



East West Theatre presents:

the astonishing pick-a-path mystery of the sinister circus murders

EXIT 2ND BANANA

Script by David Foote and Ross MackLeod, aided by improvisations from Katie Clarke, Benny Marama, Caroline Waugh, Hannah Conning, Grant Hughes, Bronwyn Williams and James Wilson

come meet the unusual suspects

INCLUDING

the buxom Miss Bänderburg,
the South Pacific's only female Lion Tamer,
the mentalist of mentalists - Madame D'Gyp,

AND FREAKS OF EVERY PERSUASION

Struggle to conceal your disgust at
Euphemia the Bearded Lady
& laugh along with the charming comedy
stylings of

NATURES GREATEST MISTAKE

They should have died at birth.

They didn't.

BUNKO & SHILL!!!

“a clever, funny and very entertaining production”

(Waikato Times 2006)



THE PLAY

Exit Second Banana is an interactive murder mystery set in a circus during the 1930s. It incorporates elements of slap-stick, and vaudeville with noir style dialogue.

Based on a concept by two New Zealand playwrights, Ross MacLeod and David Foote, the text of the play was devised by the original cast and first performed in 2006 in Hamilton, NZ, then toured regionally within the Waikato. It has since been performed by the National Youth Theatre of New Zealand in 2009 and by Te Aroha Little Theatre in 2011. This East West production will be its Chinese Premiere.

Six potential victims, six potential murders, eight possible endings. Whodunnit? You Decide!

THE COMPANY

East West Theatre is an amateur English-language theatre group in Shanghai. We are dedicated to producing professional quality theatre on an amateur budget. As the longest-running English-language theatre group in Shanghai, we have produced eighteen critically-acclaimed shows since 2006 ranging from family favourites (A Christmas Carol) to Shakespeare (A Midsummer Night's Dream) to contemporary classics (Life x 3 by Yazmina Reza).

East West Theatre is dedicated to sharing high-standard English-language drama with the Shanghai arts and culture community. We are committed to providing an intimate, engaging, and thought-provoking theatrical experience with every single production.

East West Theatre exists to produce high-quality performance art for the English-Speaking Shanghai community and to provide a platform for enthusiasm, participation, dedication and friendship.

THE DIRECTOR

David has been working semi-professionally as a director, writer and producer of theatre for the last ten years. His plays have been called "gutsy, intelligent and intriguing" (Hannah Smith 18-03-2010, Salient) and his characters "Wonderful... with all the malevolence of any nineteenth century childrens' story." (Gail Pittaway 20-09-2003, The Waikato Times). David's complete review history can be accessed at: <http://www.urbanvintner.co.nz/Category:Theatre>

LISTINGS INFORMATION

Performances on 14th-17th & 20th-23rd June at 8pm.

All other show information can be found at <http://eastwesttheatre.com/events/exit-2nd-banana/>.
For reservations please call 13564102955 or email east.west.info@gmail.com.



REVIEWS

PREVIOUS EAST WEST SHOWS

Memory of Water, Shanghai 2011

Let's be honest: death is funny. Given the increased likelihood of erratic behavior, the possibility of massive social blunders, and the natural human need to laugh terrifying things into unreality, it's clear that the recently bereaved offer solid gold material for comedy. This truth has certainly not been lost on East West Theatre, whose latest production, [The Memory of Water](#), makes the most of the humorous potential of grief.

Directed by Amy Brummit and based on Shelagh Stephenson's award-winning script, the play finds three sisters staying in their mother's home following her death from Alzheimer's. The women mull over the past and bicker about their differences as they prepare for her funeral the next day, each meanwhile remaining preoccupied by her own relationship issues.

The leading trio is comprised of successful doctor Mary (Christy Shapiro); Teresa (Erika Mitschrich), who runs a health supplement and homeopathic medicine business; and histrionic youngest sister Catherine (Tamara O'Connell). The three occupy varying positions on a spectrum of narcissism, with Mary ostensibly the most grounded, Teresa a few degrees closer to dysfunctional, and both far surpassed by Catherine who -- unimpeded by even the smallest scrap of self-awareness -- elicits the most laughs as she soars to ever-increasing levels of egotistical vapidness throughout the play. Their squabbles are punctuated by the arrival of Mary's lover Mike (Rami Abuna'Meh), who is married (but not to her), followed by Teresa's husband Frank -- played to sardonic perfection by Shanghai theatre circuit regular Mustaq Missouri.

While the play didn't immediately find its pace, things began to flow along nicely once the cast settled into the comfortable rhythm of their pithy back-and-forths. O'Connell got the best jokes and got the best out of them, pulling off abominably self-obsessed shopping addict with almost worrying believability. It is Christy Shapiro, however, who deserves the credit of acting as the anchor of the piece, providing the substance needed to prevent it from floating off into pure frivolity. A familiar face in Shanghai theatre, her consistently outstanding performances in the most diverse roles make her association with any production enough to recommend it. This part is no exception, with her delivery packing an emotional punch when needed without ever crossing over into mawkishness or melodrama.

Most affecting are the scenes in which Mary is visited by the ghost of her mother, Vi (Virginia Withers). This is where most attention is directed to the intertwined themes of the play: the fallibility of memory, and the impact this has on our perception of ourselves and those close to us. These issues are represented throughout in different ways, most poignantly by Vi's Alzheimer's. Left with only fragments of her former self, she drifted, she says, between islands of identity.

This is one of many references to the water of the play's title, which is given more explicit context by Mike's explanation of a finding that supports homeopathy: that water has a "memory", retaining the properties of active ingredients which have been removed. The sisters' own heavily diluted memories, are, like water, continually in flux. Their conflicting views of their childhood denote the impossibility of shaping a definitive version of the past,



movingly reinforced by Vi's assertion that she sees nothing she recognizes in Mary's remembered version of her.

Managing to pull off both silly and serious with equal proficiency, *The Memory of Water* still leaves room for highly relatable moments of insight into the workings of a family. Whatever your own background, it's likely you'll find something that strikes a chord with you here -- as well as some truly fine performances you'll be glad you didn't miss.

(Eilidh McCabe, Smart Shanghai 28-11-2011)

Zoo Story/Dumb Waiter, Shanghai 2011

As dramatic set-ups go, wandering through deserted warehouses on a rainy night and up a dripping fire escape to find the Downstream Garage theatre is pretty good. Before the actors are even on stage in the black box space, suspense is cranked up and the audience is ready for some intense theatre. And that's exactly what you get from East West Theatre's double bill of *The Zoo Story* by Edward Albee and *The Dumb Waiter* by Harold Pinter.

Both plays are two-handers. In the first performance Paul Collins plays Peter, a married father of two reading a book on a sunny afternoon in Central Park who's interrupted by cheerful loner Jerry, played by Jason Lasky. Lasky shines in this performance. His goofy smile and lop-sided hoodiness suggests a good nature but this is undermined as hints of a wildness emerge as the drama progresses. Jerry is a powerful storyteller with vivid characterisation of his gin-sodden landlady and his nemesis, her dog. Collins' character is mostly the straight guy to Lasky's uninhibited tales, but his stiff, restrained Paul is believable and in the end sympathies are balanced evenly between the two equally tragic characters. Or perhaps Albee is telling us that it is the entire human experience that is tragic.

Light relief comes after the interval. Lasky and Collins return as Ben and Gus, two hitmen in a basement waiting for their latest job who are thrown into confusion by the sudden arrival of kitchen order notes – 'soup of the day' and 'scampi' – into their top secret hideout. Pinter's play is amusing but less powerful in this double bill. Collins' cockney accent strays into camp Dick van Dyke territory and even though the hitmen are in Birmingham, Lasky sticks to his native American accent, which works until he comes to words like 'berk' and 'mate' or phrases such as 'buck your ideas up'.

Accent quibbles aside, East West have put together a poignant, shocking, amusing and ultimately entertaining night at the theatre which we recommend you check out, especially as you can see it for however much you think it deserves – tickets are by donation only.

(Anna Leach, Time Out Shanghai 14-10-2011)



PREVIOUS SHOWS BY DAVID FOOTE

Exit Second Banana - Hamilton NZ 2006

Urban Vineyard is developing a speciality of small comic treats such as Couch Soup and Good As Gold. The latest production, Exit 2nd Banana, is murder mystery set in a circus. It's a great venue for extreme characters and full of opportunities for atrocious metaphorical groaners about life. The audience as judge and executioner can choose victims and the clues for the murders so the concept will not play out the same each night.

Jack Valentine (Ross MacLeod) is the uniformed sleuth, already alerted to the odd remnants of a circus who have not yet left town. He does a fine run of soliloquies bursting with mixed metaphors. McLeod assisted with writing and development of the script, along with David Foote, director, and other members of the cast and company. It's a clever, funny and very entertaining production.

Other outstanding performances are by Caroline Hastings as the mentalist Dr Gyp, and the Occultist from Otorohanga; and Benny Marama's Lobster Boy. Adding to this troupe were a Scottish bearded lady, conjoined schizophrenic twins, a man-eating lion tamer and a reluctant announcer with charming sand and wind machines.

Simple sets with ingenious touches and circular airy music complete this big top spoof.

(Gail Pittaway, Waikato Times 2006)

Fractur - New Zealand Fringe Festival, Wellington NZ, 2010

In 1971 at Stanford University, 24 college students took part in what has become one of the most infamous experiments of modern day psychology. The volunteers were divided arbitrarily into 'prisoners' and 'guards' and began what was supposed to be a two-week experiment in the effect of power upon the human psyche. It was called off after just six days. The effect of power upon the human psyche turned out to be some pretty scary stuff.

Fractur is a theatre piece based on this experiment. It explores these dark territories of the mind and, while not exactly what I would describe as scary, it is certainly fascinating as both subject matter and theatrical exploration. The premise is this: eight theatre friends, under the direction of Bosnian refugee Vanja Draganic, volunteer to take part in a long-form improvisation based on the Stanford Experiment. They are divided into prisoners and guards and agree not to leave the premises for a six-day period. Almost immediately shit gets crazy.

What we see is 'documentary theatre' and the play is structured around 'flashbacks' to the prison guard experiment, intercut with a series of monologues from the performers in which they justify their participation in the experiment and the show.

Adrian Holroid's set of taped-out floor space and white door frames is minimal but practical—especially for a shared space in the heavily programmed BATS Fringe season—and Rebecca Rolfe's costumes are likewise simple but effective, providing all the necessary elements and no more. I was particularly impressed by the original music, composed and performed by Adam Maha, which has the necessary tense and threatening undertones as well as being really beautiful. The programme (design uncredited) is also very cool.

The staging is dynamic, with some of the best use of split focus and group scenes that I have ever seen in BATS; a credit to the individual actors and to the ensemble as a whole... I think



this piece definitely has something. It is gutsy, intelligent and intriguing. I would be interested to see this reworked, and props to the Fringe and Urban Vineyard for bringing this ambitious and inventive piece of theatre.

(Hannah Smith, Salient [18-03-2010](#))

Unbearable Things - Hamilton NZ, 2011

Unbearable Things, a play based on the sensational 1930s and 1940s story of exotic Auckland dancer Freda Stark, is nothing like its name suggests.

The play's writer and director, Urban Vineyard's David Foote, of Hamilton, had long been interested in the story of Stark, her lover Thelma Mareo and Thelma's husband Eric, so he decided to put his own spin on what might have led Eric to be charged with his wife's murder

Due to the level of creative license taken, Foote has changed the character's names to Dora Hart and Adele and Milos Radev, but the story remains recognisable enough to leave a feeling of wanting to know the original.

Urban Vineyard's newcomer Michelle Burne, who plays Dora, was audibly nervous to start, but as she was stripping in the fashion of stark and singing solo, it was excusable. Burne's voice went from strength to strength throughout the evening, as did her acting and solo scenes.

Carl Watkins as Milos was a convincing foreign national, and not adverse to stripping either.

Lydia Foley, Ngaia Copeland and Natalie Foster all performed well in their supporting roles, but it was Katie Hansen as Adele who really made the show.

Hansen acted without overacting, and injecting some 21st century mannerisms into her character in a way which made them seem timeless.

Finding Waikato University's small New Place Theatre can be a challenge but Unbearable Things will make it worth your while.

(Louise Risk, Waikato Times 6/07/2011, p A3)