela. These two are the stars, but they are ably supported by Gordon Connell as the absent-minded Raymond; John Monteleone as the youthfully lecherous Aldo; Patricia Kalember as Victoria, an ambitious debutante; and John Hallow as the uncanny Detective Mumford.

The single setting by Akira Yashimura evokes a tacky Art Deco living room, the sort you'd expect in some Twenties thriller. Gregg Marriner's lighting provides the needed atmosphere while poking fun at the use of lighting in such plays through extra boldness. A similar sensibility prevails in Merrill Cleghorne's intentionally clichéd costumes.

# New York dramas, Long Island theater

by Anthony J. Howard

The performers are all experienced, Broadway-quality actors, the scripts were written by award-winning playwrights whose works have played to New York audiences and critics.

Now they're going to find out what Long Island audiences think, during the second annual Professional New Play Readings Festival at Dowling College.

Organized by Dowling drama professor John Monteleone, the five-night festival features the work of four professional playwrights and one student author. All in various stages of development, the plays will be read by professional actors in seated and staged readings at the college's Performing Arts Center.

One of the final steps before production, the readings are an integral element in the play's creative development. Often, it is the first time a playwright hears the words they've written spoken aloud in a theatrical setting.

According to Monteleone, the informal venue provides playwrights with a pressure free environment to gauge audience reaction. Then they can decide which parts work and what needs rewriting.

"It's all part of the creative process," Monteleone said. "It allows the playwrights to see the play, to hear the play as it's going on, to get a sense of what is going to work, and they can do that in part by seeing the audiences' reactions."

It's not just the immediate reactions writers are looking for. After each reading, the proverbial fourth wall between the stage and audience will be removed. Audience members will then be invited to critique the play, offer suggestions and, in effect, guide its creative direction.

You don't have to be a drama critic to assess each work. All the writers ask for is an honest, thoughtful reaction to the way the play made them think. Different audiences will react in disparate ways, but every one is equally legitimate and welcomed. "Everyone is capable of responding out of their own inner life, because we all have different life experiences and education,"

Monteleone said.

It's that personal, unbiased reaction of ordinary theater-goers that student and playwright Sal DiVincenzo is anxious to hear. "That's what the play reading is all about. I want to hear what the people think of my work," said DiVincenzo, who will have two readings featured on Sunday December 17, at 7 p.m.

"For me, I don't necessarily want to hear the perspective of the critic, I want to know what the audience thinks. Were you entertained? Did it bother you? What was it all about for you?" said the Dowling senior, who expects to graduate this December with a degree in management.



The Workshop playwrights with work in Dowling's Play Reading Festival are, from left in back, Joe Lauinger, Robert Trumbull, Sheila Walsh and John Monteleone. In front is director Ahvi Spindell.

DiVincenzo was bitten by the theater bug after taking an improvisation class taught by Monteleone last year. Though still a business student, the class showed him where his dreams really are. "John was the teacher and he just inspired me to do what I always dreamed about doing," he said. Last May, DiVincenzo produced his first play, "What? If!" for Dowling's student production.

The first DiVincenzo play to be read at the festival will be "Trilogy One," consisting of three separate short acts that deal with the weighty subjects of life, death and sex in a lighter fashion. "It's a very silly, funny play, that's different than what I usually do. I'm really curious to find out what the audience thinks about this one," he said.

His second reading is titled "Fear the Woman," which explores a group of abused Long Island women who begin to devolve into the men who disrespected them.

The festival is the second to be organized by Monteleone, a playwright and actor whose work "The Lamp" will be featured on December 16. Held over five nights in early December, the readings are all free and open to the public at Dowling College's Performing Arts Center in Oakdale. Last year's reading featured the work of novelist Joe Pintaur and television writer Gary Kott, along with Monteleone.

This year's crop includes some lesser-known, but experienced, writers who are members of a New York City cooperative of actors, directors and playwrights known as The Workshop. Located on Theater Row, where many Off-Broadway productions are staged, The Workshop gives members an economical means to stage their work for interested producers and audiences.

The festival opens on Saturday, December 8 with Robert Trumbull's "Question of Mercy," which deals with a son's struggle to fulfill his father's wish to assist his suicide. Then on Sunday, December 9, award-winning playwright Sheila Walsh's "Two Sides of the Story" will explore the relationships between eight very different characters.

After a successful New York premier reading at The Workshop, Joe Lauinger's "Dirty Work" comes to the Dowling Reading Festival on Friday, December 15. Lauinger's play focuses on the struggle to fulfill our life's dreams and aspirations.

The festival concludes with the reading of Monteleone's "The Lamp" and DiVincenzo's two works on December 16 and 17. All readings start at 7 p.m. and are free to the public.

Monteleone is hoping the Workshop and Dowling College can create a synergistic effort that will provide writers with an arena to develop their work. In exchange, drama students and local theater audiences will be given the opportunity to participate in the creative development of the authors' works. And the college can offer this artistic venue for a minimal outlay.

"I can expose Long Island audiences to exciting, innovative work that is being developed in New York, for very little money," Monteleone said.

While Long Island audiences are devoted theater-goers, most Island playhouses offer just the basic fare of commercially popular hits. The works offered at Dowling's Reading Festival are, in Monteleone's words, "more challenging."

"Don't get me wrong, I'm not against commercial theater. Some of its very good. But we're about artistic development and raising questions about culture and humanity in our plays," Monteleone said. ■

The Suffolk County News

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 1993

## T H E A T E R

### REVIEW

# Alienation in Its Sad and Comic Modes

**T**HERE AREN'T many theaters, among Long Island's many, where you might see an absurdist/existential doubleheader of drama, exploring alienation, isolation and a lot of other stuff we all feel but rarely admit to.

Edward Albee's "The Zoo Story" and Samuel Beckett's "Krapp's Last Tape" may sound like pretty rough going. On the surface, yes, both one-act plays are unconventional and depressing.

But they're also very funny.

You may notice, as you're watching, they're a lot like life.

"The Zoo Story" is one of Albee's early works — before "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" made him famous. It's a frightening story, mostly because it is so believable and, in a way, ordinary. Peter is a nebbishy, middle-class family man with a wife, two daughters, two cats and a parakeet, not to mention a home. He's attempting to read a book in Central Park. This is Peter's bench. He comes here often to read. But today, he is approached by a talkative transient named Jerry. If "The Zoo Story" had been written more recently than the '50s, Jerry would be homeless. As it is, he lives in half a room in the back of a fourth-floor walk-up populated by other marginal citizens.

Jerry feigns passivity and pacifism. But we discover as he talks — and talks and talks — with little encouragement from Peter — that he's really quite aggressive. And probably dangerous. Peter, who by nature is reticent to offend anyone, avoids offending Jerry, at first out of politeness, later out of fear. This shift from tedium to tension occurs incrementally and almost imperceptibly until Jerry sets himself up for the shocking result he has sought all along.

Rick Miller, as Peter, is a comic nerd. And Tom McCreesh, while convincing in his controlled derangement, is a little *too* annoying as Jerry. His constant pacing, while very much in character, becomes a distraction.

Maybe there's a way to pace his pacing.

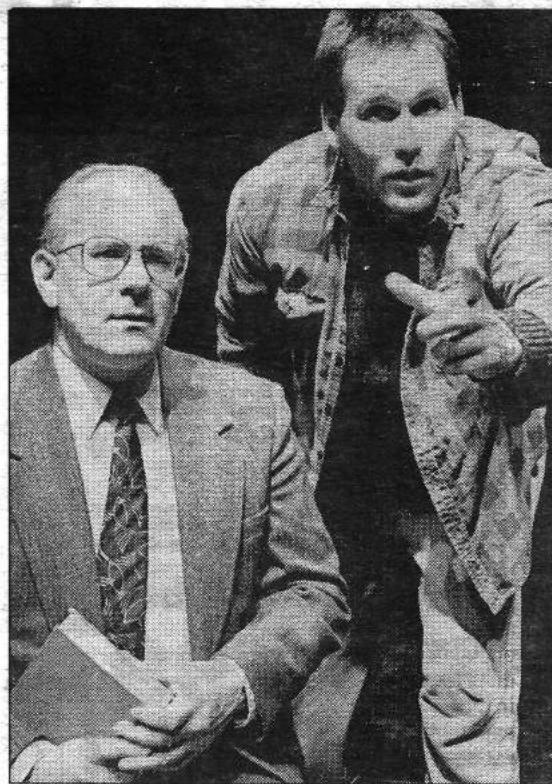
The second one-act, Beckett's "Krapp's Last Tape," is typically minimalist for the author of "Waiting for Godot."

There is no monologue at all for the first several minutes in this one-man play. And little is spoken throughout. Most of the language is delivered by playing back a spool of reel-to-reel tape.

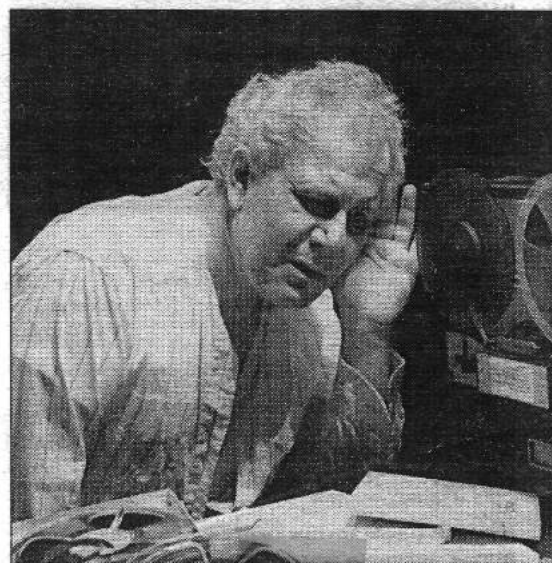
Rick Miller conveys the senility and physical restrictions of a lonely, old man with the poignancy of a sad-face clown. The disorder of the old man's life is reflected both in his comic forgetfulness and in the disorder of the tapes strewn about his desk.

John Monteleone, artist-in-residence at Dowling College, has directed both one-acts with an obvious love and sensitivity for the material.

And besides, the price is right. / ■



Rick Miller and Tom McCreesh in Albee's 'The Zoo Story,' top, and Rick Miller in Beckett's 'Krapp's Last Tape,' below



#### THE ZOO STORY and KRAPP'S LAST TAPE.

A pair of one-act plays by Edward Albee and Samuel Beckett, respectively. Starring Rick Miller and Tom McCreesh. Directed by John Monteleone. At Dowling College's Performing Arts Center, Oakdale. Through Sunday night. Free admission. Seen Jan. 28.

# Contemporary classics shine at Dowling

by Kevin Molloy

Finally, locally produced dramatic plays you can sink your mind into.

With the Long Island theatrical landscape littered with campy Broadway musical revivals, Dowling College built a small performing arts center with a black-box theater on their Oakdale campus several years ago, and hired East Islip native John Monteleone to fill it with the contemporary dramatic classics local theatergoers now have to travel some 50 miles to see. And after a string of critically acclaimed performances there, the college's Artist-In-Residence once again achieves success in his direction of Edward Albee's *The Zoo Story* and Samuel Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape*.

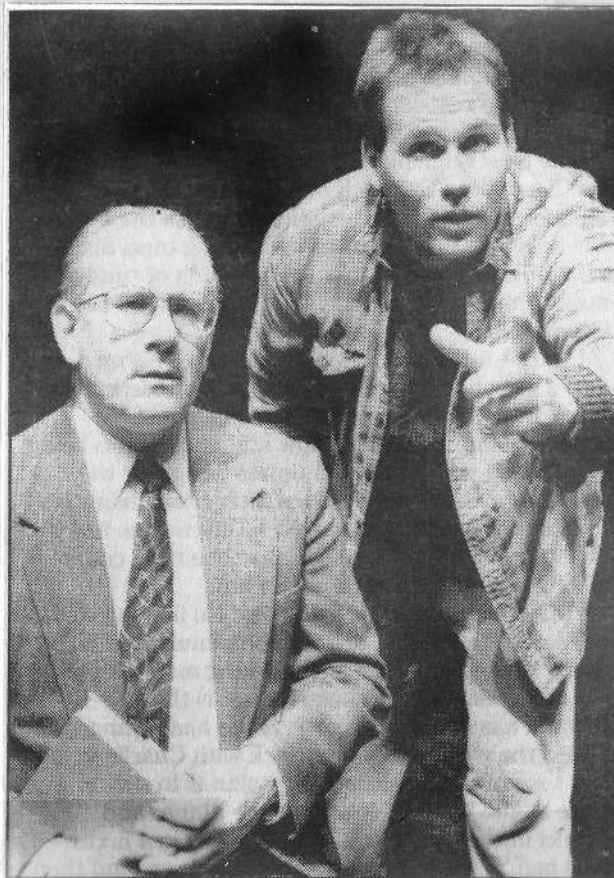
While not the usual fare you'll find in any of a number of local playhouses, the two one-act dramas provide captivating performances of intense storylines that draw in the theater's small audience like an old friend sharing a story.

It's the reaction that Monteleone, a playwright himself, has sought to bring to Long Island theater for so long, after seeing such works succeed across the country only to fail here.

"I think what theater should be is what college is - challenging and enjoyable. We're going to do challenging works for the Dowling community and for Long Island audiences here," he said. "To me, theater is a process of evolution. Audiences should be involved in someone else's truth. They can agree or disagree with it, but not be told a patronizing lie . . . [right now] theaters really have to do audience pleasers, because, let's face it, they have to pay the rent. Long Island audiences don't want to deal with intellectual ideas and humanity."

The two plays he's currently directing at Dowling, though, do just that. While not overly cerebral works at face value, both have a compelling story line that keep you entertained while at the same time force you to think about the world. And the performances by actors Rick Miller and Tom McCreesh are brilliant.

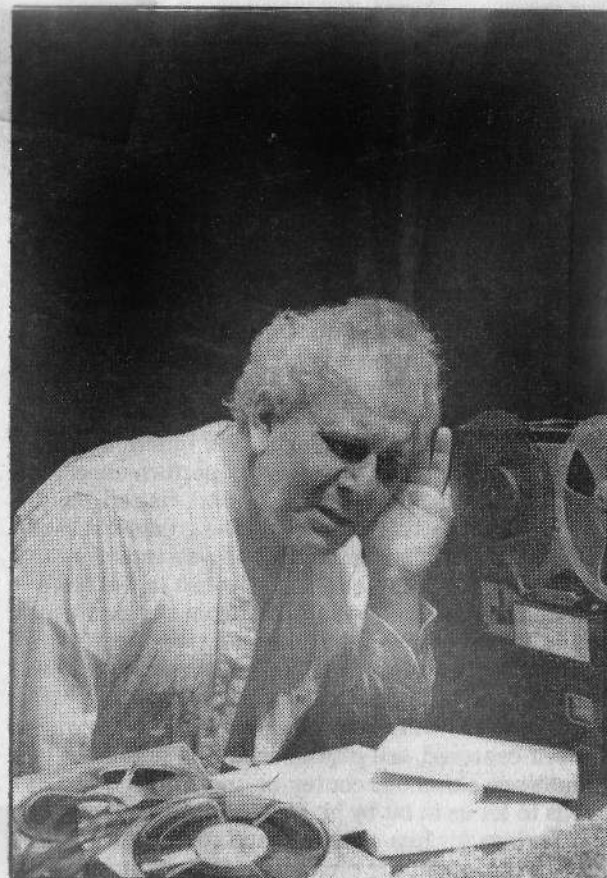
In *The Zoo Story*, set in New York City's Central Park, the story of two men's very different lives unfold before us in a conversation at a park bench. Peter (played with perfect minimalistic actions by Miller) is a middle-aged, middle-class



Rick Miller (left) and Tom McCreesh (right) star in 'The Zoo Story,' now playing at Dowling College.

family man feeling rather comfortable and secure about his life as he sits reading a book on his favorite park bench. But when Peter (fantastically performed in just the right off-balanced manner by McCreesh), a poor mid-twenties loner who lives in a nearby roominghouse, stops to talk to and question him with some untold purpose, we're drawn into a harrowing portrait of a young man alienated from the human race. And Peter, as he later discovers for himself, is just as isolated in his own world, only in a different way.

Miller returns with a solo performance in *Krapp's Last Tape*, turning in a wonderfully absurd and melancholy performance. With the entire play set around a desk holding a reel-to-reel tape recorder and boxes of tapes, we find a man in his twilight years listening to the tape-recorded diary he has kept and cross indexed for most of

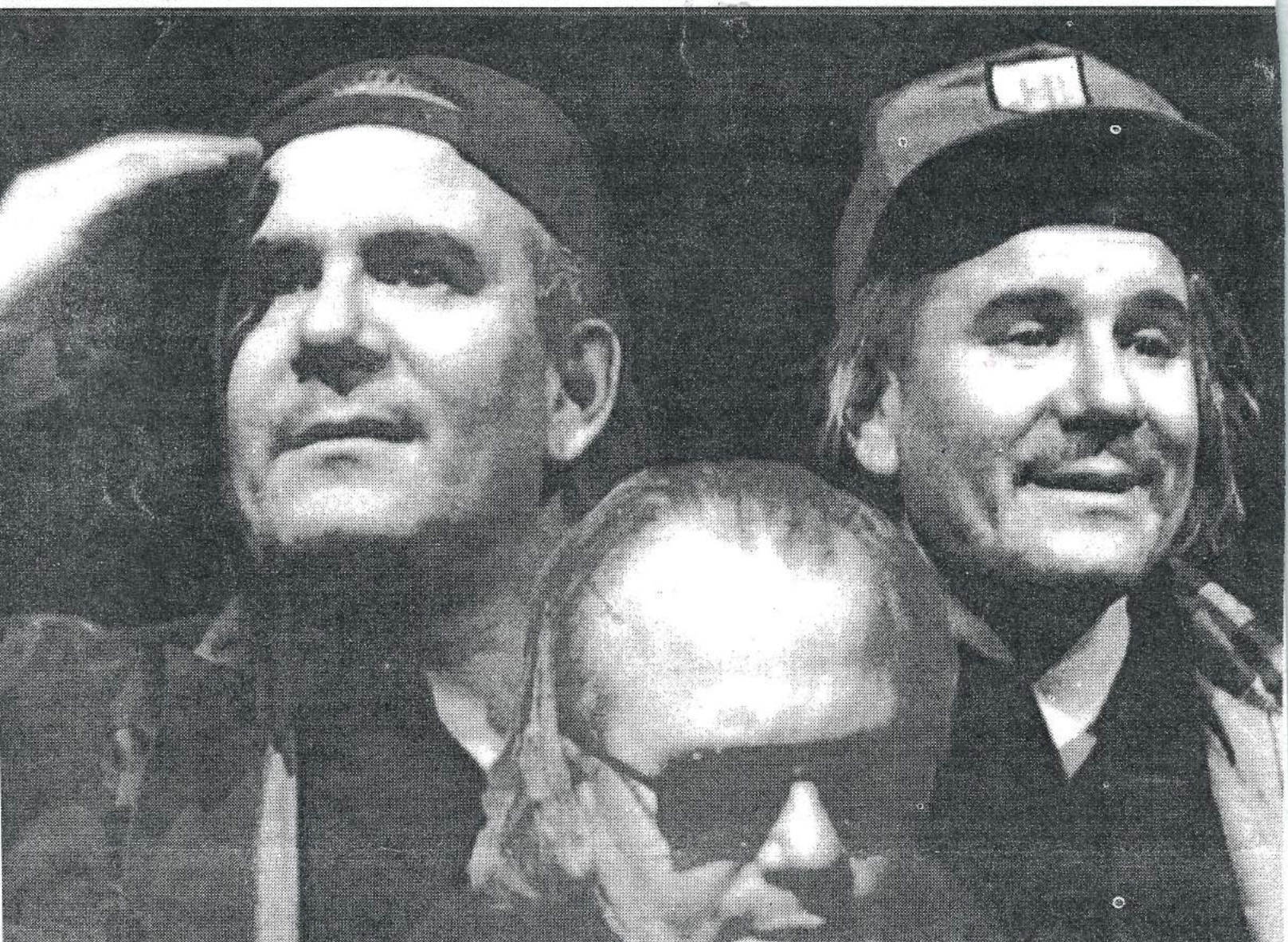


Rick Miller as Krapp in Dowling's production of 'Krapp's Last Tape'.

his life. Now a bitter and senile old man, whose physical appearance and actions can't help but draw laughter, he alternates between listening to his innermost thoughts of 40 years before and making a new recording, both sounding hauntingly familiar without him ever really realizing it. Forty years apart, the same man tape records musings of what a fool he was when he was younger, when looking at life in retrospect.

Both performances, including the minimalist stage and lighting design by Monteleone, are highly effective in drawing the attention to the performers.

*The Zoo Story* and *Krapp's Last Tape* will be performed on February 4, 5 and 6 at 8 p.m. at Dowling's Performing Arts Center in Oakdale. Admission is free, but reservations should be made by calling 244-3155 Monday through Friday 8 a.m. - 5 p.m., and on Saturdays at 244-3399.



# THE FACES OF WAR

RESIDENT RICK MILLER EXPLORES MEMORIES OF WAR IN HIS ORIGINAL ONE-MAN PLAY, 'VETERAN'S DAY'

It's a memory he'll never forget, and one that he kept to himself for 25 years. Now, though, he wants to share this and other memories in his original play *Veteran's Day*, a one-man performance of six characters exploring the meaning of their war experiences. The stunning one hour show debuted last weekend at the Dowling College Performing Arts Center, and will soon go on tour to local schools and libraries.

The six characters in the play couldn't be more different. There's the gung-ho 17-year-

depot, an action which earned him a medal.

The most powerful performance, though, is of the anonymous suburban gentleman raking his leaves, who after explaining that "he doesn't talk much" about his experiences in Vietnam, relates the sight of all those caskets awaiting shipment to the United States.

"That was me," explains Miller, a 45-year-old Islip resident who originally began writing *Veteran's Day* as an exercise for an acting workshop. "After I read it, I was absolutely

MORE - OPEN →

# 'More From Story Theatre' comes to Dowling

by Rene Babich

march 8, 1990

"I train people to be artists, not soap opera stars," said Monteleone. "I want to integrate the mainstream public and the artist. My vision is to do something for the arts on Long Island. The college has shown an interest in my presence and has done a great deal to help me."

Monteleone said since he joined the staff at Dowling in 1986, he has been trying to build up the theatre aspect of the school. He has partially renovated the theatre and is constantly working on improving the features of the performing arts building.

"I believe a playwright should strive for excellence and a unique voice," he said. "This century has seen more changes, more experimentation and more styles emerge than ever before. The greatest art seldom receives the attention it deserves."

Despite the efforts of Monteleone, one of the biggest problems his Actor's Workshop has had is in drawing audiences to innovative plays, experimental or original.

He attributes this to what people have

become accustomed to seeing in movies and plays today, which he calls "cheapened mythologies geared at tapping into the weak, most surface subconscious." Such emotions as revenge, violence and blatant, meaningless sexuality are what many filmmakers and playwrights use to attract people to their work, Monteleone says.

"We want to sell a product," said Monteleone. "The majority of people occasionally enjoy complex plots, but most of the time, they are tired (from working) and they want to be entertained. I can't blame them. If a play has merit I don't mind doing it. I have nothing against entertainment. I just don't want to do anything trite."

Monteleone also works closely with children in theatre. He has put on plays at Dowling, acted by children, which have been written by Dowling theatre students. In March, he plans to put on a play that deals with children coping with divorce issues.

"It's about finding the answers," he said. "There is music in it that lets the questions be dealt with in a positive way. It's geared at uplifting the audience."

Monteleone said he believes theatre should be used as an educational tool. By learning how to act, by learning how to adopt a role, children can relate to others in a better way.

"Theatre is a place where we can discover ourselves," Monteleone said. "Education to me is an art. It's the most valuable thing we have. Everything you are is from an experience you've had. Education has to be taken seriously. We're not here to educate the teachers, we're here to educate the students. Art is a utility — a tool in their lives."

Monteleone is currently embarking on a theater project with problem children in the Longwood School District. He said he feels that theatre is an effective tool in helping to iron out emotional problems in children and helping to build confidence.

"Every person is a whole human being," he said. "When we learn how to understand them, it is more difficult to hate. We flatten the image of humanity. By learning to understand the creation process, it can often teach us about ourselves. Mistakes are part of life. If you're afraid to write poorly, for instance, you will never write really well."

While John Monteleone says theater is more than just entertainment, the next production of his Actor's Workshop of Long Island Repertory Theatre Company is described by him as a "playful, beautiful, wonderful exploration of the imagination."

Beginning March 9 and running until April 1, *More From Story Theatre* will be presented at Dowling College's Performing Arts Center. The author of the play is Paul Sills, the founder of Chicago's Second City Improvisational Company.

An improvisational workshop for actors and comedians during the 70's, Second City was responsible for hoisting the careers of such comedic giants as *Saturday Night Live* stars Dan Akroyd, John Belushi and Gilda Radner. Second City eventually evolved into the Second City Television (SCTV), which featured the likes of John Candy, Eugene Levy, Andrea Martin and Martin Short.

Based on American, Celtic and Arabian folk lore, *More From Story Theatre* is a form of improvisational theatre in itself, as it is taken from a written text, yet at the same time is a flexible text that can be manipulated by each director who uses it.

"It's a funny, warm play for the whole family," said Monteleone. "It brings out the child in us. Each of the nine stories has an underlying message."

Monteleone, who is the artist in residence, instructor in dramatic arts at Dowling, and the producer of the college theatre department productions, said that characters such as imps, mothers and princes are used in the play because they can be interpreted in so many ways.

"They could be created into as colorful of characters as we want," he said.

Aside from his work at Dowling, Monteleone also runs the Actor's Workshop of Long Island. Encompassing a Repertory Company, an acting school for adults, teens and children, Monteleone has been running the school since 1984. He is the author of eight plays of his own and is currently working on a ninth. In January, he starred in the Oberon Theatre Ensemble's rendition of the "Devil's Advocate" at the Chelsea Theatre Festival in New York City, a company comprised of former students from Monteleone's Actor's Workshop.



## Previews and Reviews

# Deathtrap is spellbinding

by René Babich

To kill or not to kill is not the question. Who to kill, how to get rid of the evidence and how to write a mystery are the questions being addressed in Ira Levin's mystery *Deathtrap* put on by The Actor's Workshop Theatre Company In-Residence at Dowling College.

While young Hamlet might cringe at the flagrant disregard for human life in this play, it is a compelling commentary on materialism, self-preservation and the ability of a human being to disregard his morals in order to try and save himself from failure. It is also a gripping mystery that is supremely ironic in that, Sidney Bruhl, played by Greg Bodkin, expends all of his energy creating the perfect mystery in reality but cannot write one.

The play's director, John Monteleone, who is the Company's founder/producer/artistic director, has done an excellent job setting the stage for this spellbinding mystery.

Set in the round, the study of Sidney Bruhl, the play's main character, invites the audience in as they surround the stage. Monteleone also has the actors break through the conventional barriers of the stage from time to time, by setting props the actors must use amidst the audience. The combination of the round theater and coming into the audience forces us to be, in some sense, active in the play.

The setting is clever in that, almost at all times, the audience feels they are part of the diabolical plot going on in the play.

Bruhl, the aging playwright, utters the first word of the play with convincing venom: "Deathtrap," he says to his wife.

For an audience who has never seen or read the play, Levin's mystery is quite suspenseful. We are convinced when Bruhl explains to his wife, Myra,

that he has just received a play from a novice playwright and that the work is magnificent.

He fools her into believing he is monumentally jealous and may even kill the young man and steal his play.

Myra, played by Susan Walmsley, is a convincing actress who makes us believe she is shaken by her husband's ravings. She also has a weak heart and until Act 1, Scene 3, we see that she has minor attacks as her husband scares her more and more.

When the young playwright comes to the Bruhl home under the guise of being instructed by Bruhl, we believe she is truly frightened of what her husband will do to him.

Little do we know that Bruhl and the young playwright, Clifford Anderson (played by Ray Gobes Jr.) are actually homosexual lovers and the real plot here is to give Myra a heart attack so they can get her money and be together.

After Sidney pretends to kill Clifford, Myra falls apart and seems to be on the edge of a breakdown. Walmsley is at her best in the play here as she gets closer and closer to the edge. She walks around the study with a shawl draped over her shoulders and has the demeanor of a soul who has damned herself.

Her epiphany comes when she says, "All the time there was a part of me that was hoping you would do it." The resignation of the woman to her blackness is sad, moving and the actress does a fine job portraying it.

When Clifford bursts into the room supposedly from the grave and bludgeons Sidney with a brick, it's too much for Myra and she has a heart attack and dies.

At this point we may believe that the play should end, but Levin continues to probe the mind of Sidney Bruhl, who still cannot write a play.

Bruhl's character is despicable in a way. Once an extremely successful and lauded playwright, he has hit a snag in his career. After writing many plays, he now has a block and will do anything to get himself on top again: Even kill his wife who threatens his happiness with his lover: Even kill his lover who threatens his freedom by wanting to write a play based on what they did.

Levin's address of self-preservation is frightening in that, one can relate to Bruhl while at the same time be repulsed by him. Greg Bodkin's acting in the play is the best of the company. He is tortured and driven and he is very sad because while he devises these brilliant plots to kill, he annihilates the writer in himself. The murders he commits leave him powerless to create fiction and his intentions of keeping himself on top are flushed away by the decay of the human being.

Helga Ten Dorp, played by Ruth Stewart, is the psychic neighbor who, although she is on the right track, gets confused by the messages sent out by Bruhl. She sees evil and figures out what's going to happen, but Bruhl's plot is so clever and complex, she cannot get all the information correct.

Ten Dorp is a very likeable character and Stewart does justice to the eccentric woman. She achieves eccentricity and humor well and at the same time endears herself to the audience.

C. Dale Yeary also does a good job portraying Porter Milgrim, the seemingly stiff lawyer who turns out to be a dirty old man. Yeary is funny and effectively makes the audience believe he is very prim. Levin turns the knife one final time at the end of the play when Ten Dorp discovers that Milgrim is really an obscene phone caller, however the play ends on a much less serious note.

*please turn to page 21*

## Deathtrap/20

The only character in the play who is pretty much exactly what she seems to be is Ten Dorp. Even Myra Bruhl has secrets and lies stored away. She never told her husband how much money she had while she was alive.

Ray Gorbes Jr. has his moments of fine acting in the play like when he is faced with Sidney who intends to kill him. At that moment, the terror of the character is real in the actor and we feel his fear.

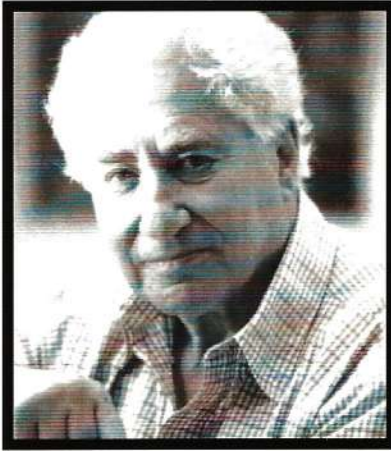
All in all, Actor's Theatre Workshop Company does an outstanding job with this fine play. The lead acting by Greg Bodkin is moving — he is able to illicit both anger and sympathy from the audience and that is important for a main character.

Susan Walmsley, Ray Gorbes Jr., Ruth Stewart and C. Dale Yeary were also commendable.

Monteleone's staging was superb. He chose wisely when setting the stage in the round because nothing draws an audience in deeper than when they are practically on stage.

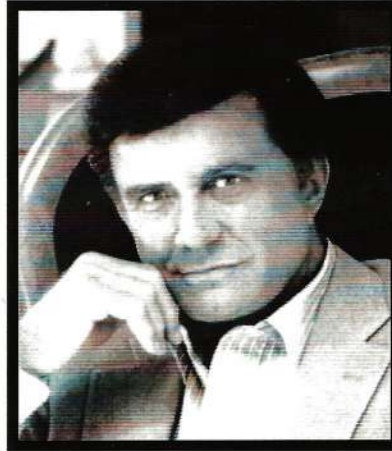
*Deathtrap* can and should be seen at Dowling College's Performing Arts Center now until December 2. Tickets are \$12 on Friday evening, \$14 on Saturday and \$10 on Sunday afternoon. For information call 244-3399.

**Artist-in Residence John Monteleone, Producer, in conjunction with  
The Annual Theme Committee  
is proud to present an evening with (*in person*)**



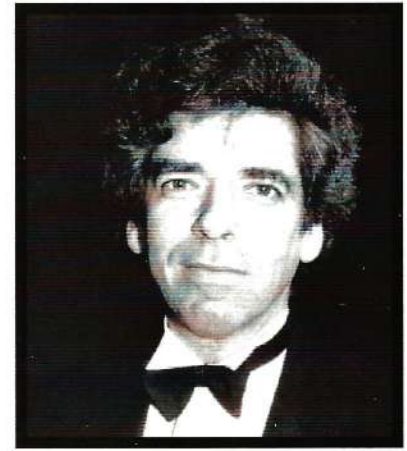
**BUDD SCHULBERG**

is the Oscar-winning writer for such films as *On the Waterfront*, *A Face in the Crowd*, *A Star is Born* and *Nothing Sacred*. Books include: *What Makes Sammy Run?* and *The Disenchanted*.



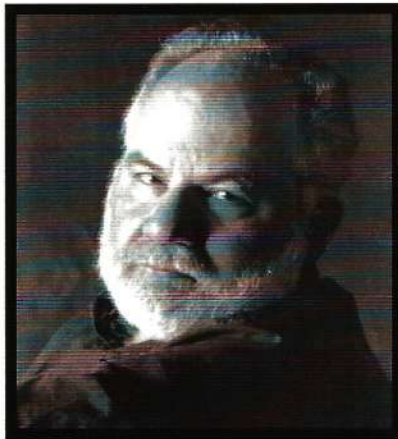
**CLIFF ROBERTSON**

is an Oscar-winning actor, director and screenwriter. He won the Oscar for his performance in *Charly*. Some other films include *PT 109*, *Obsession*, *Star 80*, *J.W. Coop* and recently, *Escape from L.A.*



**DAVID NEWMAN**

co-scripted the seminal American film *Bonnie and Clyde* that created the contemporary gangster film genre. Collaborating with his wife Leslie Newman, they wrote *Superman I, II & III*.



**MICHAEL EDELSON**

has taught film studies and photography at SUNY at Stony Brook for 22 years. His photographs are collected by international museums. He produces and hosts the *Meet The Movie Makers* series at the Staller Center.



**JOHN MONTELEONE - Moderator**

Dowling College Artist-in-Residence and Adjunct Professor, is a playwright and screenwriter with over 50 theatrical productions to his credit. His work has been praised by The New York Times, Newsday and other media.

**This distinguished panel will examine this year's College-wide theme**

**Technology, Culture and Human Values and the question:**

**"HOW DO TECHNICAL ART FORMS REFLECT AND INFLUENCE CULTURE AND HUMAN VALUES?"**

This event will explore the full scope of film art (a very technical art which utilizes all the arts together) and how it affects both societal norms and individuals from every walk of life. The evening will give an extraordinary opportunity to witness the inside story of how a great work is conceived and what motivated some of the most profound films and performances of the twentieth century via their creators and participating artists on this most distinguished panel. Come meet and hear these legendary as well as upcoming artists on:

**Monday November 18th at 4:30-6:00pm in The Ballroom, Fortunoff Hall, Dowling College**

***ADMISSION IS FREE - RESERVATIONS ARE REQUIRED***

**Dowling Family Members must make their reservations no later than Tuesday November 12th.**

**After that date, the public will be able to take any open reservations available.**



**Please call 516-244-3155**



# MURRAY SCHISGAL

**Legendary Playwright and Screenwriter of the film "TOOTSIE" • Six BROADWAY plays**  
• Oscar Nominee and Winner of Numerous Awards

## Comes to Dowling College

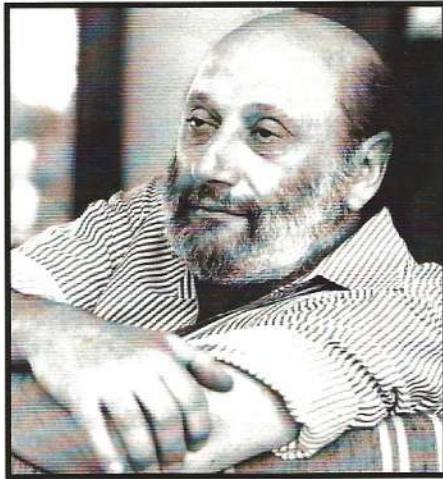
(Interviewed by Artist-in-Residence John Monteleone)

### The discussion:

### **The Playwright Dinosaur Versus the Screenwriter Hulk!!!**

A look into the life work of a playwright extraordinaire and our changing artistic climate

**FOLLOWED BY 3 OF HIS ONE-ACT PLAYS TO BE READ**  
**AS A STAGED READING BY NEW YORK CITY ACTORS**



**MURRAY SCHISGAL**



**JOHN MONTELEONE**  
Interviewer

The evening will include film clips from his films with an interview/discussion followed by a question and answer period by the audience.

**MURRAY SCHISGAL:** Broadway productions: LUV directed by Mike Nicols and starring Anne Jackson, Eli Wallach and Alan Arkin, TWICE AROUND THE PARK, JIMMY SHINE starring Dustin Hoffman, ALL OVER TOWN, AN AMERICAN MILLIONAIRE, and THE CHINESE and DR. FISH. Mr. Schisgal was nominated for an Academy Award for his screenplay TOOTSIE, starring Dustin Hoffman. He also wrote the film scenario for THE TIGER MAKES OUT starring Ann Jackson and Eli Wallach. His original play, THE LOVE SONG OF BARNEY KEMPINSKI, starring Alan Arkin, was later turned into an original TV screenplay for an ABC special in 1966 and was nominated "Outstanding Dramatic Program" by the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences. Off-Broadway: THE TYPIST and THE TIGER starring Ann Jackson and Eli Wallach, FRAGMENTS and THE BASEMENT (starring Gene Hackman), the musical of LUV titled LOVE (starring Judy Kaye and Nathan Lane), ROAD SHOW, EXTENSIONS, and CIRCUS LIFE. In addition to his outstanding Theatre and Film credits, Murray's plays have been produced around the USA by major regional theatres, and extensively in Europe. He is published world-wide and his works also appear in numerous anthologies including BEST AMERICAN SHORT PLAYS from 1974-1995. He has won numerous awards including The Critics Circle and The American Theatre Wing's Tony Awards among many others. Since 1987 he has been the Creative Consultant for Dustin Hoffman's Film Company PUNCH PRODUCTIONS.

**THE DISCUSSION:** The Ball Room, Thursday, April 17 at 3:00 PM and **FOLLOWING**  
**A READING of 3 of Mr. Schisgal's One-Act Plays: GOOSING, SEXAHOLICS, and THE COWBOY, THE**  
**INDIAN, AND THE FERVENT FEMINIST,** at 7:30pm in The Performing Arts Center (PAC)

(When making RESERVATIONS, please indicate if you are attending **BOTH** the Interview and the Play Readings or just **ONE** event)

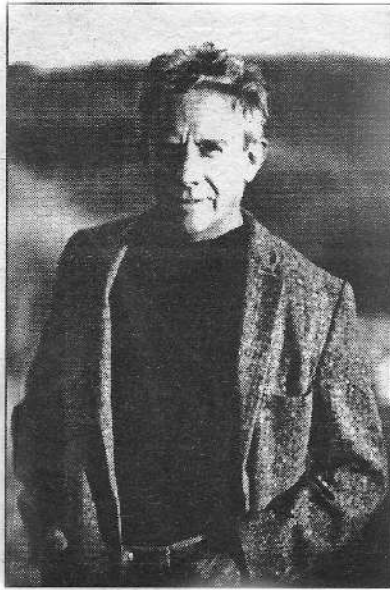
**(516) 244-3155**

**Admission is Free and will be based on a first come first served basis**

Produced by John Monteleone and Dr. James E. Caraway



## Playwrights to hold readings, panel discussion at Dowling



Joe Pintauro



John Monteleone



Gary Kott

Three critically acclaimed Long Island playwrights will hold a panel discussion and offer professional readings of their latest works this week at Dowling College.

Participating in the discussion and readings are Joe Pintauro, an internationally acclaimed playwright and novelist; Gary Kott, an Emmy Award and Humanitas Prize nominee and winner of the Writers Guild of America and NAACP Image awards; and John Monteleone, a critically acclaimed actor and playwright who is the Artist in Residence and Adjunct Professor of Drama at Dowling's Performing Arts Center.

At the panel discussion, which will be held in the Hunt Room of Fortunoff Hall on December 5 from 4-6 p.m., the playwrights will offer their insights into the creative process. Audience members will also have the opportunity to share their points of view with the panelists, and participate in a question and answer period.

The readings, which will be held at Dowling's Performing Arts Center, begin on Friday, December 2 at 8 p.m. with Pintauro reading from his latest play, *The Dead Boy*. The story takes place on the battleground between the American church and the American press over who has the moral authority to accuse and punish.

On Friday, December 9, Kott will read from his solo play, *Him*, a story of man's journey into his past and future, where he revisits career victories and defeats, searches for the logic in his romantic triumphs and humiliations, digs for clues to his humanity, and explores the heavens for traces of his origin. During the journey, the man confronts his limitations, his frustrations, his doubts and fears, as well as reaffirms his convictions and hopes. The play moves from the surface of the earth to its deepest core, then out to the ends of the universe. The reading will begin at 8 p.m.

Monteleone asks the questions of who are the criminals and victims in our society, and who creates our "paradise" and "hell," and who can free us from it in his play, *Breakout*, being read Saturday, December 10 at 8 p.m. The action of the play revolves around the kidnapping of a wealthy governor's son by what appears to be two desperate, somewhat comic, petty criminals and their "street friends," each seeking the key to the American Dream. However, as the play develops, the interpersonal relationships of the characters are exposed and reveal scarred, grossly intertwined pasts filled with cover-ups, deceit, lies and shocking hidden agendas that have landed them all in the belly of the beast. The play examines self-and familial persecution, salvation, redemption, forgiveness and brotherhood.

All events require a reservation, which can be made by calling 244-3155 Monday-Thursday from 8 a.m.-8 p.m. or Friday from 8 a.m.-4 p.m. Dowling College is located on Idle Hour Boulevard in Oakdale. ■

soprano and pianist, per-  
classical mu-  
I. John Drew  
n Street, East  
students. 324-

**OF LONG IS-**  
ing Robert  
next Sunday 3  
School, Garden  
nts.

A chamber en-  
zart, Debussy,  
Sunday 3 PM.  
n Church, 353  
Free.

**ALE SOCIETY.**  
Requiem" and  
panies by an  
Baker at the  
I. Cathedral of  
edral Ave.,  
B.

**RS.** Performing  
"Choral Fan-  
ay, 8 PM. Sea  
Downing Ave.  
Cliff. \$4. 676-

**PHONY.** Under  
Lipkin and  
er, concert pi-  
to No. 5 in F  
Saint-Saens, to-  
n High School,  
oads, tomocrow  
d Adams Play-  
ity, Hempstead  
421-4555.

**ND QUINTET.**  
n including sear-  
art, Persichetti,  
Arnold, tomor-  
brary, 2nd Ave.

musical arrange-  
from America's  
collection of historical songs, tomorrow  
8:15 PM. Hempstead Town Hall Pevil-  
lion, Main St. and Peninsula Blvd.,  
Hempstead. Free, but tickets necessary.  
489-5000.

De Jerez and Company performing and  
singing and dancing a flamenco music  
program tomorrow 3 PM. Peninsula  
Library, 280 Central Ave., Lawrence.  
Free. 239-3262.

**THE TOKYO STRING QUARTET.** Fea-



Newsday Photo by Karen Wiles

*Stoke hole scene in 'The Hairy Ape' is performed at Dowling Col-  
lege, Oakdale, by (right to left), John Monteleone, Julian Lombardi,  
Brian Boyhan, John Carter, and Brian Anderson. The drama will be  
performed by the Loft Theatre Wokshop today and tomorrow at 8:30  
PM at the college's Performing Arts Center, Central Blvd., Oakdale.  
\$2.50 adults; \$1.50 students. 489-6100.*

\$7.50-\$5.50; a  
(212) 541-7290.

**GORDON LIG-**  
and next Satur-  
Avery Fisher H-  
za, (212) T  
through Ticket

**JAZZ IN NEW**  
Where? Call  
for recorded in  
playing where  
City's clubs and

**RALPH STANL-**  
**MT. BOYS** cor-  
day at 8 PM fo  
music in NYU  
566 LaGuardia  
special "pic  
band and audi  
brought the i  
ments, will tal  
gram. \$4.50  
427-1488.

**SPARKS AND M**  
at Avery Fi  
Plaza, (212) T  
through Ticket

**JZ TOP'S FANI**  
in concert nex  
Madison Squa  
8th Ave., 31st  
4400. \$7.50, \$6  
tron, (212) 541

**MR. WORDS.**  
musical salu  
Elizabeth Ashl  
Cook, Bette M  
more. Avery  
ter Plaza, (2  
(benefit).

**BALALAIKA A**  
Tonight at  
folk music. A  
Center Plaza,  
—