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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

The Nerd

Great acting but script drags

By Carol Baldwin
 ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR

Rick Steadman is the ultimate unwanted guest. Or is he?

Although he comes for an evening and decides to remain indefinitely as the house guest of a man he has never met, Steadman shakes up that man's life, a life that has become stale and drab and devoid of risks.

Steadman, a.k.a. the nerd (Andrew Finnigan), upsets the life of his gracious host, Willum Cubbert (Mark St. Jean), by filling it with colour, challenges, and ultimately with risks.

And, of course, dealing with those changes is the premise of Larry Shue's *The Nerd*, currently being presented by West End Studio Theatre at the Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts.

I must, in all fairness, preface my comments about the play by stating, up front, that physical comedy seldom tickles my funny bone. Witty words and subtle humour are my comedic preference.

Consequently, the first 15 or 20 minutes of *The Nerd*

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are great as far as I'm concerned. They are filled with wonderful lines delivered with precision, mostly by Axel Hammond, played by Mike Tadic. In fact, Hammond is not only the catalyst for the comedy, he's the catalyst for the action. Without him, there is no story, despite the play's title. And Tadic does a superb job.

For me, once the nerd steps on stage, the witticisms slowly slip into physical humour and the dialogue gradually gives way to gestures. Now, if you're a fan of farces, that's a good thing. But if you're not, it is not.

However, having said that, Kevin St. Jean, who plays Thor, the mischievous young son of Warnock and Clelia Waldgrave (Steve Dashney and Audrey Adams, respectively), is the king of gestures and antics in this production. This performing prodigy is fabulous as he screams, tumbles and runs about the stage, alternating between fury and fear, hell-raising and hiding. His presence skillfully upstages all the adult actors.

Keep an eye on this emerging actor. If he is as talented in adolescence and adulthood as he is as a youngster, you'll be seeing this young man's name in theatre programs and on marquee for years to come.

Actually, all of the acting in this production is flawless. The entire cast is a talented lot. It's just that Tadic and the younger St. Jean shine a bit brighter; and perhaps that's because they have the script and the director, respectively, to enhance their talents.

And yet, it is the script to a large extent, and the director to a lesser extent, that are responsible for the play's switch from snappy scenes with witty dialogue to a slow-moving storyline with farcical antics.

Maybe the gradual increase in farcical actions was director S. Gur's attempt at compensating for the storyline that begins to drag at the end of the first act. And, once again, it may have worked for those who like comedic clowning. For me, however, editing is the only solution to a slow-moving script, although editing may prove more difficult than trying to work around the sluggish snags.

So, in essence, this three-hour play (intermission included) takes too, too long to make its point, so much so that the comedy starts to unravel. And therein lies its biggest flaw.

With superior acting, an excellent premise and a crowning surprise ending, it has all the makings of an entertaining evening, which it would be, if the game-playing scene and the execution of the plot to get rid of the nerd were quicker paced. Trimmed by 30 minutes or so, *The Nerd* could well be the comedy hit of the season.

The Nerd will continue at The Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts, Sept. 20th to 23rd.

Tickets are \$16 and are available by visiting or calling the box office at 130 Navy St., 815-2021, weekdays from noon to 5 p.m. and Saturdays from 2 to 5 p.m.

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Community Notices

Deaths

CHAPMAN, ROBERT ALLAN - Born March 29, 1945 in Halifax Nova Scotia. Passed away September 14, 2000 at the age of 55. Loving husband of Joan (Macleod). Father of Grant, Pam, and Rob. Son of the late Sidney and Kay (Creighton) Chapman. Big brother of Leda, Michael, and Perry. Little brother of Paul. Visitation was held Sunday at Oakview Funeral Home, 56 Lakeshore Road, West (1 Block east of Kerr St.) Oakville. Funeral Service was held Monday September 18, 2000 in the Chapel. Followed by cremation. He will be remembered, Honoured, and loved. Always



Deaths

NELSON, Dorothy A. (nee Broad) - (A member of the Eastern Star). Peacefully on Sunday, September 17, 2000 at Oakville-Tratfalg Memorial Hospital in her 81st year. Dorothy, beloved wife of the late James. Loved mother of Sharron and her husband Ray Courchesne, Wayne and his wife Barbara and Jama and her husband Keith Ballantyne. Dorothy will be missed by many grandchildren and great grandchildren. Dorothy was predeceased by her brother Gordon Broad. Visitation at the Kopriva Taylor Community Funeral Home, Wednesday, September 20, 2000 from 2-4 and 7-9 p.m. Funeral Service 3:30 p.m. Thursday, September 21, 2000 in the chapel. Visitation will also be held 2-4 p.m. Saturday September 23, 2000 at the Miron-Wilson Funeral Home, 150 Balsam Street, South, Timmins. Funeral Service 7 p.m. Saturday, September 23, 2000 in the chapel. Interment Monday, September 25, 2000 at Timmins Memorial Cemetery.

Deaths

SMITH, Darrell James
 At Cambridge Memorial Hospital on Monday, September 18, 2000. Darrell James in his 65th year, of Flamborough, formerly of Oakville. Beloved husband of Anne (Campbell). Loving father of Heather Dillon, Cheryl and her husband Ronald Gall and Douglas. Cherished Poppa of Heidi and Barrett Dillon. Dear brother of the late Mervyn. Brother-in-law of Norma Smith and Frank Campbell. Fondly remembered by his nieces and nephews and many friends and family. Friends may call at the KITCHING-STEEPE FUNERAL HOME, 146 Mill St. N., Waterdown, on Wednesday 7-9 and Thursday 2-4 and 7-9 P.M., where Funeral Service will be held on Friday, September 22nd at 11 A.M. Private interment to follow. If desired, donation may be made in Darrell's memory to Cambridge Memorial Hospital Foundation - Cancer Clinic or the Charity of your choice.
 KITCHING-STEEPE FUNERAL HOME
 (905)689-4852

In Memoriam

CARLEY, George
 In loving memory of a dear husband. August 2, 1911 - Seotember 22, 1997

For all the years we shared together
 Our memories will live on.
 Everyday we miss you.
 Wife Violet and Family.

HASSALL, Glen

In Loving Memory of Glen Hassall Who Passed Away on September 20th, 1987
*It's been thirteen years since you passed away.
 The pain and sadness still remains,
 As fresh and vivid as that cold September day.
 Almost everyday a special memory comes to mind,
 Leaving us still smiling deep inside.*
 Always loved and remembered by wife Linda, son Trevor, Mom and John

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 If you want to quit,
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HESLIP, Elinor - (Born January 7, 1924). On Sunday, September 17, 2000. A loving mother, grandmother, aunt and friend to so many. She lived a full life of laughter and kindness, music and joy shared with her family and friends. Predeceased by her husband Marsh Hespil, her parents George and Cora Lewis and brothers Miller and Bill Lewis. She leaves behind her children, Jane Best and her husband Robert, Peggy Neely and her husband Mike, Doug Hespil and his wife Kerry Sue, Tom Hespil and his wife Jody and Timothy Hespil and his partner Dave Dewan. She will be sadly missed by ten grandchildren: Emily, Sam and Willie Best, Lindsey, Kacey and Jaime Neely, Ben, Josh and Sam Hespil and Brady Hespil. A Memorial Service will be held at Hopedale Presbyterian Church, 156 Third Line, Oakville, where Elinor was an elder and member of the choir for over three decades, on Thursday, September 21st at 2 p.m. In lieu of flowers, donations to the Canadian Diabetes Association or the Hospital For Sick Children would be appreciated by the family. Arrangements entrusted to WARD FUNERAL HOME, OAKVILLE, 905-844-3221.

Passed Away DAVA-LYNNE McNEIL

The family of Dava-Lynne sadly announces her sudden passing as a result of a motor vehicle accident September 15, 2000 near Grand Valley at age 27. Dava-Lynne (Hoeksema) McNeil will be deeply missed by husband Marc and children Nicole and Austin. Dear daughter of Laura and the late Heedde Hoeksema of Hillsburg. Sister of Randy Hoeksema. Dearly missed by grandmother, Vera Powell, and many aunts, uncles, nieces and cousins. Predeceased by Maya (Hoeksema) Thornton and Harvey Powell.

Friends will be received at the funeral home Tuesday 2 to 4 and 7 to 9 p.m. A memorial service will be held at Bethel Christian Reform Church, Acton, Wednesday September 20, 2000, at 1 P.M.

Remembrances may be made to the East Wellington Advisory Group (EWAG)
 Blue Springs Funeral Home
 12 Church Street East, Acton
 519-853-2399

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