

# electro scope

electric company theatre society

october 2000 > vol 4 > issue 1

## *Dona Flor Heats Up the Kitchen*

The crock pots are bubbling again! Currently in development with their latest work, the Electric Company employs their trademark collaboration to produce: **Dona Flor and Her Two Husbands**. An exhilarating feast for the senses, this adaptation of the classic Brazilian novel by Jorge Amado will premiere at the Vancouver East Cultural Centre March 3 – 10, 2001.

Sponsored by the Vancouver Playhouse, the production is co-written with Playhouse Artistic Director Glynis Leyshon and Carmen Aguirre, and stars Aguirre, Ty Olson, and Donald Adams. It is the recipient of this year's **Alcan Arts Award** (\$50,000), the largest single donation to a theatre project in Canada.

Our production features the dance and drumming of Capoeira masters Aché Brasil. Pepe Danza also brings his flair for percussion and samba into his original sound design. We are thrilled to be working for the first time with Pam Johnson who heads up set design, as well as Adrian Muir who joins us again as lighting designer.

Rich in both narrative thrust and thematic complexity, this timeless Latin American classic is a fun, festive, and sensuous story told through music, physical theatre, and the sounds, rhythms, and spectacle of Carnival. Not to mention the flavour and aroma of Dona Flor's famous School of Savor and Art.

The Electric Company is thrilled to be back in the creation stages of play development. We are eager to make this exciting adaptation a roaring success! Please join us in March for this sumptuous evening of theatre, spectacle, and music. Remember: There's nothing like a good kitchen party! ✨



## The Alcan Award and National Recognition

In the space of one short year, the Electric Company's reputation has expanded from favourable local reviews to recognition on a national level. The Globe & Mail recently hailed the collective as one of four "young leaders" in theatre in Canada.

Such kudos, and the announcement of this year's Alcan Arts Award have left us elated and proud! We must acknowledge the ongoing incredible support from our local community that has powered the company through four years of vigorous activity.

We would like to make special mention of The Vancouver East Cultural Centre whose mentorship in the form of venue, office space, and avuncular advice has kept us alive. Bravo!



*Sensual Delights:* Carmen Aguirre in the upcoming **DONA FLOR AND HER TWO HUSBANDS** running March 3-10, 2001 at the Cultch

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## **"The Score" Leaves Audiences Genetically Altered:**

**"A stimulating piece of theatre, lovely vital acting work, great passion, and commitment. Good luck – loved the whole thing. Moved to tears."**

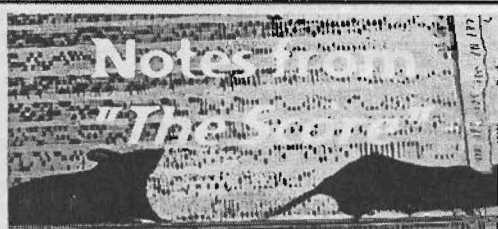
**"Terrific Show!! Great discussion too! Loved it!"**

**"Great way to communicate scientific ideas across to a wide population of people."**

**"Fabulous, funny and funky. Please spread the word – get the play on tour!"**

**"It's great to see a show with an intellectual component. Screw the critics – stick to your guns!"**

**"Superb production – Great Talent – Thanks!"**



**The Score**, an Electric Company production, marked a unique relationship between science and the arts. Inspired by leading geneticist Michael Hayden at the Centre for Molecular Medicine and Therapeutics, the project grew into a wonderful collaboration between the Electric Company and his laboratory. It was our collective aim to create a new play that would spark the public's interest and stimulate dialogue surrounding the key issues raised by the rapidly advancing world of genetics.

**The Score** played to consistently large houses, and those who attended were invigorated by the importance of the subject matter and inspired by the artistic and conceptual elements of the production.

The impact on audiences was clearly demonstrated by the post-show discussions and debate held after each performance with a panel of scientists.

The turn-out for these events was truly amazing! An unprecedented fifty percent of our patrons stayed to listen and participate. They were eager to express their opinions, and passionate about the questions raised in the script.

The response from the scientific community was equally exciting for the Electric Company, as many of the attendees were not regular theatre goers. Among them were leading genetic researchers, genetic disease counselors, editors from prestigious science journals, and pharmaceutical company representatives who had come from around the globe to attend the Human Genome Conference being held in conjunction with the play.

We feel the production has been surprisingly successful both artistically and as a bridge between our theatre community, the general public and the international scientific community.

## **The Score Scores !**

**The Score** was honoured with 5 Jessie Richardson Awards for:

- Outstanding Production
- Outstanding Original Script
- Outstanding Direction - Kim Collier
- Outstanding Set Design- Robert Gardiner
- Supporting Actress – Lois Anderson

Also nominated from our team were:

- Adrian Muir – Lighting Design
- Christine Reimer – Costume Design
- Megan Leitch – Lead Actress
- Kevin Kerr – Supporting Actor



## **The Score Tours**

**The Score** premiered April 2000 at The Waterfront Theatre on Granville Island. Many insisted that **The Score** travel to other cities to be remounted under similar circumstances coinciding with upcoming conferences on genetics.

We have our first opportunity to realize further development of the production as we prepare for a tour to Toronto this November. A new version of the play is being presented there by Rx & D to coincide with a bio-tech conference. It will be fascinating to see their reaction to the plays content.

## **Our Board...**

Karen Berkhout.....PRESIDENT  
Anthony F. Ingram..... VICE PRESIDENT  
Mitch Anderson.....TREASURER  
Ailsa Brown..... SECRETARY  
Tim Howard..... AT LARGE  
Marietta Kozak..... AT LARGE  
Margaret Tom-Wing..... AT LARGE

*A warm welcome to our new board members...*



## Pat Armstrong 1935-2000



The Electric Company wishes to express its deepest sorrow at the loss of one of Vancouver's truly most original personalities — a devoted woman-of-the-theatre who changed all our lives: Pat Armstrong.

We hear of "old souls": people who exhibit a timeless wisdom... Pat was a young soul, holding an honest fascination and curiosity with the world around her, a thirst for knowledge and new experiences, and an ever playful, mischievous spirit. Pat was a perennial kid.

As President and Vice President of the Electric Company since its inception, Pat was invaluable to the Electric Company's creation. She not only served on our board; she demanded its formation.

She was willing to start with us at the very beginning, feet-first, hands-on, hit-the-dirt-running. The first year she took home one hundred mailout letters to write personal notes on each one. At Christmas the next, she donated to the Electric Company on behalf of her entire family, to whose thrill, delight, and horror were suddenly all member-donors.

Pat's presence transformed our Board meetings into gourmet pep-rallies; moveable feasts for the eye, ear and mouth. It was she who conceptualized donor categories that began with "sparks" and ended with "Thor--God of Thunder": this, from a woman who had more kilowatts compressed in her small frame than a child of ten. You didn't need wool socks on a carpet to feel it. Pat was stadium lights and a laser show!

Pat, we will miss you greatly. We love you and are grateful for having the opportunity to have been charged by you, powered by you, and present in your light. To your spirit of joyous invention that you leave us with -- we, we happy few, salute you....

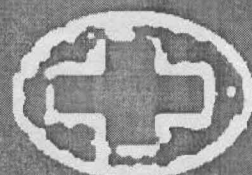
### *Writing in the Rockies! Postcards from the Banff playRites Colony 2000* by Kevin Kerr

September 1, 2000

Dear Loved Ones:

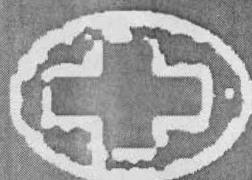
Shred this postcard immediately after reading! We don't want it falling into the hands of Alliance MPs lest they realize that in the wilderness of Ralph Klein's Alberta there is actually a place where artists are encouraged to eat well, breathe clean air, hike, take occasional hot tubs after volleyball or drop-in fencing, and actually work — write, write, write — amidst some of the most spectacular scenic vistas in Canada. The Colony is "fantastique"! There's a dozen playwrights here from across Canada plus a couple of international exchanges (Australia and France — talk about cultural extremes!). There's a team of dramaturges to help the writers figure out what exactly they're ranting on and on about, and a company of eight actors, also selected from across the nation, who workshop the scripts and

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*This July and August the Electric Company's foreign correspondent Jonathon Young spent four weeks in Brazil researching their upcoming production of **Dona Flor**. The following is his account of a Candomble Ceremony.*

The gentleman in yellow and brown (a Canadian) at the end of the bench on the men's side of the room, seated closest to the drummers, imagined telling the story. He imagined how a good friend and co-worker, upon hearing his account, would respond with a "Wow," using the familiar method of raising the pitch slightly, and giving out a little more air than necessary thereby increasing the effect of sudden keen interest and surprise. The friend and co-worker would follow this with a question, a probe: "So, what does it look like when the Orixas (the spirits of Candomble) are evoked and embody the people that dance?"

The person is possessed and brought through a curtain into another room to get into the clothes and sacred objects of the Orixá they have become.

It happened three times during the ceremony and each time a possession occurred the man in yellow and brown from Canada had not had his eyes directly on the son or daughter when they were suddenly taken, by force, into another place, that is, another place in the body. He had been observing the first character for quite some time, through almost an hour of monotonous chanting, barely a melody to latch on to, accompanied by a limp and dispassionate clapping section that was not made to stay within any coherent rhythm even by white Canadian standards. But when it happened it took the

Canadian completely by surprise because his mind was formulating (in past tense) an attempt at describing the old, drooping dispassionate ladies who barely clapped and even nodded off for some seconds, and the table that was adorned with simplistic black and red statuettes of various divinities unknown to the Canadian; feathers, glass jars of shells and water, strings of beads, candles, and in the centre a vase of big green leaves which he wouldn't even attempt to name later on. Besides, he was looking past the names, seeking the purity of form, wrestling with the concept of "the simplistic object, endowed with importance and ceremony is as transcendent as the well-made object of great beauty."

What I wouldn't give to have seen the Canadian's face when the possession hit like an electric shock the body of that half-smiling, self-conscious character, who wore shorts and a shirt with sporty logos. A possession of the spinal column by Afro-Brazilian electricity. Try to imagine my dear friend and colleague, a chameleon stung in the neck by a giant spider, poisoned and transformed, it's muscles wracked by violent spasms, its earthly spirit released outward or inward where it is impossible to name with words. His first thought was that an accident had happened, that the character burnt his forehead on a candle, or had a sudden and insanely ferocious bout of intestinal gas so feared by all tourists in tropical countries. But the ladies in their plain, pale blue blouses knew this was not the case and they stood to assist him, catching him as he tipped backwards out of his chair, guiding him upwards and through the curtain into another room hidden from the eyes of the Canadian. ✎



## Membership Form

Yes, I would like to become a:

☐ Member of the Electric Company

Enclosed is my \$5 membership fee

☐ Donor of the Electric Company

I am enclosing the following amount : \$ \_\_\_\_\_

(All Donations will receive an Official Receipt for Tax Purposes)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

Province: \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

**ELECTRIC COMPANY THEATRE SOCIETY 1885 VENABLES STREET VANCOUVER, BC. V5L 2H6**  
**TEL 253-4222 FAX 251-1730 EMAIL etheatre@vcn.bc.ca**



## Electric Garden Party

If the annual fundraiser is a litmus test for the success of a new season, the Electric Company is primed for a great year! The Electric Garden Party was a summer art auction and open air canteen that was by far our most atmospheric fundraiser ever. Featuring the works of ten Canadian artists and the backyard of dear friends Kirsten McGhie and Mark Haypenny, the Electric Garden teemed with all kinds of life. Live music, poetry, and severe flood lighting effects that produced giant shadows on the neighbouring house made the whole night come off swimmingly. At its end (around 3 am), as the last chair was struck, the empties stacked, the rain was just beginning to come down, and we thanked our brilliant board of directors for their excellent weather management skills. **AND NOW THIS:** The Electric Company proudly announces that as a result of said party, we have now purchased a brand new computer, printer, and scanner -- all desperately needed for the future survival of the admin-weary office warriors. Thank you ever so much to our board, our art-donors, and all the attendees of last July's soiree! ⚡

## Cell Mates



The Electric Company's first foray into film is nearing completion. **Cell Mates** is a short screenplay commissioned for the "Hotel Project" being produced for the Bravo! Television station by Fortress Films and Rumble Productions. Six short films set in various rooms of an anonymous urban hotel have been written by six different authors. The Electric Company's contribution, a surreal story of three clones waiting to meet their "dad" for the first time, was shot this past spring and is in the final stages of post-production. Director Rob McDonough has created a beautifully crafted piece, which stars Jonathon Young as the clones and their estranged father. The Electric Company would like to thank Fortress and Rumble for producing this project and providing a fabulous opportunity to experiment in another medium. Look for all six films to be shown on Bravo! in the near future. ⚡

## Donor Categories

**candle power**

**\$25-40**

a spot on the mailing list, advanced notice of special events, readings, and future productions

**volt**

**\$41-99**

above plus we kiss your feet

**spark**

**\$100-149**

above plus we send you autographed pictures of the Electric Company

**forked lightning**

**\$150-250**

above plus we call you periodically and make small talk

**killer watt**

**\$251-499**

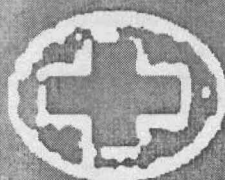
above plus we do a little dance around you and chant, "thank you, thank you, thank you"

**thor:**

**god of thunder**

**\$500+**

above plus we climb grouse mountain and proclaim you and your family's names to the gods and the heavens above



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## Banff *continued from page 3*

provide extra company in the Banff Arts Centre pub. Electric Company regular Andy Thompson (*Brilliant!*, *The Wake*) is here as an actor making the whole experience that much more enjoyable. I have the pleasure of working with Québécois dramaturg Paul Lefebvre, who, when he was a child, had his bicycle stolen by two of Céline Dion's brothers while he was at an altar boy's meeting. He's a master storyteller and seems to have some sort of CD-ROM encyclopedia installed in his head as there's apparently not a single subject around for which he doesn't have an amusing anecdote. It's now rutting season, which is of course a little dangerous with all of those actors cooped up together for three weeks, otherwise there's little to fear from the wildlife because apparently they've deported some 200 Elk from the Banff area recently. My next door neighbour, a playwright from the East Coast, said they took a couple in Digby, Nova Scotia to liven the place up a little. It'll be hard to leave this place – it's great for the process, inspiration, and caloric intake. Be seeing you soon, hopefully with a new draft of the play.



Kevin

## LOVE-CHILDREN OF THE STARS?



KEVIN KERR:  
REX MURPHY'S  
SON?



KIM COLLIER:  
GERALDINE  
CHAPLIN'S  
DAUGHTER?



DAVID  
HUDGINS:  
DOUGLAS  
COUPLAND'S  
CLONE?



JONATHAN  
YOUNG:  
THE CAT IN  
THE HAT'S  
FIRST LITTER?

## What's Up

Kevin's new play **Unity (1918)** is being produced by Touchstone Theatre and will be presented in March 2001 at the Van East Cultural Centre – right after **Dona Flor and Her Two Husbands**.

**Workshops:** This September, Electric Company hosted a mentorship workshop to help emerging theatre companies. Last spring we hosted a reading of Rick Dobran's new play **Lisa Lisa**, complete with wine and cheese.

**Video Projector Rental!** (Model: SONY CPJ-100) Best rates in town! Call 253-4222 for price quotes.

**Electric Company Theatre Society** is a not-for-profit, producing theatre company dedicated to the development of new Canadian theatre with an emphasis on physical and visual imagery.

We strive to create theatre that is life-affirming, inspiring and provocative, and to promote theatre as an educative and cultural experience to the general public and the larger community through productions, workshops, tours and other related means.

We believe in theatre that is accessible: financially and thematically. We wish to challenge the conventions of theatre while preserving a strong sense of story.

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**ElectroScope** written and produced by the Electric Company: Kim Collier, David Hudgins, Kevin Kerr, Jonathon Young, and board member Margaret Tom-Wing