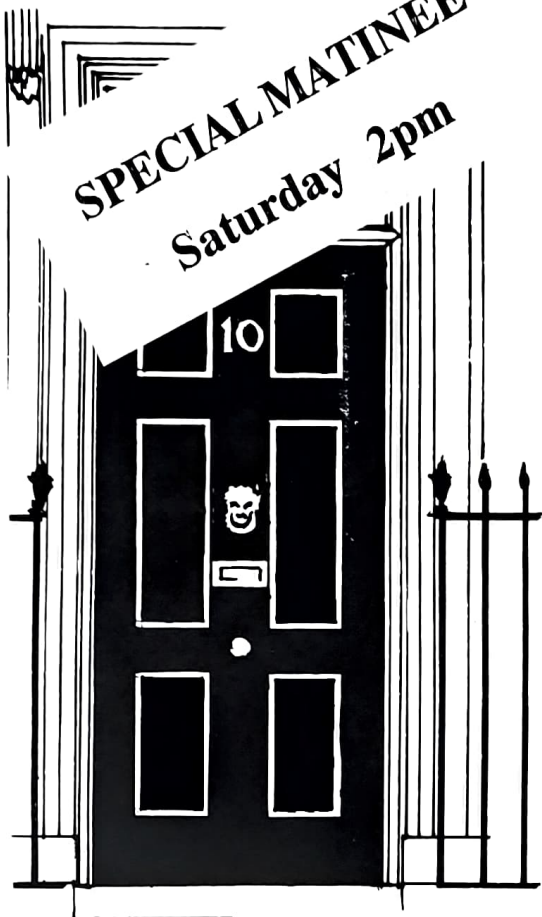


KANATA THEATRE



TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY SEASON
PRESENTS

SPECIAL MATINÉE
Saturday 2pm



Pardon Me, Prime Minister

by

Edward Taylor
John Graham

EARL OF MARCH SCHOOL

Wednesday, Thursday, Friday & Saturday

May 10-13, 1989

8.00pm

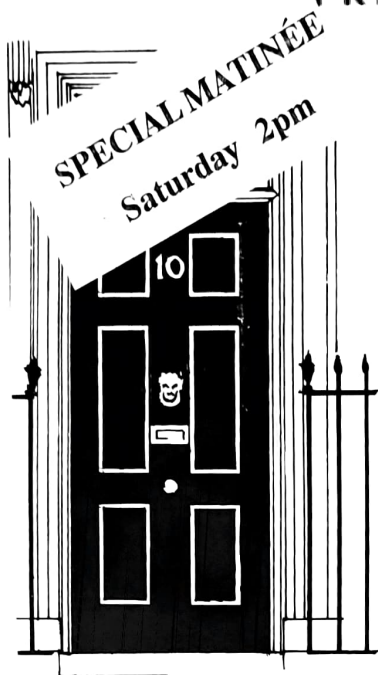
All seats reserved \$6.00, \$5.00
Students, seniors (Weds, Thurs only) \$3.00

Box office telephone 592-1715

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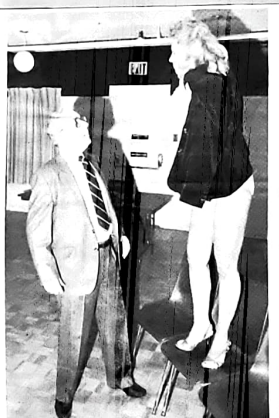
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Brooke Keneford and Jennifer Haynes, two of the stars of "Pardon Me, Prime Minister."



Nell Robertson, Brooke Keneford and Rob Johnson seem intent on parliamentary matters; do they know they are being watched by those barely-clad ladies? Kanata Theatre's production of "Pardon the Prime Minister" will be performed May 10 to 13 at the Earl of March High School. For more details call 592-1715.

Kanata Theatre — putting it all together, then taking it all off



SUZANNE MERCIER

Wed. May 10, will be opening night for Kanata Theatre's final production of the season, "Pardon Me, Prime Minister," a farce by Edward Taylor and John Graham.

Unless you have been in a coma for the past couple of weeks, you will no doubt have noticed pictures in the local newspapers of some pretty scantily-clad ladies (Director Hayes, Patricia Vireberg and Monica Hollands), all passing through — where else — the Prime Minister's office.

The play promises to be light-hearted, but long before the curtain opens and the Prime Minister steps out, a number of people have been hard at work to put this play together.

I had the pleasure of following the early development of the play from the night of auditions through to rehearsals. I took notes concerning the various steps that are necessary to mounting such a production.

Unfortunately, I could not attend the final dress rehearsal due to press deadlines.

Several facts emerged from my observations. First of all, the people who

compose the Kanata Theatre are, as the cliché goes, one big happy family.

Many of them, like Bill Williams and Tony Bryant, have been with the theatre since its inception over 20 years ago. Even so, new members are easily welcomed.

Secondly, nobody minds a bit of hard work, everyone pitches in happily to make the production a success. Because members rotate tasks, just about everybody eventually gets a hand at some aspect of the production.

And, perhaps most importantly, everyone enjoys having a bulk fun.

The following are impressions and observations on the production of the play, in the order they occurred.

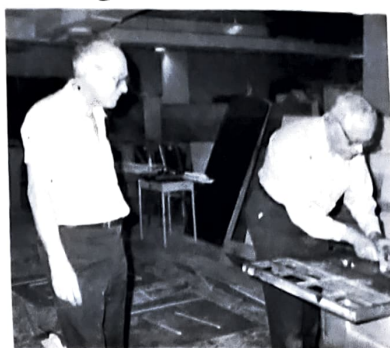
On Feb. 20, 14 people turned out to audition at the Beaverbrook Community Centre. The night before, 25 people came out. Rosie Keneford, the director of the play, and Joan Ritchie, producer, were there to oversee the readings.

Some actors were nervous and quiet. Others were nervous and not so quiet. Many were joking around with each other. There are nine characters in this play, five women and four men.

Finally the auditions began. All the actors try out for several parts. The decisions as to who gets which part are made that evening.

I find myself admiring the spirit of these who try out. It can't be easy.

Those people who form the production crew tackled a snowy evening to at-



Bill Williams (l) and Tony Bryant work on the set for "Pardon Me, Prime Minister" which opens tomorrow at 8 PM at the Earl of March.

tempted a meeting at Joan Ritchie's on March 15.

The many tasks involved in the actual production itself include set design and construction, sound, lighting, properties, furnishings, costumes, stage managing, make up and continuity, better known to us non-theatians as prompting.

Also related to the production, in a more indirect manner, are the headings of programs, publicity, photography and box office.

The main theme of that night's meeting had to do with the nuts and bolts of the play, its mechanics.

There were important details to attend to, like the problem of the lit cigar which must go in a desk drawer. How will this be done? Last time a cigar was lit on stage, some people in the audience walked out.

Bill Williams came up with some ideas for a set design.

"Because it's a farce," he says, "we need many doors." He adds, "where else are all these scantily-clad ladies going to hide?"

Another detail: the doors must open downstage, so the ladies will actually be hidden.

Having not read the play myself, it came as a surprise to hear that goats' eyes are needed as props.

Elsie Bryant, an old hand at all this, says calmly, "there are cockles and muscles they sell in the supermarket that look just like goats' eyes."

A whole new world was revealing itself to me.

There are the technicalities to think about, too. This play won't be as demanding as some of the others because there will be no set changes.

In addition, there are only two acts. This should make the lighting and stage managing fairly simple.

Perhaps the greatest fun was discussing costumes. Or, for this play, the taking off of costumes.

Everyone tried to visualize the different characters in their various states of undress. The logistics of creating a rip-off skirt were discussed at length. Will velcro be used? You'll have to see the

play to find out.

On March 28, actors practised blocking. This basically involves having the director help the actors with their parts and perhaps more importantly at this point, get a notion of how they are to move around the stage.

"Blocking for a farce is quite hard," says Rosie, "but when all is done, it's great fun."

I watch Rosie as she literally races from one side of the stage to the other.

She reminded me of a basketball coach, urging her players on. In this play, she directs husband Brooke, who plays the Prime Minister.

Again, details are important. Rosie, who directs a play every other year, is keen to spot a potential problem.

"Use your right hand, not your left — so you don't block the view," she says to one of the ladies.

Rosie uses a creative technique to solve a blocking problem — she has the actor reverse his other lines. Simple and very effective.

On April 27, in the bowels of the Earl of March High School, the sets were constructed. Flats 12 feet high were painted and carried all the way up to the auditorium, where they were assembled.

On the evening I was there, Bill and Tony were cutting precisely-measured lengths of moulding on the table saw. The moulding embellishes the panelling for the Prime Minister's Wedgwood blue office.

Previously, some other flats had been painted with four-inch roller brushes to create background scenes.

"Even the smaller designs are painted with the roller brushes," Bill says. "It's quite a skill."

For the last two weeks in March and all during the month of April, rehearsals have been taking place, usually four times a week, either at the Beaverbrook Community Centre or the Earl of March High School.

Now, after having glimpsed at the inside workings of the play, I will have all the more fun sitting back and watching how it all unfolds on opening night.

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



Kanata Theatre will present the final play of the season next week. "Pardon Me, Prime Minister" will be performed at the Earl of March High School at 8 p.m. nightly, May 10-13, with a special matinee performance Saturday afternoon at 2 p.m. Kanata Theatre does not always give a matinee performance, but this highly entertaining comedy will be very popular, a farce to end the season.



Rob Johnstone seems to have his hands and lap full with "lovely ladies in lingerie" in Kanata Theatre's production of Pardon Me, Prime Minister, and his long-limbed looker seems happy about it. The play opens at the Earl of March on May 10 and runs until the 13th nightly at 8 p.m. Matinee performance on May 13 at 2 p.m. Box office 592-1715.



Scantily-clad Jennifer Haines in rehearsal for this week's Kanata Theatre production of Pardon Me, Prime Minister. The British sex farce begins tonight at the Earl of March auditorium and runs until Saturday. Tickets can be obtained at the box office.

KANATA THEATRE

'88 '89

20

Theatre Review Pardon Me Prime Minister delivers on promises of sin and skin

The promotion for *Pardon Me Prime Minister*, Kanata Theatre's final offering of the season, presented a different young woman in her underwear each time you picked up the paper and probably piqued the interest of more than a few theatre-goers.

The play delivered on its promise of skin in the farce which saw the rather befuddled British P.M., George Venables (Brooke Keneford) chasing various half-clad women around his office. However, the leader was not bachelorette, but simply trying to avoid this impression on his colleagues by attempting to dress everyone who may have felt a bit chilly at 10 Downing St. A rather complex situation, and one which has a more convoluted origin.

The Prime Minister seems quite content or rather quite subservient when his overbearing Scotch minister of finance announced plans to rid England of all subversion (i.e. booze, strip joints) through extensive taxation.

However, before he can announce the new budget proposal, the P.M. is confronted by a woman who claims to be his illegitimate daughter conceived during a wild campaign celebration. His "daughter," an exotic dancer, demands on behalf of herself and her strongest mother

that he change the stultic aspects of the new budget which threaten some of Britain's more basic pleasures or she will reveal all and bring down his government. In a tense stand-off, as found in most farces, she takes off most of her clothes.

Meanwhile the poor P.M. has to deal with scantily-clad journalists, wives, and secretaries and the fully clothed, yet crusty minister of finance.

Eventually the budget is scrapped and the P.M. escapes a rotten scandal.

The door-slamming, lingerie-fashions-show of a farce had some good performances. Brooke Keneford played the bumbling, tippling leader exceedingly well and similarly good was Rob Johnstone as his private secretary Rodney Casopwell.

Neil Robertson, a suitably grouchy as Hector Crammond, the fiery, sell-anything finance minister, who gets his comeuppance in the end. Jennifer Haynes played Shirley Springer, the crusading dancer from the Libido night club, who finds a whole new use for the official Hatbox of parliament.

A light, and yet entertaining farce, *Pardon Me, Prime Minister* certainly didn't lack pace or timing. However, it indulged a farce and subscribes to all the

conventions of this form of double-entendre and mistaken identity. This form might be getting a bit tired, especially considering the number of promising new Canadian themes, and playwrights out there right now. But if it's farce you want, the British seem to be the masters and the source.

However, *Pardon Me, Prime Minister* was definitely well-staged, competently acted and overall a very good production of its type.



Kanata Theatre's last play of season a hoot of a finale

By Suzanne Morcier
Kanata Theatre staff

If Kanata were to implement the kind of regime demanded by the Exchequer Hector Crammond in *Pardon Me, Prime Minister*, the morality squad would surely have raided the Earl of March High School auditorium last Wednesday evening.

Kanata Theatre's opening night presentation of *Pardon Me, Prime Minister* was simply a hoot of a tale of two sexes, a farce filled with fun.

Those attending the performance also learned about the more practical uses of Hunsard (great for governmental cover-ups) and how to make the same red dress look good on three different women.

When a play has only one set, there must be a great deal of action to keep up interest.

This was certainly the case in the Prime Minister's office, tastefully decorated in Wedgwood blue, which was the setting for this play.

By the end of the evening, Prime Minister (Brooke Keneford) had certainly exercised, both mentally and physically; he spent a great deal of time running door to door - all within the confines of his office - to hide ladies dressed only in their underwear.

Hector Crammond (Neil Robertson), the stingy exchequer coming close to apoplexy himself, commented wryly that the Prime Minister "did not have the luxury of having a nervous breakdown", though it would not have surprised anyone if he had one.

Through those various doors passed a number of daring ladies - convincingly played by Jennifer Haynes, Patricia Vinesberg and Monica Hollands -

who bared their souls and their pasts, much to the P.M.'s frustration and delight.

Brooke Keneford was perfect as the lovable, teddy-bear kind of Prime Minister, quite human despite his flaws. Neil Robertson, as the steely and immovable Crammond, was a great foil for Keneford's more wavering character.

Rodney, the P.M.'s servile secretary who also had a hand in the goings-on, was well-portrayed by Rob Johnstone.

Dorothy Beak played the endearingly simple wife of the Prime Minister and Margaret Jardine the less-than-naive Dora

Kanata cast has hit with political farce

By Barbara Crook
City staff writer

A national budget with crippling taxes on everything fun. A scandal that threatens to topple the government. A prime minister struggling to be nice to visiting dignitaries and noisy reporters.

If it weren't for all the women running around in nothing but their underwear in *Pardon Me, Prime Minister*, one could swear Edward Taylor and John Graham had written their play about Canadian current events instead of about a fictitious British PM.

The events in this farcical romp through 10 Downing Street are far from probable.

But they have just enough plausibility to give a little extra bite to all the fun and games in Kanata Theatre's enjoyable season-ending production.

Prime minister George Venables (Brooke Keneford) is preparing himself for the political consequences of the tough budget being prepared by his minister of the exchequer (Neil Robertson), when a young woman (Jennifer Haynes) shows up with a secret from the P.M.'s past that could bring down the government.

The P.M. is ready to give in to her demands for a less severe budget.

But convincing the dour, penny-

Theatre review

Pardon Me, Prime Minister
Kanata Theatre
Earl of March High School,
477 The Parkway, Kanata
May 10-13, 8 p.m.
Saturday matinee, 2 p.m.

pinching finance minister to change his plans is another story - until Venables discovers he's not the only one with a scandal to his credit.

Half the fun of the show is figuring out which lovely lady is going to show up in her knickers next.

Director Rosemary Keneford demonstrates her usual flair for farce, although the pace of this show still drags.



