



# electroscope

electric company theatre society newsletter

october 2001 > vol 5 > issue 1

## *into the belly of the flop*

To live is to strive, to strive is to risk failure.



Electric Company invites you to participate in an evening of precarious theatre with their upcoming production of **flop**, a horror of peptic proportions that celebrates the spirit of risk that balances on the brink of disaster.

**flop** is the story of three talented, up-and-coming young architects, Cooper, Crowne and McLure, who are working on the project of a lifetime. "Vitruvius" is to be a Gothic-styled residential skyscraper of behemoth proportions that will proclaim the sanctity of home and solidity of the future. In the architectural planning and engineering of the project, the three will push the design envelope to its very limits believing that their innovations will elevate them to new heights of status and success.

However, well into the construction, the essence of the building is called into serious question. Reeling from the blow, the heroic trio of "design warriors" embarks on a mission to resuscitate the structure and their professional reputations.

The **flop** creation process is a chance for the original Electric Company quartet to regroup as sole collaborators: to work in the pure language of images and ideas that we have accumulated over five years of creating large-scale works.

Based in our research into architecture, structural engineering and design, the Electric Company is exploring the parallels to building a story and the story of a building.

Just as the struggling architects of **flop** desperately attempt to re-work their failing design, the artists of the Electric Company attempt to dismantle narrative structure, site-specific works, and the collaborative process.

The potential to fail is inherent in all human endeavors. **flop** offers the unique opportunity to celebrate the goofs, fluffs, and face-plants in the luxurious safety of your red comfy seat at the Cultch.

**flop** opens at the Vancouver East Cultural Centre January 26<sup>th</sup> and runs til Feb. 2, 2001 ✓

*coming soon to a pool near you*



**Kendra Fanconi: The Littlest Mermaid**

**The One that Got Away** is the story "of a girl with a fish where her heart should be" — a captivating yarn, spun by local playwright and performer Kendra Fanconi.

The play is enormous in scope, both in the wild history it traces and in its design around a shimmering indoor swimming pool complex at Vancouver's Jewish Community Centre.

The story is loosely based on the fast life of her late great Jewish grandfather. A man of extremes, Everett Wile was a millionaire, pauper, sage, addict, philanthropist, miser, and scam artist whose ninth wife remarked of him:

"He was a bastard every day of his life, but on the last day he was an angel."

Fanconi adds: "This play begins on that

last day. When bastards become angels and a life of misery changes into a good story."

From the watery depths of memory and myth, the past and future of Everett Wile float up to haunt him: his ex-wives, his granddaughter, and his waterlogged narrators.

Rich in physical and visual imagery, the production promises to be a "deep" and heavily chlorinated experience.

A water chorus, a perambulating audience, a submerged set, a water soundscape and water videography are all elements of this fantastical tale as the Electric Company continues to play with new forms in unique places.

**The One That Got Away** - Surfacing March 4-8, 11-15, 18-22 in 2002. ✓

## *the year in brief*



Entering its fifth year last season, the Electric Company assessed the preceding years, acknowledged the workload, and agreed that a good long vacation was in order. They descended the staircase into the lab where they applied the

formula "a change is as good as a rest", where "change" ( $\Delta x$ ) = "twice as much work" ( $2mv^2d$ ), "rest" ( $m$ ) = "vacation" ( $\Delta T-W$ ), and "as good as" of course being equivalent to "results in" ( $\rightarrow$ ). After intensive time at the blackboard and some contact improv by David and Jonathon, the company declared:

" $2mv^2d = \Delta T-W \therefore E \rightarrow \infty$ " or in other words, "the more we do the more energy we'll have!" With this discovery, the Electric Company entered its busiest season to date, while defying several basic laws of Newtonian Physics.

## *the score in t.o. evolution of a genetic code*

Last November, the Electric Company reassembled the cast of *The Score* (with the addition of Dean Paul Gibson stepping in for the very busy Jimmy Tait) to present the production in Toronto. The play was performed at a conference for Canada's research and development companies in the pharmaceutical and biotech industries. It was a huge hit among the scientists and CEOs and director Kim Collier and lighting designer Adrian Muir have both been put on a waiting list for their very own clones! Well done you twos (or is it four?)

## *dona flor letting it all hang out with the folks from Alcan*

Our most ambitious project to date, **Dona Flor and Her Two Husbands** featured 21 performers, two venues, and played to sold-out audiences for its entire run. The play was conceived by local playwright/actor/director Carmen Aguirre, who co-wrote the adaptation of the Jorge Amado novel with the Electric Company collective. The project was made possible by the Alcan Performing Arts Award — a \$50,000 grant for the creation of a new work, which the Electric Company won in February of 2000. *Dona Flor* received five Jessie Nominations and took home statues for both Outstanding Supporting Actor (Donald Adams) and Outstanding Costume Design (Christine Reimer). Reimer and her assistant Kirsten McGhie deserve special credit for creating over 70 costumes for the show; and Ty Olsson, who played Flor's debauched husband Vadinho, deserves special credit for appearing on stage for most of each performance wearing none of them!

The season concluded with the company considering a course in remedial physics, but deciding that, at least for now, they just didn't have the time ( $T=0$ ). ✓





## deus rex machina

Rex Murphy, CBC critic and cultural icon extraordinaire, was recently seen warming his port sherry at the Electric Company's Big Plug Blowout. Malcolm Parry's cub reporter K. Kerr was there, and after the ubiquitous "cleavage shot" managed to jot down Murphy's speech on the back of a party napkin:

Rex:

"The Electric Company is five years old. Even in the primordial landscape of Canadian Theatre they are not very old — still essentially larval in their evolution. However compared with the speed at which MPs will vote themselves raises, five years begins to resemble geological time and thus we can feel free to assess the movement of the Electric Company's particular tectonic plate.

"There is a phrase drawn from that ineffable lexicon of popular idioms to describe the precise moment when inspiration is replaced with repetition, redundancy, and banality. 'Jumping The Shark' — it's an allusion to an episode of Happy Days where Arthur Fonzarelli attempts a daredevil feat whereby he leaps over a shark swimming in a sort of ocean-borne compound on a pair of water-skis. This, the 'experts' — inverted commas — declare is the episode where Happy Days was transmogrified from a nostalgic homage to nineteen-fifties optimism into a spin-off spawning doppelganger featuring forty-year olds still just recently out of high school and a stomach turning romance between Erin Moran and Scott Baio. It was then that Happy Days Jumped The Shark.

"Is there such a darkly defining moment for the Electric Company? A few would cry no. More would cry who? While I, on the other hand,

propose that if they haven't yet Jumped the Shark, then at least the moment we first witnessed a foreboding dorsal fin slicing the waters to the obligatory two-chord theme from Jaws would have to have been...

(Slide appears that reads: "The Score")

"But before we go any further let's consider their evolution — or the gene pool, if you will, that this particular shark is swimming in.

"To begin: I saw Brilliant! — and I'm sorry if I'm unable to ascribe to it the eponymous adjective it's so unabashedly calling for, but I'll go so far as to say that Brilliant! was *adequate*. Italics, if you could see them, mine. I saw it again at the Roundhouse and found it to be considerably longer, the projection screen larger, and the info-geek decidedly sexier.

"Which brings me to Angelina Jolie in Tomb Raider. The wild horses have yet to be born that could drag me to see that film, but that doesn't prevent me from staring incessantly at the movie's poster, which I've installed as my desktop screensaver.

"But back to the Electric Company —

"I must say, I enjoyed 'The Wake'. If only for the fact I stole the audience participation bag. And I still use my Spy Tube to torment Peter Mansbridge to this very day. Imagine me saying, "Hey Peter, I have a tight close-up of your bald head", and other witty examples of my mordant pith.

"But 'The Score'. Let's start with the title. sounds like some forgeable drug-theme Robert Deniro film. Oh, wait a minute, it is.

"And here, isn't this actor wearing the same wetsuit as was worn by Stockwell Day for that fateful press conference which appeared to have been mercifully edited from an Annette Funicello movie before mercilessly winding up in the context of a national election?

"Is there any connection between the leader of Her Majesty's Laughable 'Opposition' — inverted commas — and this actor?



"Well we know that Stockwell's eventual fate was to be immersed in a vat of medieval proportions filled with scalding water and teeming with angry cowboys and knife wielding robots. While this actor's eventual fate

was to be immersed in a tub of lukewarm soapy water teeming with a near nude Megan Leitch (or, if there is any truth to certain rumors, an entirely nude Megan Leitch on closing night). Are we to assume that the lesson is, gimmicks such as this are best left to the arts rather than politics? Or is the lesson simply, sometimes you get lucky and sometimes you wind up sucking up to Joe Clark and that wetsuits worn or otherwise can't change a damn thing about it.

"But while the wetsuit marked the beginning of the end of Stockwell Day, in the case of The Score it merely marked the end of the beginning. No Shark Yet.

"But what other gimmicks in the Score could announce the appearance of the great white predator of the deep and a man on water-skis wearing a leather jacket?

"Well when I look at a scene like this, I can't help but think of a Brittany Spears Video. But to be

fair, in most circumstances I can't help but think of a Brittany Spears Video — unless of course I'm feeling 'arty' in which case I think of Christina Aguilera — Bold face, underlining, and sparkles, mine.

"And speaking of that vast landscape of inanity, Much Music, somebody once deftly compared The Electric Company to the Backstreet Boys. It was me, and I forget the context, but it was deliciously scathing.

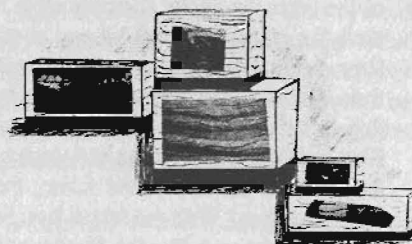
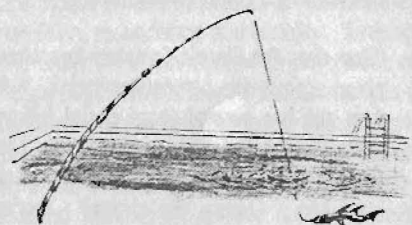
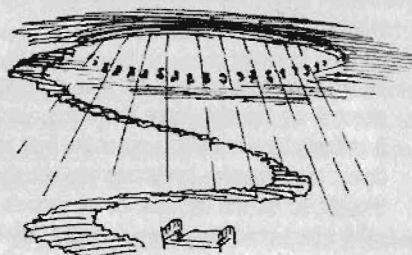
"And how about this classic moment. A thirty page scene staged as a radio debate on a public broadcasting network? If a shark can smell a drop of blood from eight nautical miles, then surly this scene is a sucking chest wound.

"When searching, though, for that defining moment as the skis leave the water, and admittedly it's a quixotic quest at the best of times, the particular landmarks are usually thought to be the appearance of sequels, child actors reaching puberty, cheesy "clip" shows, and of course the inevitable spin-off. Lest we forget Joanie loves Chachi.

"How does the Electric Company fare when pitted against this particular criteria? Well Azra still has several years ahead before she's singing the theme song from "The Facts of Life". But Sequels? Brilliant had at least two. Cheesy clip shows? You're watching one now. And spin-offs. Well out of The Score the Electric Company wrote a short film called Cell Mates. It was about three clones waiting in a hotel room to meet their "father". The film was directed by Robert McDonagh, produced by Fortress Films and Rumble Productions, and starring, as the three clones and the father, the Backstreet Boys. While you take a look, I'll have a smoke and I'm Rex Murphy and that's My Point of View."

## swamped

*Liquid*, an underwater rave that recently took over the Jewish Community Centre pool complex on September 22, was a fundraising party like no other for **The One That Got Away** project. What some of you missed was: floating in inner tubs and paddling over to the floating bar, the spun tunes of D.J. David Whitmey, hot-tubbing, a conceptual slide show on *Liquid* by Mark DenBoer, a fun re-mix of Esther Williams movie pool scenes projected over water, blinking lights, bubble machines, a canonball competition with a great flying belly flop from



preliminary design sketches for  
**The One That Got Away**

Matthew Bissett, electric jello, Kendra Fanconi and Kathleen Oliver in their bathing suits not to mention Mitch and Jonathon in practically nothing!

Electric Company and Kendra Fanconi would like to send out a special thank you to Brenda Leadlay, Anna Kalfa and all the staff at the JCC and Norman Rothstein Theatre (especially the aquatics manager Dave Ibbolt) for their support of the event.

To all the folks that came out and partied: thankyou thankyou thankyou.↗

## wish list



Sought: PC or Macintosh computer; old or young — we're not ageist; primarily for word processing and graphics.



Needed : A sublet or house sitting for a loveable out-of-town actor visiting to perform in our production **The One That Got Away**. Any period from Feb. 3 to March 18, 2002.↗

## Notice to All Members!

An extraordinary meeting of the membership of Electric Company Theatre Society will meet on Monday, October 22, 2001 at 6:30 pm. All members are welcome to attend and vote on the addition of a special resolution to our Society Act. The meeting will be held at the home of David Hudgins:

1343 Lakewood Drive  
Vancouver, BC  
V5L 4M7  
604-254-5316

## POSTCARD FROM DENMARK

Dear Electrolytes,



Greetings from Copenhagen, home of *The Little Mermaid*, the *Museum Erotica*, and of course the *Copenhagen International Theatre Festival*. Did you know that Danish beer comes in many different varieties including light, very light, non-dark, and light? Tasty!

I'm here with theatre's answer to Team Canada — an assortment of all-stars from across the country, many of which I've met here for the first time. It is often asked, with a country as large as Canada how do theatre artists manage to ever get together, exchange ideas, and fuel each other's works at home in their various regions. The Answer: they apply to the Canada Council to meet in Europe!

We're here on a weeklong stay during this city's fascinating theatre festival to see shows from around the world, meet international artists, and gossip about Canadians that aren't here. Were your ears burning in early August? Well rest assured, your dirty secrets are now common knowledge in Halifax, Winnipeg, and Quebec City!

It's been exciting to see the nature of the work being played on the international stage! From a production of *Hamlet* performed in Lithuanian in the courtyard of Elionore's Kronenberg Castle to an evening of "risqué" performance pieces at the *Cabaret Verboten*, we were certainly exposed to the best and, well, something other than best of international theatre.

Ultimately though the trip has allowed for some early investigation of our own company's future in the world of international touring, as well as strengthening some ties back home in Canada.

Special thanks to the Canada Council's theatre section for supporting such initiatives towards international co-production, touring and presenting.

Love, Kevin



# *songs from the big plug*

We're five years old.

Electric Company's 5th Anniversary Blowout and 5th Annual Fundraiser was in June. We want to celebrate all the artists, technicians, community partners and audiences that have joined us in the last five years. It's been an incredible experience to launch this company and to work with you all on the productions we have produced.

This year's BIG PLUG event included a sweeping overview of the Electric Company's history which forced us to dust off our dancing shoes and attempt to tap again. The Electric Company rediscovered the silent movie sequence in **Brilliant!** as well as the Tesla/Edison tap-off which was quite a rehearsal room sight. Andy Thompson graced us with **The Wake's** Alvo von Avenleben at the keyboards. Kevin recreated his Rex Murphy from **The Score** in a soliloquy you can read on page 5. Tim Matheson guided us through EC history with his beautiful slides.

A huge and humble thank you to all the incredible artists that helped make this years BIG PLUG art auction a success with their incredible art donations: Nora Berkhout, Carol Hudgins, Pam Johnson, Chapelle Jaffe, Tiko Kerr, Rob McDonagh, Nora Patrich, Andrew Rucklidge and Juan Manuel Sanchez.

## Event Donors

A special thank you to all our donors who contributed generously: Lazy Gourmet, Inform Brokerage, Maria Denholme, Wendy O'Hagan, Karen Berkout, Megan Leitch, Jenny Patterson, Vancouver Playhouse, Vancouver East Cultural Centre, Menu Setters, Que Pasa Mexican Foods, Tim Matheson, Linda Chinfen, Paul Schiffman, University of British Columbia Theatre Department, Steven Galloway, Kevin Chong, Madeleine Thien, Rick Maddocks

## Sponsors

Granville Island Brewing

## Event Performers

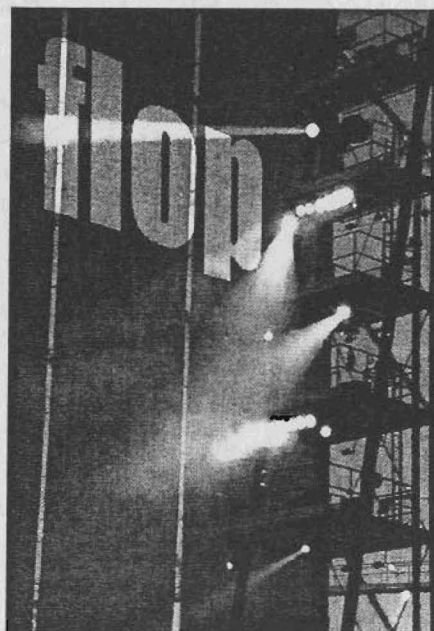
Seika Boye, Ann Da Silva, Andy Thompson, Anna Martin & Friend, Tony Wilson, Stan Taylor, Kevin Elaschuck

## Special Thanks

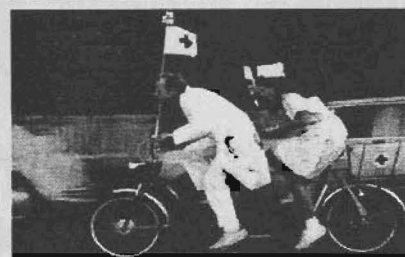
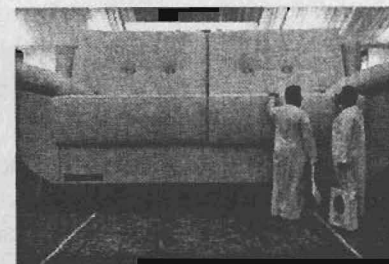
Kelly O for helping to co-ordinate event, Lorraine the T.D. and Angela Beaulieu who donated security, and helpers: Kendra Fanconi, Stuart Collier, Julie McGeer, Marita Dachsel

## Our Beautiful and Talented Board Members

Karen, Ailsa, Mitch, Tim, Marietta, Margaret, Anthony (former member) ←



early design idea for flop



**Flops:** some rather shabby ideas (clockwise from top): the traffic tree, the mega-chair, the super-blade, the tableboat, a med-evac built for two

# *growth*

The five year anniversary of Electric Company marks an expansion of our company's operating and touring activities as well as a return to the original working relationship that **Brilliant!** brought to light five years ago.

With these changes comes fresh funding from the Canada Council, allowing us to hire a long awaited and sorely needed administrative assistant. We welcome **Ms. Carolyn Lair** as our Producing Manager! Ms. Lair has a long history of Vancouver arts administration and has worked with many companies including Ruby Slippers and Mascal Dance. Her wide range of interests in music, dance, theatre, architecture, and visual arts and her knowledge of fundraising and touring makes her a valuable asset to the

long-term health and growth of our company.

As the company begins to set their sights on a tour within the next two years, preparations are beginning and contacts are forming. Kim Collier attended the International Tour Conference in Toronto last February, returning with a fresh supply of inspiration and information. Kevin Kerr attended the Danish Conference this summer to gather information, meet like minded companies, and suss out the touring milieu on the international stage.

We are also working to attract producers to a possible co-production or co-tour. We welcome with open arms all local and visiting artistic directors to our upcoming **flop**. We hope they are suitably scared by the title, but not put

## 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

## our board

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

## our members

A warm welcome to all members, new and old! If you would like to become a member/donor please clip and send the form.

## our company

Electric Company is a four-person collective that has steadily carved a national reputation through the creation of original works of theatre since 1996. Kim Collier, David Hudgins, Kevin Kerr, and Jonathon Young met in theatre school, where their common respect for physical spectacle, adventurous narrative, technology and visual art inspired the creation of their first show and the company that followed.

Wrapped in layers of visual and physical imagery, our plays, at their core, speak to audiences of an accelerated culture at an exhilarating rate.

Our stories grow out of issues, themes, or narratives that appear on our collective radar and are fed through a process

## Membership Form

(es, 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 604-253-4222 FAX 604-251-1730 EMAIL etheatre@vcn.bc.ca

intensive research and aesthetic critique. We tune in to stories of personal and social transformation. We are excited by the role of technology in people's lives; with the impulse of invention continues to work against the resistance to change.

We strive to create theatre that is life-affirming, inspiring and provocative, and to

promote theatre as an educative, cultural, and by all means fun, experience.

With a fresh approach to the use of space in our storytelling we transform venue into narrative. Challenging the established conventions of creating theatre and watching theatre, the Electric Company constantly experiments with its own formulae.

We believe in theatre that is accessible: financially and thematically. Audiences are always at the forefront of our work.



**ElectroScope** written and produced by the Electric Company: Kim Collier, David Hudgins, Kevin Kerr, Jonathon Young, and Producing Manager Carolyn Lair.





PLEASE OPEN WITH CARE

**ELECTRIC COMPANY THEATRE SOCIETY  
1885 VENABLES STREET  
VANCOUVER, BC.  
CANADA  
V5L 2H6**

