

# Young actors form theatre troupe

They're young, talented and smart. Frustrated by the lack of opportunities to play truly challenging acting roles, Markham residents Robb Cook and Murray Oliver created their own opportunity.

They formed Snake Song Theatre, their own drama company, and are producing a difficult Sam Shepard play, True

West, which runs March 29-April 16 at Toronto's Palmerston Theatre.

They're also home-grown actors in a sense, who gained their first exposure to drama at Markham District High School under the instruction of the late Ron Hindle.

Colin Taylor, the director of the upcoming True West production,

was also a student of Hindle. The three recall that this drama department head, in his very pointed way, introduced them to the discipline of their craft.

"He was a very tough man," says Taylor. "The thing I appreciated most about him was that he was very demanding. He never lied about the business, he never glamorized it. He would have absolutely no nonsense,

which was very unusual for drama in a high school."

"Sarcasm was a good sign of his respect for you," Oliver says, describing the often hard exterior of the man who, nevertheless, or possibly because of this intimidating manner, motivated them to develop their abilities.

The actors agree that it was Hindle's rare commitment to theatre at the high school level that resulted in a number of promising students, themselves included, pursuing drama professionally.

"In a very real way what he exposed me to in his classes led me to decide that acting was the direction I wanted to go," Oliver says. And this group is going full speed.

Cook and Oliver studied drama at the University of Guelph, while Taylor trained at the University of Toronto. Just last Christmas Cook and Oliver formed a partnership that resulted in Snake

Song Theatre.

They wanted to produce quality productions that placed them in demanding parts, and that's exactly what they've got with their production of Sam Shepard's True West.

"I thought they were ready for a play like this," says Taylor, director of the one-and-a-half-hour production that involves four actors. "It's the perfect dramatic structure; nothing extraneous, nothing fat."

Taylor says his actors have the opportunity to focus on detailed work in this production, avoiding the technological trappings that sometimes detract from plays of a larger scale. He says the play is regarded by many in the acting community as a difficult one.

Set in contemporary Southern California, it centres on the relationship of two brothers within a family. Cook acts the role of Austin, the successful, educated, aspiring screenwriter.

Oliver plays his brother Lee,

the petty thief. The performers say the play is a timely one, primarily examining the issue of the urban drive for success.

"It looks at who in the family, consciously or not, was pegged as the one going to be successful and who was along for the ride," explains Oliver.

Although Shepard is known for the obscure nature of his plays, Cook says "this play is the closest to realism that he's done."

Taylor says the play is very funny and slightly disturbing and that "the audience will all get something from it." The actors and their director are also getting something from it.

They're learning different approaches to their craft and being stretched to the limit dramatically.

When putting together the True West cast, producers/actors Cook and Oliver say Markham's Bunty Webb became the obvious choice for the role of the mother. In addition to Markham Little Theatre, Webb has done film and commercial work, and brings to the play a wealth of experience.


Yet she lacks the stringent school training of her co-actors. Taylor says this difference in background will result in learning on both sides.

"We wallowed in method nonsense," he says of his university drama days, "so it will be worthwhile to work with someone with a different point of view."

Webb says she has a lot to learn, too. "I'm used to working with people at the Little Theatre who (act) as a hobby. But it's different to work with young people for whom this is their job and their life."

Not only have the two had to manage the business side of the production, but they are financing the play out of pocket. They have been able to acquire top technical assistance explains Webb, because of the quality of the production and the people involved.

Oliver jokingly recalls a saying of Hindle's which has stood him in good stead since his high school days. "If you didn't enjoy the screw-ups, we wouldn't do it live," it goes.



**"I know what it's like to need cash in a hurry. National Trust knows, too."**

When a career and kids and a social life don't leave much time for banking, count on National Trust to make it as fast and easy as possible.

**NATIONAL TRUST**  
A National Trustco Company

MARKHAM — Markville Shopping Centre, 479-3544

*Striving to be the best!*

**Herongate Barn**  
Dinner Theatre  
Altona Rd., Pickering  
Back By Popular Demand

**NOT NOW DARLING**

Playing from March 30th-May 6th

For Reservations & Information  
Book early to avoid disappointment  
Please call 294-0426

**CITY DRIVING SCHOOL**

- Registered and approved by the Ontario Safety League to educate drivers in Ontario
- New courses for all ages start every week
- Shop and complete
- Day, evening, Saturdays and vacation breaks
- 25 hours of classroom instruction
- 15 Private driving lessons (automatic 600 min.)
- Enquire about our gearshift course
- Lifetime Membership

**REGULAR COURSE FEE \$279**

**ECONOMIST COURSE FEE \$265 WHEN YOU PRESENT THIS AD UPON APPLICATION**

- Insurance: Save 41%
- Certificates: Within 21 days or less
- Income Tax Fully deductible
- Gift Certificates available

2390 Eglinton Ave. E. Ste. 226 (at Kennedy Rd.)  
5582 Yonge St. No. 35 (Near Yonge/Finch Subway)  
2357 Finch W. Suite 206/Weston Rd.  
645A Bloor St. W./Bathurst Subway

FREE Pick-up - 24 Hr. Service  
532-2626 or 532-3856  
Serving Your Area

**WE PERK YOU UP!**

**24 Hrs. A DAY**

**RED ROSE DONUTS**

16th AVE. PLAZA 16th & 48

**EASTER SUNDAY BRUNCH**  
is a "SUITE TREAT" for the whole family

**SUNDAY, MARCH 26TH**  
11:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

How "suite" it is to spend Easter Sunday with your brunch at:

**MARKHAM SUITES HOTEL**  
8500 WARDEN AVENUE, AT HWY. 7  
FOR INFORMATION CALL: 470-8500

Adding a new dimension to FIRST CLASS!  
\$27.95 per person  
\$14.00 All-in 12 and under

Markham Suites Hotel

**NORTH SOUTH**  
Heating & Air Conditioning

Your authorized **bryant** COOLING/HEATING

Heating & Air Conditioning Dealer

Get a **FREE** Humidifier (Value \$165.00) With any Heating or Air Conditioning Installation

**479-6015**

**3 WEEKS for only \$49.\***

**"Nutri/System made me what I am today - 66 lbs. lighter."**

The NUTRI/SYSTEM® Weight Loss Program helped Laura Dutton reach her weight loss goal with delicious food and behaviour counselling.



Our comprehensive program works because it includes:

- Personalized Weight Loss Profile\* to identify your personal weight loss problem.
- A variety of delicious Nu System Cuisine® meals and snacks.
- Nutrition and Behaviour counselling.
- Behaviour Breakthrough® Program for long-term success.

Don't Wait, Call Today.

Our client, Laura Dutton, lost 66 lbs.

**We Succeed Where Diets Fail You.®**

As people vary, so does an individual's weight loss.

© 1989, Nutri/System, Inc.

**Here's \$500 ...and save hundreds \$\$ more**

- NGV is economical
- NGV is safe
- NGV is clean
- Dual-Fuel installation keeps gasoline in reserve

Offer available for a limited time only.

**OVER 1100 CENTRES IN NORTH AMERICA**

**nutri/system® weight loss centres**

NEWMARKET 836-1017  
BARRIE 721-3355  
MARKHAM 470-6767  
MIDLAND 526-3737

Special offer consists of 3 weeks of Nutri/System services. Does not include exclusive Nutri/System foods, games and maintenance. New clients only.

**Natural Gas for Vehicles**

Consumers Gas will give you \$500 off the cost of a Natural Gas Vehicle Conversion. Limited time only. Call now.

**\$500 OFF** A Natural Gas Conversion

NGV Hotline: METRO EAST Larry Hutzul 495-5370  
METRO WEST Tony Matarozzo 495-5916  
PEEL REGION David Smith 276-3588

**Consumer's Gas**