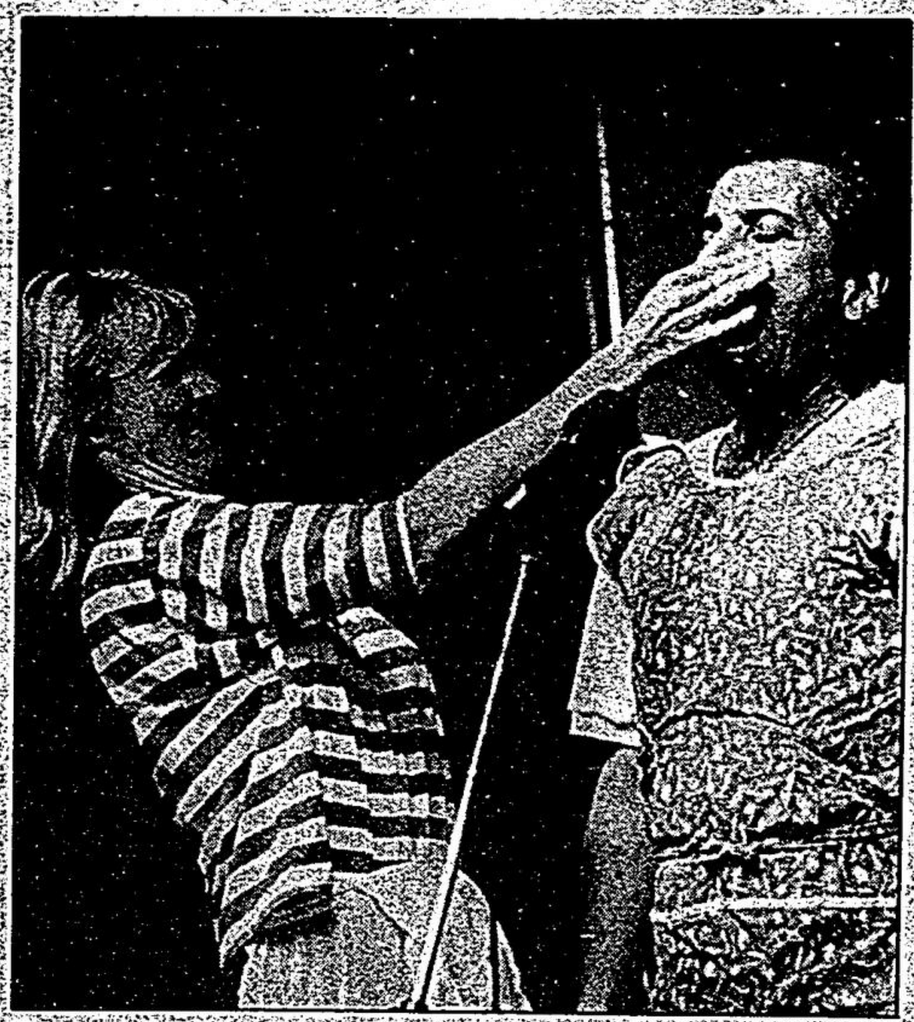
Polkaroo wows 'em in Markham



Two cast members of the Polka Dot Door's theatre ensemble ham it up for the audience of young and old fans during a production last week in Markham. But Polkaroo, that familiarly funny face that's loved by Polka Dot Door fans was the star of the show.

— Bob Daigle

By BOB DAIGLE

It was an event to rival any rock concert.

Fans were lined up outside, bodies surged forward as the door opened, and excitement built as the seats filled.

The lights dimmed and the hushed crowd waited. The warm-up band arrived and the fans cheered their efforts but they were all waiting for the "Star."

As soon as the star appeared, the fans let out screams of delight. It stood there looking over the sea of faces then let out its cry known world-wide, "POLKA ROOOOOOOO!!"

More than 800 children and parents attended the two performances of the Polka Dot Door—live in the Markham Theatre last Sunday.

Optimist sponsored

The show, sponsored by the Unionville Optimist Club, enchanted parents and children alike to the point where it was difficult to tell which group was having the most fun.

The Polka Dot Door, a Child's Play Production, is an adapted version of TV Ontario's highly successful television series and has toured for 12 years across Canada.

Four on tour

Four people tour with the show. Cindy Cook and Gerry Mendicino were the hosts and they used songs and games to get the children involved.

They were backed up with guitar music played by Kevin Knelman. McKinley Bryson was show stage manager and, of course, there was Polkaroo.

Geirey Richardson has produced the show for the last six years and revels in its success.

"When we initially began the show, it only appealed to the children. Now we have everybody rolling in the aisles. It's magic," said Richardson.

Wide appeal

He says nearly one million people from coast to coast have seen the show in the past six years. He predicts even greater success for the future.

"I anticipate, with luck and a few things working the way I expect, we will probably perform to a quarter-million people in 1988 and as many as a half-million the year following," he noted.

Whatever the numbers, everyone who attended the performances thoroughly enjoyed the production. So much so that the Unionville Optimist Club has already asked the group to return.

The Unionville Optimist Club is a group of community-minded men with a motto 'in the interest of youth'. The club is using the proceeds from the show to help fund future projects.

"We hope to sponsor public speaking contests, essay contests and a big project—(hiking) trails for the Unionville area," says Robert Mitchell, local Optimists vice-president.

Mitchell said the trails will allow children to get to various places in the community without having to walk near roads.

Bike paths

"We are starting in Unionville around Toogood pond and, in the years to come, we hope to link it with Markham." he said.

The club, which started three years ago, has been involved in several projects.

Initially, they needed a place to meet and approached town council to ask if they could refurbish the old library building in the centre of town.

Council supplied funds and the club provided manpower.

"Now, not only do we use it but so do the cubs, scouts, guides and a couple of dance classes," says Richard Fedy, a club member.

More to come

The club has two more performances planned for the future.

Saturday, Dec. 5 brings Sandra Beech, known as Chickaroo, to the Markham Theatre and Sunday, March 6, will see Eric Nagler in concert at Seneca College's Minkler Auditorium.

If the success of the Polka Dot Door is any indication of what's in store, the group's future is an optimistic one.

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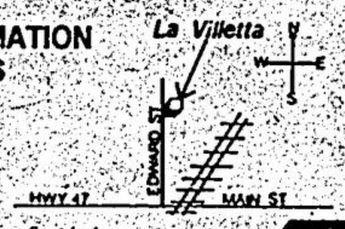

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