

SOCIAL INTERCOURSE

U of A Symphonic Wind Ensemble
 With Edmonton's Royal Canadian Artillery Band
 Friday, 15 February at 8pm
 Convocation Hall (Old Arts Building)

The Edmonton Royal Canadian Artillery Band, one of six professional Canadian Armed Forces bands, teams up with the University of Alberta Symphonic Wind Ensemble for this show that combines the best elements of big band-style jazz, wind instruments, and maybe even heavy artillery fire. The show features pieces from Wind Ensemble alumni, the premier of David Maslanka's *Symphony No 7*, and a piece called "Frenergy," a combination of frantic and energy that's the best fusion of words since ginormous. The songs from the performance will also be included in the Wind Ensemble's first recorded album, which will be released at the end of the school year.

Dangerous Liaisons
 Alberta Ballet
 15-16 February at 8pm
 Jubilee Auditorium

This thrilling French tale of romance and betrayal, set in the age of Louis XVI, follows the story of the Marquise de Metreuil, who convinces her ex-lover Vicomte Sebastian de Valmont to seduce the innocent Cecile de Volanges in order to get back at the man she must marry. This bet results in a vicious love tetrahedron of sleazy and diabolical proportions that would nowadays be suitable only for daytime television.

Mos Def
 With Guests
 Saturday, 16 February at 9pm
 Edmonton Events Centre

Born Dante Terrell Smith, rapper Mos Def is best known through his partnership with Talib Kweli, his work with Kanye West, and his burgeoning solo career. The socially conscious rapper is touring to promote the release of his upcoming fourth solo album *The Ecstatic*, due for release in April. Besides rap, Mos Def also has had an extensive acting career; after studying experimental theatre at New York University, he got his break as Bill Cosby's sidekick in *The Cosby Mysteries*, and is most recently starring in *Be Kind Rewind* with Jack Black.

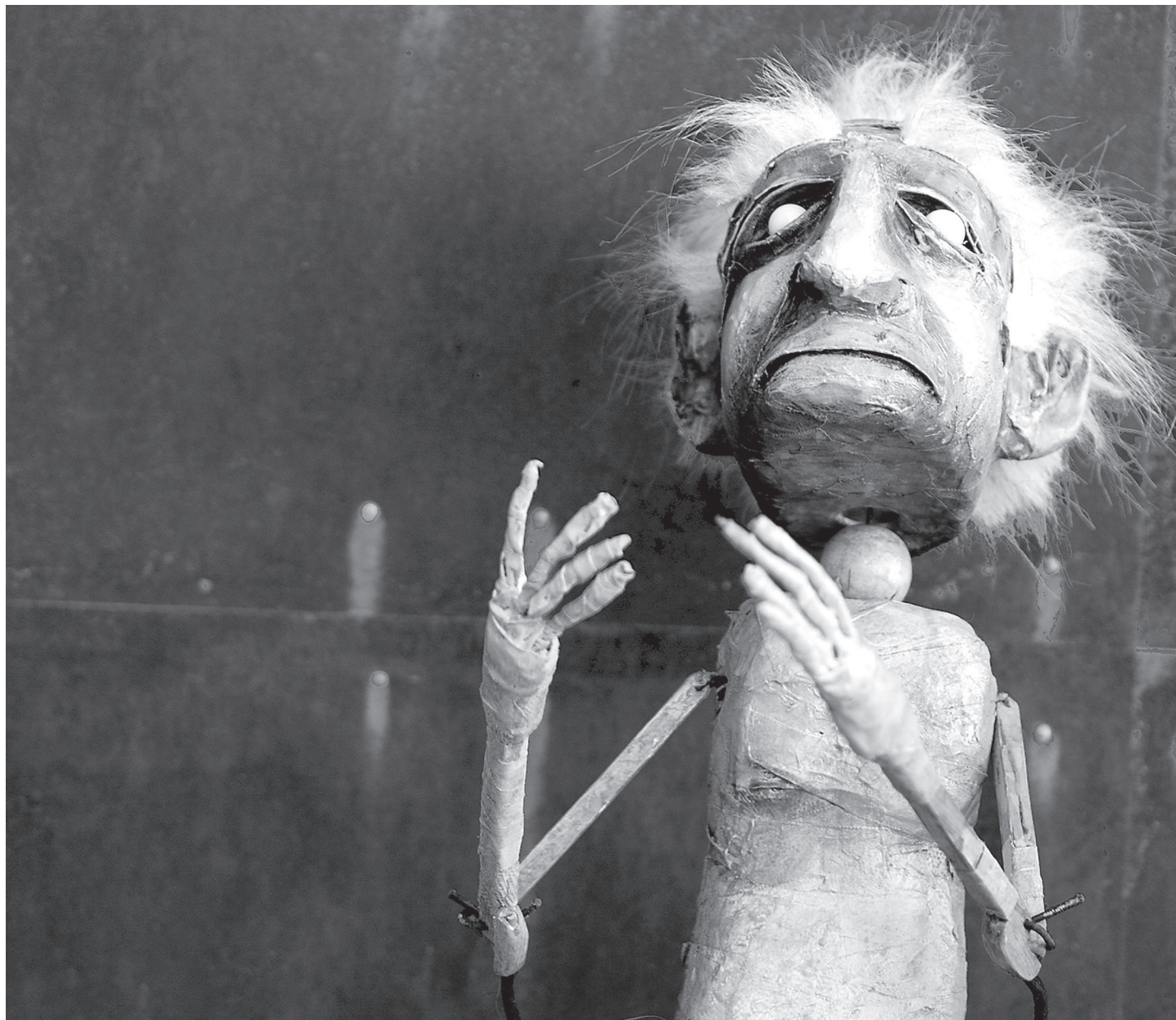
Tanya Prochazka
 Sunday, 17 February at 7:30pm
 Holy Trinity Anglican Church (10037 84 Avenue)

University of Alberta cello and chamber music professor Tanya Prochazka performs solo in this show, being put on by the Edmonton Recital Society. One of Canada's most accomplished cellists, the Australian-born Prochazka plays frequently on the international stage, as well as regularly with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra and on CBC Radio. She will be performing Bach cello suites No 2 and No 6, renowned for their difficulty, as well as a cello suite by Benjamin Britten.

Riverdance
 17-24 February, various times
 Jubilee Auditorium

The world-renowned Riverdance spectacle taps its way into Edmonton for the whole of Reading Week. The Irish step-dancing show has enjoyed countless performances across the world and numerous appearances in the monologues of late-night comedians during its 14-year run. Combining their love of dancing with their love of pleasant streams, Riverdance brings together two out of three of the Irish's greatest traditions. For more information on the third, refer to this issue's well-written, in-depth feature.

JOHN KMECH
 The Arts & Entertainment Staff



In with the Old Trouts, out with the puppets

Famous Puppet Death Scenes skips the plot and examines the final chapter of puppet lives

theatrepreview

Famous Puppet Death Scenes
 Runs until 2 March
 Directed by Tim Sutherland
 Starring Peter Balkwill, Mitchell Craib, Pityu Kenderes, Judd Palmer, Stephen Pearce, and Tim Sutherland
 The Roxy (10708 124 Street)

DAVID JOHNSTON
 Arts & Entertainment Staff

It's five minutes into our conversation when Judd Palmer of the Old Trout Puppet Workshop openly admits his immaturity and that of his fellow artists. Then again, the lucid periods of the first five minutes probably should have been a big enough clue.

"We were buddies back in our youth, and we were summer camp counsellors, and we were clearly the weirdest guys in camp," Palmer deadpans. "But then Y2K was coming [...] so we figured it would be better to gather together for mutual protection down on this ranch in southern Alberta. There was plenty of food in case of apocalypse, guns in case of roving mutants [...]. We needed some way of bringing revenue into our gang, so we started doing puppet shows for adults, oddly enough."

But the audiences of cowboys and "Hutterites from across the river" were enough to breathe life into the newly formed troupe, and the boys of Old Trout had found their calling.

"Plus, I had a general belief that, somehow, the world of puppets was keyed to some dark underworld of Bohemians," he continues, "Prague basements, smoking cigarettes [...]" it's all true, by the way.

Palmer and his gang will be returning to Alberta this month, bringing their latest pupaphobia-inducing masterpiece, *Famous*

Puppet Death Scenes, to Edmonton. Billed as a collection of the greatest death scenes in the puppet theatre canon, the show has been touring North America for the past two years, growing and changing along the way.

"I don't remember a lot of death scenes in the puppet theatre canon. In fact, that's pretty well true [that there really aren't any]. So we just made them up," Palmer continues in a slightly more serious tone, citing Ronnie Burkett and Peter Jackson's *Meet The Feebles* as inspirations for his group's connection to the macabre—their puppeteer idols, if you will.

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JUDD PALMER
 FAMOUS PUPPET DEATH SCENES PUPPETEER

"There's a bunch of things appealing about [puppetry]," he notes. "It's sort of all the art-forms combined. There's sculpture, connections to theatre. [We feel] the world has not yet fully explored the possibility of puppetry for adults. We found there's a lot to be done in there that people aren't necessarily doing. It was our own weird little niche."

And it's a niche that they've found popular, as they're now onto their seventh mainstage production in the last decade.

Death Scenes originally grew out of a moment in the Old Trout's last work, *Pinocchio*, a darker, Grimm brothers 19th-century version wherein Pinocchio goes nuts and smashes Jiminy Cricket with a hammer

in the first five minutes. Palmer fondly recollects the conflicting emotions he and the other Trouts felt in the theatre every time they did the death scene: the shock, the humour, the sadness, and the annoyance.

"It was this sort of key theatrical accomplishment that the audience doesn't know what to feel," he explains. "It was our favourite bit of the play, and we thought, 'Well, what if we just made a play with nothing but our favourite bits, instead of wasting time on the bric-a-brac of "plot" and "character development."'" And thus *Famous Puppet Death Scenes* was born.

The show delivers with its titular promise, spanning the full spectrum of marionette massacres, with 22 sketches in all.

"[If] it strikes to the very core of your being, if you see your own soul mirrored back at you, if it forces the audience to consider their own mortality—that's what makes a puppet's death truly famous."

Palmer doesn't ever seem worried about pre-conceived audience notions towards puppetry or its exact location within the realm of actual theatre. But that could be because, unlike the Old Trouts themselves, it's very difficult to call their work childish.

"The kids love it. The kids love to be shocked. Usually, it's the adults that are offended," he laughs.

But with the *Death Scenes* tour finally wrapping up in a few months, the Old Trouts aren't looking for some downtime. They're already thinking of their next project—and its new location.

"We're moving to Mexico, to Guanajato, a region famous for its mummies," Palmer states matter-of-factly. "The groundwater has some kind of odd constitution so that when you're buried there, you mummify. So they have an absurd collection of the undead down there for your perusal. It's [the perfect place] for us: something halfway between alive and dead. That's a puppet."

In other words, the Old Trouts won't be suddenly maturing anytime soon.